PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 90

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
20 JANUARY—31 JANUARY 1986

ISBN 0 10 681090 1

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY RIGHT HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, SEPTEMBER 1985)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
Minister of State for Defence Support—The Lord Trefgarne
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Barney Hayhoe, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister of State—The Lord Elton, TD
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Mrs. Peggy Fenner, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE SUPPORT—The Lord Trefgarne
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—John Lee, Esq, MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Dunn, Esq, MP
George Walden, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
Peter Bottomley, Esq, MP
David Trippier, Esq, MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
David Hunt, Esq, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Lord Elton, TD
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Sir George Young, Bt, MP
Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
Richard Tracey, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Eggar, Esq, MP

Health and Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Barney Hayhoe, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Ray Whitney, Esq, MP
The Baroness Trumpington
John Major, Esq, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Mellor, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone, CH

Management and Personnel Office—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
The Lord Lyell
Richard Needham, Esq, MP

Paymaster General and Minister for Employment—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
John MacKay, Esq, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Lord Lucas of Chilworth
Michael Howard, Esq, QC, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Mitchell, Esq, MP
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP
The Earl of Caithness

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Donald Thompson, Esq, MP
Ian Lang, Esq, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
The Hon. Timothy Sainsbury, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
Tony Durant, Esq, MP
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP
The Hon. Francis Maude, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP
Mark Robinson, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Rt. Hon. The Duke of Northumberland, KG, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—John Cope, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—Carol Mather, Esq, MC, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—The Hon. Robert Boscawen, MC, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Swinton
LORDS IN WAITING— The Viscount Long, The Lord Skelmersdale, The Lord Brabazon of Tara, Viscount Davidson
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Hooper

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP
CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP
FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Ernest Armstrong, MP
SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—
Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Ian Campbell, Esq, MP, Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, David Crouch, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Miss Janet Fookes, MP, John Forrester, Esq, MP, Harry Gourlay, Esq, MP, Sir Philip Holland, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Hugh McCartney, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, John Spence, Esq, MP, Sir John Wells, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—
Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP, Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Sir Paul Bryan, DSO, MC, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—R. B. Sands

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—W. A. Beaumont, OBE, AE
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL— G. E. Gammie, CB, H. Knorpel, CB
SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon T. Beeson
STAFF INSPECTOR—H. W. Bunkell
TRAINBEARER (PARLIAMENTARY)—D. J. Lord
DEPUTY TRAINBEARER (ADMINISTRATION)—P. L. Warwick
ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—T. D. Salmon

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—D. W. Robson

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Kenneth Bradshaw, KCB
CLERK ASSISTANT—C. J. Boulton, CB
CLERK OF COMMITTEES—D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC
PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
J. H. Willcox (Public Bills)
R. S. Lankester (Select Committees)
D. W. Limon (Table Office)
H. M. Barclay (Private Bills)
M. T. Ryle (Journal Office)
J. F. Sweetman, TD (Overseas Office)
A. A. Barrett (Standing Committees)
C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)
W. R. McKay (Financial Committees)
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—J. R. Rose, A. J. Hastings, R. J. Willoughby, S. A. L. Panton, R. B. Sands, G. Cubie, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig
SENIOR CLERKS—R. J. Rogers, A. Sandall, MLitt, M. H. Cooper, PhD, D. L. Natzler, D. J. Cairncross, E. P. Silk, Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, C. P. R. Bennett, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, P. D. Brittain (acting), C. A. Larsen (acting), J. Hallowell (acting), J. B. Ingram (acting), P. D. Austwick (acting)
ASSISTANT CLERKS—R. G. James, Miss E. J. Baker, C. M. H. Wookey, Miss P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—E. F. Riddles
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, K. J. Brown, G. E. Clayton, L. L. Kaye, I. C. Bryan, Miss R. J. Challis, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox
SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—I. S. Orton, Miss H. C. Beaumont, Miss J. Ward, R. A. Wilkins, P. R. Daley
EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright DEPUTY—B. Tidball ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, K. B. Wood
EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—H. M. Barclay, J. M. Davies
REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. S. Lankester
TAXING OFFICER—H. M. Barclay
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, P. G. Moon, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, Mrs. J. Pickett, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss J. Stevens (Temp.)

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major G. V. S. Le Fanu
DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major P. N. W. Jennings
ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright
CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss M. Frampton, MBE
ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—D. W. Snell
ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren
PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—J. Blood
SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant
THIRD PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—S. E. R. Skinner
HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard, MBE SECOND OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant
NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
LIBRARY—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—H. J. Palmer, G. F. Lock
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—J. B. Poole, PhD, Miss J. B. Tanfield, S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, MI InfSc, Mrs. C. B. Andrews
SENIOR LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss E. K. Andrews, DPhil, Mrs. B. L. Miller, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. C. Pond, PhD, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Miss C. E. Nield, R. C. Clements, R. J. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Mrs. G. Allen (Temp.)
ASSISTANT LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss C. J. Gilmour, PhD, Miss M. Baber, C. M. Bowlby, Mrs. P. Carling (Temp.)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss M. R. O'Reilly, MBE, Miss R. Wheatman, ALA, Mrs. S. M. Withers, ALA
SENIOR INFORMATION CLERKS—Miss E. Osborn, Mrs. D. W. Clark, ALA, Mrs. E. R. Stones (Education Officer)
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, J. A. Prince, MLS, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, ALA, M. Southgate, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss M. H. Fletcher, ALA, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, Miss G. C. Howarth, ALA, K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss A. Siswell, Mrs. E. A. Houghton, ALA, Ms. V. R. Cattell, Mrs. S. M. Hingley, ALA, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Mrs. I. O. Stockton, ALA, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Ms. H. Armstrong, ALA, Mrs. J. A. P. Skipworth, Miss B. Mee, Miss G. L. Cooper, Miss S. Holland, LLA, B. Donnelly, Mrs. F. M. Ward
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson
CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—T. H. Haclin, D. J. Plowright
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—J. F. Youle, P. R. Davis, J. S. Came, S. A. Wise, Mrs. P. A. Bozdan, Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—C. J. Montgomery, C. D. Lister

SALE OFFICE—CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—C. C. Clarke, MBE

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—A. C. J. Poole
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown (Temp.)
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—F. W. Brewer, A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, A. C. Langford, MBE (Temp.) Miss M. M. McColl (Temp.)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—K. E. Johnson, R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. J. Yexley, R. S. Young (Temp.), Mrs. N. Norman (Temp.), Mrs. G. Crowther (Temp.), D. A. Tucker (Temp.)
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Johnson, Miss T. D. Ruewell (Temp.), Mrs. D. K. P. Simons (Temp.), Mrs. D. Hill, Miss P. Hurford (Temp.), Mrs. J. C. Ponting (Temp.), B. W. Palmer (Temp.), Miss J. Bell (Temp.)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—G. A. Roberts
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
ASSISTANT HEAD OF OFFICE—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss R. A. Cole
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—P. C. Kingsley (Temp.)
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner, Mrs. D. Eltringham (Temp.), M. Page (Temp.)

COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc
ASSISTANT COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith

INTERNAL AUDITOR—Miss C. D. Stone, FCCA

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan
DEPUTY EDITOR—L. R. Johns
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley
SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITORS—F. G. Brotherston, C. R. G. Watson, OBE
ASSISTANT EDITOR—P. Walker
DEPUTY ASSISTANT EDITORS—E. Holland, I. D. Church, J. Withers
COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—W. G. Garland, Miss V. Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, D. Crosswell, Miss C. Ritchie, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland, Mrs. E. J. Gregory
REPORTERS— Mrs. P. Pratt, Miss V. A. Widgery, S. M. Hutchinson, Miss C. Fogarty, Mrs. J. Ballard, Miss F. Thompson, Miss M. Babington, Miss C. G. Black, P. Oglethorpe, Miss C. Hanly, Miss A. Harris, J. Bonner, Miss J. K. Belcher, Miss J. A. Bradshaw
FIRST PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington
SECOND PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. E. M. Bangay
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. H. Stollery
CHIEF HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler
HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington
ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—H. J. Wellings

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF
DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA
PERSONNEL OFFICER—
PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn
BANQUETING SUPERVISOR—C. J. Griffiths
CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA
ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley
EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay
HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe
HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland
PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—W. H. Lewis, OBE
HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent I. K. Slessor
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—D. Todd
POSTMASTER—C. E. Tomkins
TRANSPORT MANAGER—Miss M. F. Ward

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 90**

FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 20 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Infant Mortality

1. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the infant mortality rate in 1979 in *(a)* West Glamorgan and *(b)* Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for the latest available year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): The infant mortality rate for West Glamorgan was 14·3 per thousand live births in 1979 and the corresponding rate for Wales was 12·4 per thousand live births. By 1984, the latest year for which this information is available, these rates had fallen to 6·1 and 8·8 respectively.

Mr. Wardell: Why is a new perinatal intensive care unit not recognised by the Secretary of State for Wales as a need for Wales, whereas it is accepted as a need for all the English regions? The perinatal mortality rate in Wales is higher than that in England. Therefore, why is the Secretary of State content that mothers of babies in Wales should have a worse deal than mothers in England?

Mr. Robinson: The pattern of existing maternity and neo-natal services is being given a detailed examination under the perinatal mortality initiative announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and we shall be considering the survey group's recommendations later in the year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The figures that my hon. Friend has given are encouraging. What is the status of the perinatal mortality initiative undertaken by the Welsh Office?

Mr. Robinson: Under the initiative, a catalyst team is compiling an up-to-date assessment of existing maternity and neonatal services, stimulating clinical reviews of perinatal deaths and encouraging health authorities to set up active maternity service liaison committees. In addition, the expert survey group appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is preparing an all-Wales perinatal mortality survey, and that will form part of the group's report to the Department this year.

Hospitals

2. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service hospitals in Wales there were in 1978; and how many there are now.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There were 178 NHS hospitals in Wales at 31 December 1978 and 164 now.

Dr. Marek: Are there not now fewer staffed hospital beds in Wales than at any time since the inception of the NHS? What is the Minister going to do about it?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman should remember that we have been through one of the biggest hospital building programmes in the history of the Principality. As regards the drop in the numbers of beds, over 1,000 can be attributed to our mental health initiative to get people back into the community. Under that initiative there has been a reduction of nearly 1,000 in the number of beds available to mental health, compared with 1,329 overall.

Mr. Harvey: How many community hospitals have been opened in Clwyd since 1979?

Mr. Robinson: I shall write to my hon. Friend and give him that figure.

Mr. Alex Carlile: What proposals does the Minister have for the provision of more consultant beds in hospitals in rural Wales?

Mr. Robinson: We feel that the figures for consultant beds are satisfactory.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that just as important as the quantity of hospitals is their quality and the level of facilities and standard of care that they are able to provide? Is he aware of the widespread appreciation in Delyn of the fact that the Government have made available the necessary financial resources to transform three out of our four community hospitals, the new one at Mold being nationally recognised as a model for future community hospital developments?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point that out. I am sure he will be pleased to note that under this Government the reduction in the number of beds is less than it was in a similar period under the Labour Government.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that doctors, nurses and ancillary staff are up in arms about the administrative changes that have followed the implementation of the Griffiths report? Does he appreciate that they feel that their professionalism is being undermined and often completely disregarded? As one constituent put it to me, it is a matter of life or death versus financial restrictions. How does the Minister reconcile that with the Prime Minister's famous statement that the National Health Service is safe in her hands?

Mr. Robinson: Many more patients are now being treated in Wales than was the case when this Government came to office. Part and parcel of the campaign by the Royal College of Nursing is that it feels that it is not being included in the reorganisation proposals. Last week I visited south Glamorgan, where it was pointed out to me that one of the appointments that had been made had come from the nursing profession.

Mr. Wigley: It is all very well for the Under-Secretary of State to say that the new district general hospitals have led to the closure of some old hospitals, which has happened in some instances, but does he accept that hospitals which it was assumed would continue to function when the district general hospitals were being planned are now having to be closed because of a lack of resources? If he contests that point, will he assure us that there will be no such closures until he has completed his rounds of the area health authorities in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the distribution and use of resources is a matter for individual health authorities. However, before any closure or any major change of use can take place, there has to be public consultation. If there is a weight of objection, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has to consider the matter. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the statutory procedures will continue to apply if any proposals for closures are put to us by the district health authorities.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the most recent published figures of unemployment in Newport and Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): On 12 December 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Newport travel-to-work area and in Wales totalled 12,765 and 181,496 respectively.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the recent rise in the base lending rate of the clearing banks to 12·5 per cent. is the highest this century and that unemployment in Gwent and in the whole of Wales now stands at 17 per cent.? Does he realise that, because of the Government's policies, it can be said that Wales is being murdered? Why does he not call for a change in these policies? If he cannot change them, he should get out.

Mr. Edwards: Of course I am concerned about the high levels of unemployment, but it is wrong to pretend that Wales is being murdered. In 1985 Wales obtained a very high proportion of the inward investment in this country. In fact, 48 overseas projects have been secured. If that is not of interest to the hon. Gentleman, I am sure he will be pleased to hear that well over 2 million sq ft of Government factory space has been allocated to Wales. Again, that is very near to the all-time record.

Mr. Grist: Will my right hon. Friend give a lecture to Opposition Members on the relationship between high pay rises, inflation and unemployment? Will he tell them that if we go on paying ourselves above the rate of inflation and more than our competitors we shall have higher interest rates and higher unemployment?

Mr. Edwards: For the first time for many decades we have had a prolonged period of substantial growth in the economy, combined with falling inflation. That offers by far the best prospect for future job creation and lower unemployment.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the Secretary of State recall the speech that he made when he mentioned the great gulf between City financing and industrial Britain? Was not the perfect illustration of that the behaviour of County bank with its ultimatum to withdraw money from the Berlei company? Has the right hon. Gentleman put any proposals to his colleagues to prevent such outrages recurring?

Mr. Edwards: As the hon. Gentleman knows, County bank responded to my request for further time to consider the matter. The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not answer for the conduct of County bank. It must be a matter for commercial judgment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my pleasure in the fact that the company has now been bought from the receiver. As a subsidiary of the Courtaulds group, there are good prospects for its future business.

Sir Raymond Gower: Unemployment is a continuing cause of concern for all of us, but does not industry in Wales, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, now have an unparalleled opportunity to expand?

Mr. Edwards: Much industrial investment is taking place at the present time. The allocation of factory space is at, or near, record levels. We continue to secure a high proportion of inward investment from overseas. There is a greater diversity in the Welsh economy today than there has been for many decades—indeed, this century.

Mr. Williams: If the period of growth has been as impressive as the Secretary of State describes, how does he explain to those of us who do not see it that way that

manufacturing output is still below the level at which it was when the Government came to office, and lower than it was 11 years ago at the time of the three-day week?

Mr. Edwards: My answer follows my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir Raymond Gower). For the greater part of this century Wales has been over-dependent upon steel and coal. Those industries have been substantially reduced, but I am glad to say that, as a result of massive investment in the British Steel Corporation and a startling improvement in performance and productivity, the future for the steel industry is better than it has been for many years.

Mr. Foot: As the right hon. Gentleman still believes that the Government's policy is a glowing success, will he tell us when it will be translated into helpful unemployment figures? When will the areas that have suffered 20 per cent. unemployment or more since the Government came to office see the product of the Government's policy?

Mr. Edwards: I have told the right hon. Gentleman on many occasions that I do not make forecasts of unemployment figures, any more than he did when he had responsibility for such matters.

Welsh Coalfield

4. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the matters relevant to the Welsh coalfield which he discussed with the chairman of the National Coal Board at their meeting on 14 November.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Our discussions ranged widely over the situation of the coal industry in Wales and the activities of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Coleman: Will the right hon. Gentleman make it abundantly clear to the National Coal Board that in no circumstances can investment in pits in south Wales be used as a means of industrial blackmail to secure the closure of other collieries? Does he recognise that the serious position is exacerbated by the closure, announced last Friday, of the Metal Box works at Neath, which is also a coal mining area?

Mr. Edwards: Any industrial closure or reduction in employment worsens the position. However, the question refers to the coal industry, which has been losing large sums of money in Wales—more than £600 million since the Government came to office. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the reduction in losses, the sharp improvement in productivity and performance and the fact that investments totalling £50 million have been announced this year. The National Coal Board expects to spend about £45 million on capital schemes in Wales in 1986-87.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Can my right hon. Friend estimate the number of jobs that have been lost as a result of markets that were lost during the year-long coal strike?

Mr. Edwards: The coal strike had a damaging effect on the industry and has been a factor in the acceleration of pit closures since then.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that with the closure of nine pits and the loss of 3,500 jobs in less than a year, economically the coalfield is near to breaking point? I remind him that male unemployment in Mid Glamorgan is more than 25,000, or an awesome 23 per cent. The loss of jobs at Metal Box at Neath is a development of the utmost gravity. During his term of office, Neath has lost 1,300 jobs in double-quick time. What does he propose to do about it?

Mr. Edwards: The south Wales coal industry was being broken by its many old, loss-making pits. It was making enormous losses, and there was no way in which new investment could be funded while losses were at that level. The great improvements in the performance of the coalfield means that more investment is coming forward. The hon. Gentleman will welcome the efforts of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., which supports 13 enterprise agencies and has announced support for some 56 projects worth about £10 million. It has a further £15 million available from the original tranche that was announced for future good projects.

NHS Resources

5. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the formulae and methodology used to allocate resources for the National Health Service in Glamorgan and other area health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Formulae are used to assist in determining the distribution of the available resources among district health authorities. Those formulae are kept under review by a resource allocation working group, on which the authorities are represented.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister agree that unemployment in Mid Glamorgan is almost the highest of any county in Wales, that there is an established link between unemployment and ill health, that those factors are not being taken into account as either social or economic factors, and that the resources available to Mid Glamorgan area health authority are inadequate to deal with the health demands of that county?

Mr. Robinson: We do not accept that there is such a link. In terms of the adequacy of resources available to Mid Glamorgan health authority, the equalisation formula shows that Mid Glamorgan is within 0·1 per cent. of equalisation.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend's officials are considering sparsity and whether there could be a better formula than length of roads for areas such as Gwynned. When are those considerations likely to be completed, and when will we get a better assessment of sparsity?

Mr. Robinson: The resource allocation working group will resume its work on the next round of allocations, when all those factors will be considered.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: The Minister told us earlier that allocation and distribution of resources within authorities was a matter for those authorities, but what is his response when the authorities tell the public that inadequate allocation from the Welsh Office has forced them to propose closures?

Mr. Robinson: As resources to the Health Service in Wales have increased by nearly 22 per cent. since 1979, we cannot accept the argument that inadequate resources from the Welsh Office are responsible for the problems

that some health authorities say they have. As I have said many times, the health authorities must manage the resources that are allocated to them.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In his considerations, how much does my hon. Friend take into account the willingness of health authorities to make the best use of the resources available to them?

Mr. Robinson: We do not take that factor into account when allocating resources. Of course, we take it into account when we consider centrally distributed resources.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister realise that his complacency is directly contradicted by the experience of people who live in Mid Glamorgan and who require the services of the NHS? I refer him especially to the case of a constituent who went for a cervical smear test in January and was advised at the surgery not to bother making further contact for three months because the National Health Service did not have the money to carry out the test. How can he say that he is satisfied with the funding of the National Health Service when such delays can occur?

Mr. Robinson: If a patient being treated by the health authority has a complaint about the way in which he or she has been treated, he or she has a right to submit that complaint, which will be considered through the statutory processes. There are problems with waiting lists, and the Welsh Office is helping the health authority to consider ways in which to reduce them.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that between his pathetic excuses and fiddling figures there is a great need for more resources in the valleys of south Wales? When he visits Mid Glamorgan hospitals, which he proposes to do this week, will he look closely at the needs of the people there?

Mr. Robinson: Regarding the resources available for health services in Wales, any factors within the terms of the resource allocation working group which lead to any increase in resources to Mid Glamorgan—for example for social deprivation — will inevitably lead to a reduction in the resources available to other authorities. I can only repeat what I have said before, that there has been an increase in resources to the NHS in Wales of nearly 22 per cent.

Factory Units (WDA)

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many factory units have been built by the Welsh Development Agency since its inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Between January 1976 and December 1985 inclusive, the Welsh Development Agency completed 1,239 advance factory units, 20 bespoke factory units and 92 factory extensions, totalling more than 9·6 million sq ft.

Mr. Knox: How many factories has the agency built on average each year since the present Government came to office, and how does that compare with the figures under the Labour Government?

Mr. Edwards: Of the 1,351 factories and extensions completed by the agency, 1,167 have been built since May 1979. Under the Labour Administration the agency completed an annual average of 56 factories and extensions, totalling 500,000 sq ft. Under this Government the annual average has increased to 177 completions, totalling 1·2 million sq ft of factory space. What is more, we have been getting that factory space allocated.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government have commissioned two independent studies into the future of the Welsh Development Agency? Will he assure us that none will lead to the privatisation of any of its functions?

Mr. Edwards: I always welcome constructive ideas and read with interest the proposals of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that we might privatise the agency, but that proposition has not been discussed or considered in the Welsh Office, and I have no plans to do anything of the sort.

Mr. Harvey: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that remarkable achievement and deplore the failure of the Labour Government to spend money on these projects, but what has been the average take-up rate of the units?

Mr. Edwards: At present the vacancy rate is about 12 per cent., which has decreased from 13·6 per cent. a year ago. Most property companies in the private sector would not think that those were unreasonable figures, bearing in mind the range of premises.

Mr. Ray Powell: Does the Secretary of State recall that at Question Time on 21 October last we devoted considerable time to the Parrot Corporation and the involvement of the right hon. Gentleman? Is he now prepared to make a statement to the House about the investigations carried out by Baker? If, as we discovered last week on Westland, we must continually probe to get at the truth of this issue, will the Secretary of State accept that it is his responsibility to ensure that the Welsh Development Agency conducts its business properly? In view of all the questions that were asked, surely he should have come to the House with a statement, and not tried to hide behind a reply to a written question from his former Parliamentary Private Secretary

Mr. Edwards: As the hon. Gentleman said, I have answered the question. The proper course of events would be for the National Audit Office, and then the Public Accounts Committee, to pursue the matter if they considered that to be appropriate. There are well-known procedures for the PAC to carry out such an investigation while maintaining commercial confidentiality, which I am anxious should be maintained. We should not prejudice the police inquiries that are taking place and any actions by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The company is in production, and it is selling its products. It is manufacturing a first-class British product and I am concerned that it should go from strength to strength. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will help the company to build on the foundations that it has laid and so to provide jobs in the area in future.

Mr. Best: Does my right hon. Friend accept that factory units in north Wales need good roads to provide access? When will we have his conclusion on the report of the consulting engineers into bypasses along the A5 on Anglesey, which his office has received?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question does not relate to factory units built by the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Coleman: The building of factory units in Wales is always to be welcomed, but does the Secretary of State agree that it is time he urged upon the Cabinet a change in the Government's policy on financial intervention? Do not the redundancies declared on Friday at Metal Box at Neath underline the importance of resolving these matters?

Mr. Speaker: Again, the supplementary question does not relate to factory units built by the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman is evasive and unconvincing about the Parrot Corporation. Does he agree that there must be a full parliamentary inquiry into the scandal, perhaps by the Welsh Select Committee? We are still deeply suspicious of the alleged independence of what was an internal inquiry. The right hon. Gentleman may well be hiding behind the skirt of an insufficient inquiry. Does he understand that we require more information than has so far been given about the police investigation of the affair? If no more details are forthcoming, the House will expect to see published a full report of the investigation undertaken by Douglas Baker on behalf of the Secretary of State. Why did the right hon. Gentleman not ensure that there were adequate investment appraisal and risk analysis techniques? His limp control has dented the agency's reputation and undermined its status in the City. The right hon. Gentleman should take full responsibility for this disgraceful state of affairs.

Mr. Edwards: I hope that in his opening remarks the hon. Gentleman was not casting any doubt on the integrity and independence of a distinguished accountant who is the chairman of a major firm of accountants. Mr. Baker found that the collateralised deposit was an unusual transaction from a commercial point of view and that it could not reasonably have been anticipated by the agency. The hon. Gentleman suggests that if he had been looking after matters he would have spotted what an eminent accountant believes he himself might have failed to spot. However, I am certain that the proper way to proceed with the questions which the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) who asked the question, is not listening to my answer. Instead, he is jabbering away to his neighbour—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time is getting on.

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman wants answers to his questions, the proper way to proceed is through the Public Accounts Committee, which was established by the House. I am certain that we should all be concerned that the company, which is now in production, continues and proves to be a great success.

Delyn Enterprise Zone

7. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will agree to Delyn borough council's application to extend the Delyn enterprise zone to include No. 1 and No. 2 sites at what was formerly Courtaulds, Greenfield.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received an application from Delyn borough council for the extension of the Delyn enterprise zone to include the Courtaulds Greenfield site. I shall, of course, give very careful consideration to this, but I could not now anticipate the outcome.

Mr. Raffan: As regards the application to extend the zone, will my right hon. Friend take account of the fact that only 136 acres out of the 260 at present included in the zone are available for industrial development? Does he agree that the availability of land within the zone is crucial if the efforts now being made to rebuild Delyn's industrial base are to succeed?

Mr. Edwards: I can certainly take full account of the points that my hon. Friend has put to me. As he knows, we are honouring our commitment to support the borough council's efforts to develop the enterprise zone at Delyn and to create alternative employment opportunities there. We have announced special capital applications of £1·8 million for the continued development of the zone, and we shall be announcing urban programme allocations shortly.

Mining Industry

8. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs have been lost in the mining industry in Wales since 5 March; and how many pits have been closed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Between 5 March 1985 and 11 January 1986 the number of men on colliery books fell by 5,691. Nine pits closed, and there were two mergers.

Mr. Powell: Does the Secretary of State now accept that it was not a miners' strike, or a "Scargill strike", but that it was a miners' strike supported by miners, particularly those in my constituency, who knew that if they were not prepared to fight for their jobs they would lose them? Since they went back to work in March we have lost 5,000 jobs, 1,500 of them in my constituency. Will he now tell me that he will ensure that the National Coal Board at Cardiff will not put further pressure on those still left in my constituency at the Coedely colliery by using, as my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) said, industrial blackmail to force them to accept redundancies and closure at that colliery otherwise no investment will be put into the Cwm colliery? Will he take that matter up with the board?

Mr. Edwards: What is absolutely clear is that many of the south Wales pits have been uneconomic for a long time. As the hon. Gentleman knows, closures have continued under successive Governments. What is equally clear is that the Scargill strike, which he so strongly supported, has led to an acceleration of that programme of closures and to more job losses in the time-scale than would otherwise have taken place.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does not my right hon. Friend agree that it would be worth while for all right hon. and hon. Members to go to the Upper Waiting Hall at 4 o'clock this afternoon to see the exhibition of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? They will see there the excellent efforts made and the worthwhile results achieved, and will realise that NCB (Enterprise) is now being viewed as a most creditable achievement by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Edwards: As I have already pointed out, it is doing some valuable work—56 projects worth some £10 million, to which it has provided aid of some £1·25 million already. When I gave my earlier answer, I referred to £10 million. That is the total value of those projects. The company is also supporting enterprise agencies and helping to create 1,400 or more jobs in projects that it has already announced in Wales.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the proportion of unemployed in Wales who have been continuously unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which these figures are available, the proportion was 42·4 per cent.

Mr. Davies: Has the Secretary of State any new initiative to deal with this problem?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Member will be aware that there is a whole string of initiatives, including those concerning the community programme, where the number of places available in Wales — over 20,500 to be allocated by June this year — is more than double the total available in April last year. There are some 43,000 people currently covered by special employment and training measures in Wales, and we shall continue to press on with making a success of the wide range of measures that the Government have introduced.

Mentally Handicapped People

11. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what relationship his Department intends as between the all-Wales strategy for the development of the mentally handicapped and the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The all-Wales advisory panel has established a sub-group to study education aspects of the strategy, and education interests are represented on it. I have no doubt that, when it reports later this year, it will give further advice on the relationship between the strategy and the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is much dissatisfaction among education authorities over this matter and that there is great concern among many parents of handicapped children, who fear the end of special schools in favour of wholesale integration of such children into ordinary schools?

Mr. Robinson: I am not aware of dissatisfaction per se among the education authorities. After all, it is for them to establish their priorities. However, I am aware of certain dissatisfaction along the lines that my hon. Friend suggests, in South Glamorgan. This is a matter for parents to resolve with the education authority, but we are following the situation closely.

Hospital Provision (Mid Glamorgan)

12. **Mr. Allan Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representation he has had about hospital provision in Mid Glamorgan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The most recent representations that I have received relate to the Mid Glamorgan health authority's rationalisation proposals. These have not yet been finalised, but if they involve any permanent closures they are subject to consultation procedures and submission to my right hon. Friend. I cannot therefore comment on them at this stage.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister accept that outside all the rationalisation proposals and the fiddling of figures and formulae and so on, there is an enormous need in the south Wales valleys for investment in new hospitals, rather than that existing ones should be closed?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman is obviously not aware that we have in fact been building new hospitals.

Mr. Rogers: Where?

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bishop of Durham

20. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many staff are employed by the Church Commission in the service of the Bishop of Durham, at what cost, what is the nature of their duties; and if he will make a statement.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners (Sir William van Straubenzee): None Sir, but there are five full-time or part-time staff in the service of the Bishop of Durham. There are two secretaries, a chaplain, a chauffeur/handyman and a gardener. The cost to the commissioners is £23,405 per annum.

Mr. Greenway: I find it surprising that, in view of some of the things that the Bishop of Durham has said, he allows himself to live in a palace that has cost nearly £1 million in 10 years to maintain, and that he enjoys a staff costing some £23,000 to the commissioners and many thousands more to church people. Is it not a case of people in glass houses not throwing stones? Let him think about that.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Of course I shall think of anything that my hon. Friend says, but I have compared the staff with those of other bishops, and it is very much in line with them. We must remember that the bishop lives in a great and historic house. It costs a large sum of money to maintain, but I am confidently told that it would cause great distress in the area if the bishop were to vacate it for the time being.

Mr. Ryman: Despite the sanctimonious and sycophantic question of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that the Bishop of Durham has done a great service to the people of the north-east of England by drawing attention to the fact that, as a result of the Government's unemployment policy, unemployment in the north-east has risen by an astronomic amount, and that the general social conditions there compared with the south are deplorable? Ought not the Bishop of Durham to be congratulated on drawing attention to those matters?

Sir William van Straubenzee: Those comments only lead me to say that I hope I shall never be commended by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cormack: Are we to take it from the last remarks that the Bishop of Durham rides to hounds? Can my hon. Friend assure us that the Bishop of Durham's chaplain holds entirely orthodox beliefs?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am not responsible for the chaplain. In fact, he is no charge to the commissioners. In reply to the first part of the question, I do not know anything about the bishop's leisure time activities.

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Christians have a view on the social problems, such as unemployment, that face us, especially when they afflict communities, and that it is a Christian virtue for any bishop to stand up and comment when the Government carry out such policies?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I have always stood up for the right of bishops to express their views in whatever way they choose. The only reservation that I have had was if they appeared to be fundamentally deviating from Christian tendencies.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend tell the House whether deaconesses in the service of the Bishop of Durham are likely to see legislation during this Parliament on the matter of their ordination?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity. The House will be asked to consider a measure which concerns deaconesses. I do not expect that the House will be asked to consider it before Easter.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I agree that bishops are entitled to their views on social policy. Is my hon. Friend aware that many people in the diocese of the Bishop of Durham are apprenhensive about his theological views? As some people are now expressing anxiety that he should not confirm their candidates for confirmation, is it likely that his staff will be reduced pro rata?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I do not think the staff work on the basis of results in that way.

Sunday Trading

21. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 18 November, *Official Report*, column 14, the Church Commissioners have yet made a statement of their policy towards the proposed deregulation of Sunday trading.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners are very conscious of the view expressed by the General Synod on this issue, which has been pressed so eloquently in another place. The commissioners are drawing this view to the attention of those retail companies in which they are shareholders. They are asking those companies how they feel about the whole issue.

Mr. Bruinvels: I welcome the answer given by my hon. Friend. It is important for the Church Commissioners to declare a view, because they may be considered hypocritical, in that they have £240 million invested in shopping precincts in Gateshead, Ipswich and Glasgow and in many companies that wish to open on Sundays, such as Habitat and British Home Stores. Will my hon. Friend make it clear to the Church Commissioners that, by last week, 16,292 people had written to the Home Secretary expressing concern about Sunday trading? Only 27 of those people were in favour. Does that not show that the public do not want to go to the shops on a Sunday?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The reasons set out by my hon. Friend were some of those that moved the Church Commissioners to take the steps that I have given in my answer. It will be interesting to see what response we receive. I am aware of the immense strength of feeling on the issue. The architect of the Bill was a previous Home Secretary. I think that it was a disastrous misjudgment.

Mr. Frank Field: Would it not a matter for concern if the commissioners had a view on this subject? Do we not have a right to look to the Synod for that view, and not to the commissioners?

Sir William van Straubenzee: That is partly the reason why it is the General Synod's view that has been drawn to the attention of the various retail groups that I have described. I think that from time to time, and on appropriate occasions, the Church Commissioners are also expected to hold views on the matter of their investments, and they do.

Mr. Best: Will the Church Commissioners take into account the fact that in the mid-west of the United States of America and in Scotland, where there has been Sunday trading for a long time, people are not noticeably irreligious? Will they also take into account the fact that the churches are open on Sunday?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I think that in Scotland the situation will be dramatically different if there is no restriction of any kind in England. I do not believe that that will stop at the borders. It will go northwards in a way that people will find unpleasant.

Mr. Ryman: The hon. Member has been asked about the shares owned by the Church Commissioners. Do the Church Commissioners own any shares in Westland helicopters? Did they attend the meeting at the Albert hall recently? Which option do they prefer, if any, and which half of the Conservative Cabinet do they support?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are discussing Sunday trading, but I will allow that question because I am interested.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I hope that I am giving an accurate answer. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman. I believe that the commissioners have no shares in Westland. I am sure that if they had taken part in the meeting they would have been very prayerful before they went.

WALES

Planning Policies

14. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives his Department has taken on planning policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment have jointly taken planning policy initiatives, mainly aimed at removing unnecessary controls and improving and speeding up the operation of the planning system. In addition, the office is consulting on the draft circular on housing in Wales for senior management referred to in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 9 December.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Minister accept that the Welsh Office, under his right hon. Friend's tenure, is the most interventionist in terms of planning policy that Wales has seen since the inception of the Welsh Office, and that his

intervention amounts to interference in the opportunities that local planning authorities have to pursue planning policies and housing development related to local needs?

Mr. Robinson: I do not accept that my right hon. Friend is interventionist in his planning policies. As I am sure the hon. Member is aware, it is open to anyone who has an application turned down to appeal to the Welsh Office. The normal practice is for an inspector to be appointed to consider the case.

THE ARTS

Tax Incentives

22. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Minister for the Arts when he will be able to make a statement concerning tax incentives to benefit the arts.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Tax incentives are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This Government have already reduced rates of personal and corporate taxation and reduced the rate of capital transfer tax. The arts have benefited from these and other measures, including a reduction in the covenanting period for gifts to charities. We shall continue to look for improvements.

Mr. Proctor: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment as a Privy Councillor. Has he seen the article on page 3 of *The Times* today headed:

"Charity aid tax scheme proposed"?

Will he make strong representations to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in support of the measures set down there?

Mr. Luce: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his first remark. As to his second remark, I have, of course, seen the article in *The Times*. As he will be aware, this is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the Government have already done a great deal to encourage giving to charitable bodies. I believe that everything possible should be done to improve that still further.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind, when he talks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about those matters, that there is agreement across the Floor here, amongst all parties and throughout the arts world, that the future of our heritage in art and architecture rests upon charitable giving being made tax-deductible along the lines described in the article? Will he encourage the Chancellor to that view?

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says. Of course I want to see everything possible being done to improve encouragement for arts bodies. Much is being done. I have noted that there was a strong, unanimous report on the subject of tax incentives by a previous Select Committee that deal with these matters. I have taken note of that report.

Business Sponsorship

23. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has received about the progress of the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: All the representations that I have received recently have praised the progress of the scheme.

Mr. Chapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, generally, local authorities could do much more to promote business sponsorship of the arts in their communities? Does he further agree that many could follow the example set by Barnet and appoint an arts officer with responsibility to encourage the business sponsorship incentive scheme?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. Local authorities can do a great deal. His borough of Barnet has set a lead. I was glad to meet representatives from there, including the arts officer, and was able to congratulate them on the lead that they had taken.

Mr. Hardy: While support is always to be welcomed, does the Minister accept that in those areas where business is struggling to survive, or may have already disappeared, it will be harmful for too much to be expected? Does he agree that he needs to be careful to avoid being divisive or dangerous, in a regional sense, in that matter?

Mr. Luce: I wish to see as much support as possible for the arts in all areas. I attach great importance to all regions in this country, including the north. I have made two visits to the north-east. I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman made. It is up to businesses to decide whether they can make those contributions. They must always remember that they can offset them for tax purposes if they can be categorised as marketing and advertising.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, welcome as his support is for the business sponsorship, and much as I applaud and encourage it, the solution to the problem lies in a satisfactory answer to the first arts question on the Order Paper? Does he accept that we are glad that he referred to the Select Committee report? Has he yet made any progress in convincing the Chancellor of its merits?

Mr. Luce: I am aware of the strength of my hon. Friend's views on this subject. He played a leading part in the Select Committee which came up with views about the need for further changes. We have already made progress—my hon. Friend acknowledges that—but this is a matter principally for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The Government are, however, committed to improving incentives for giving to arts and charitable bodies.

Mr. Jessel: As this highly successful scheme is a great credit to the sponsoring firms in association with the Government and arts bodies, will the Government consider means of extending the scheme to include capital projects?

Mr. Luce: I cannot give an understanding on that, but I am glad that I have been able to increase the budget of the business sponsorship incentive scheme substantially, from £1 million this year to £1·75 million in the coming financial year. I hope that that will be a major encouragement to business to sponsor the arts even more.

South Bank

24. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has received any requests from the Arts Council for additional funding for the South Bank arts complex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council included the needs of the South Bank arts centre in its general statement of funding requirements and I took these into account in determining the figure of £25 million for post-abolition funding which I announced on 14 November 1985.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that there has been a reorganisation over at the Royal Festival hall by the South Bank board, which has resulted in the general administrator, a GLC employee on £23,000 a year, being sacked and the appointment of two general administrators and nine additional directors on salaries ranging from £22,000 to £35,000 a year? Is he further aware that blue collar workers have not been told what jobs they will have, except that 60 of them will be declared redundant? Does the Minister believe that that is how to handle the situation post-abolition? Does he agree that it is a disgraceful example of the Arts Council creating jobs for itself?

Mr. Luce: I have great confidence in the new South Bank board under the leadership of Ronnie Grierson. It is determined to make an exciting job of the future for the South Bank and I believe that there is every prospect of that happening. We are still waiting for figures of the Arts Council's allocation. It is for the board to decide what staff it should have. I ask the hon. Gentleman to remember that its responsibilities are much larger than those of the GLC until 1 April. They include the whole of the South Bank, whereas the GLC covers only three concert halls.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister remember that when the Government took the foolish and malicious decision to abolish the GLC it was on the ground that it was undemocratic and costly? The Government have now created a quango of a quango to operate the South Bank and have doubled the cost of administration alone. Does he agree that costs are escalating, that the South Bank has demanded that they be met, and that the only source of funding is the inadequate sum provided to make good the shortfall resulting from abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is ignoring the point that I have just made. The responsibilities that the South Bank board has taken on are wider than those of the GLC, which cover only three concert halls. The board, therefore, has wider responsibilities. It is determined to involve the private sector and the Government in the longer term. That provides a very good prospect.

Arts Funding

25. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his current estimate of the shortfall in arts funding for 1986-87 in the light of the abolition of the Greater London council and metropolitan counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: There should be no shortfall. I am making £25 million available to the Arts Council for post-abolition funding in 1986-87. It is reasonable that the rest of the GLC and metropolitan counties' spending should be taken up by successor authorities, which will be relieved of substantial precepts.

Mr. Freud: I am grateful for that reply. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise the extent to which uncertainty exacerbates the misery of arts establishments? Will he address his mind to the fate of the Greater London research library, which has been funded by the GLC and has two months of funding to go but still has had no statement about its future?

Mr. Luce: Of course I am aware of the problem of uncertainty, and that was why I tried to make an early announcement about central Government funding to deal with abolition problems. It is now up to successor authorities to play their part, and I am glad that Westminster borough council is setting a lead in that respect. The library is principally a matter for the Department of the Environment. I understand that the London Residuary Body is discussing with the London boroughs proposals for the continuation of a Londonwide service.

Eastern Region Arts Association

26. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Minister for the Arts what is the proposed level of funding for the Eastern region arts association for 1986-87; and what percentage change this represents since 1979.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the level of funding for individual regional arts associations. The 1986-87 funding level for Eastern Arts has not yet been announced.

Mr. Murphy: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he recognise that since this Government came to power the increase in real terms in the eastern area has been 50 per cent.? Does he agree that that gives the lie to Opposition claims about lack of commitment by this Government to the arts?

Mr. Luce: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that between 1979-80 and 1985-86 there was a real increase of over 50 per cent. in the allocation to Eastern Arts. As my hon. Friend says, that is a real demonstration of the Government's strong commitment to the arts.

Channel Tunnel

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Channel fixed link.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the President of France, meeting earlier today in Lille, announced the decision of the two Governments to take together the necessary steps to facilitate the construction of a fixed link across the Channel by the Channel Tunnel Group. Copies of the joint statement are being made available in the Vote Office.

We will publish as soon as possible a White Paper that will give the full reasons for this decision. It will also chart the next steps to give effect to that decision, the treaty, the concession agreement and the legislation.

The two Governments were faced with four proposals of outstanding quality which reflect great credit on the firms involved. It is remarkable that such keen competition could develop to provide and finance privately a project of this magnitude. The key factors that led the Government to select the Channel Tunnel Group were as follows.

Eurobridge was eliminated largely on technical grounds. It is an imaginative and forward-looking proposal, but the technical risks make it too speculative for the two Governments to believe that it was likely to be financed and successfully completed.

The choice between Channel Tunnel Group, Channel Expressway and EuroRoute was a more difficult one. They differ widely as to their technical characteristics, their impact on the environment, their effect upon shipping, and their vulnerability to terrorist attack—all factors in the decision. The invitation to promoters made it clear that any fixed link had to be financed, constructed and operated without support from public funds, and without Government guarantees against technical and commercial risks. It is thus for investors ultimately to determine whether a fixed link is built. The Governments had to try to select the scheme which offered the best prospects of attracting investors' support.

Both EuroRoute and Channel Expressway answer the popular desire to drive from one country to the other with the independence and freedom of a drive-through link, but both have large technical risks. CTG's is a well-developed project, relying on well-proven technology and is both less risky and less expensive. It offers a fast and efficient rail shuttle service for road passengers and freight, with very frequent departures and no booking. It presents no problems to maritime traffic in the Channel, and is the least vulnerable to terrorist attack. Its environmental impact can be reduced to an acceptable level. The Government concluded that CTG was the best scheme to go forward to the market.

The Government remain very much aware of the arguments that the public would like a drive-through link. In due course, the conditions may arise when a drive-through link would be viable. We have therefore secured an undertaking from the CTG that it will put forward by the year 2000 a proposal for a drive-through link to be undertaken as soon as its technical feasibility is assured, and economic circumstances and the growth of traffic allow it to be financed without undermining the return on the original link. At a later stage, the Governments will be free to invite competitive bids for a further link coming into operation not before the year 2020.

I expect the signature of the Anglo-French treaty to take place in February, and the concession agreement between the Governments and the Channel Tunnel Group to be concluded shortly thereafter. The legislation will then be introduced into this House as soon as possible. Construction could begin by summer 1987.

Consultations in Kent have so far focused on the question of which scheme the Government should adopt. We must now concentrate upon making the chosen scheme as acceptable as possible. We will want to minimise the environmental impact, and to consider carefully the employment consequences of this development. We will be sympathetic if problems seem likely to arise in east Kent when the link opens some seven years from now.

We must arrive at satisfactory arrangements with the promoters for the disposal of spoil and on other environmental matters, and we will ensure that the necessary road infrastructure is provided. The White Paper will deal with these questions.

The Channel tunnel is a massive and difficult project. It will be a challenge to our engineers, our technicians and our financial institutions. Equally, I believe that it will be of great benefit to travellers and exporters alike in giving them cheaper, quicker and more reliable access to the continent of Europe.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): In opting for the Channel Tunnel Group tender, the Government—against the instincts and prejudices of the Prime Minister—have chosen a fixed link which has the potential of matching Britain's needs for an integrated transport policy. However, in rushing this decision through in such a tight time scale, the Secretary of State has broken his promise to Parliament on 9 December that he would publish a White Paper on the same day as the decision was announced. I suspect that this will not be the last of his broken promises.

A number of questions must be answered. Exactly when will the White Paper be published? Will the Secretary of State fight in the Cabinet to get a debate in Government time before the treaty between Britain and France is signed? The right hon. Gentleman said that the White Paper would refer to the treaty and various other things. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore answer this question precisely: will he fight in the Cabinet to get a debate in Government time?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that no obstacles will be placed in the way of those most affected by the scheme and that their views will be thoroughly canvassed by the Select Committee? What guarantees can the right hon. Gentleman provide that the British share of construction costs will be spent on British goods and that British labour will be employed on the project? As we know that the French are keen to gain the maximum advantage from this fixed link and to have the maximum investment in SNCF, will the right hon. Gentleman produce an investment plan in conjunction with British Rail so that BR can maximise the opportunities which the link may offer?

Will the right hon. Gentleman do what he can to establish customs clearance facilities in major regional centres in order to encourage the carriage of long-haul freight by British Rail? Will he ensure that the terminal

points from which passengers may travel are spread throughout the regions? Will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that any public expenditure on infrastructure will be new money and will not be taken out of existing budgets?

Now that the Government have taken the decision, it is their duty to ensure that any benefits are evenly spread throughout the country. The Government have a responsibility to the nation as a whole.

Mr. Ridley: I was not clear whether the hon. Gentleman was in favour of the link. It is curious that we have had such a grudging response to this statement on the day when the Leader of the Opposition has made a speech —I saw the Tape as I came in—calling for a massive programme to reverse the decline in the British economy.

I shall publish a White Paper giving a mass of the information which the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has sought and which other hon. Members will seek. The decision was taken only a day or two ago, so it seems right that I should postpone publication until full details of the decision can be included in the White Paper. I hope that the details will be published within a week or two, or shortly thereafter.

The question of a debate is, of course, one for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to consider.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to ensure that objectors to the scheme would have an opportunity to put their views. I confirm that they will be able to present their case as petitioners before the Select Committee in this House and in another place, if the Select Committee is prepared to give them status. I shall encourage the Select Committee to be as wide as possible in accepting petitioners.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman—he might even be pleased to hear this—that I believe that a good deal has been done between the British and the French railways, and between those railways and the promotors, which will result in large-scale orders for rolling stock. I am certain that all those who are concerned on the British side will do their utmost to provide as many jobs as they can on this side of the Channel.

We hope to site national customs controls as far as possible next to each other at the entry to the link of each direction of travel so that there will not be duplication or stopping for through passengers, but there still have to be customs and immigration controls.

As to public spending on infrastructure, there will be new money, in the sense that this is a new project. However, whether or not a new link is built, there will still be a need to expand the road system to the channel ports because of the great increase in traffic that is taking place.

Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham): As one of my right hon. Friend's predecessors as Secretary of State for Transport who brought similar proposals before the House more than a decade ago, I congratulate him and welcome his conversion to the project. I express my appreciation at the success of his negotiations and promise my wholehearted support to the scheme.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for those wise words. In mitigation of what he said about me, I should point out the small difference between his attempt to get his link constructed and mine, which is that on this occasion no taxpayers' money will be involved.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): We welcome the decision that has been made today, and we are grateful for the fact that this project has been chosen and not one of the others.

The right hon. Gentleman said of the chosen scheme: "Its environmental impact can be reduced to an acceptable level." Does he agree that that can be done only if British Rail has adequate capital resources to make full use of the whole network, including the midlands, the north and Scotland? I realise that this is not in his hands, but will he try to persuade the Select Committee to hold hearings in Dover and Folkestone. This would be the right way forward, because people would be able to make their views heard.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the support that he brings on behalf of the Liberal party for the decision that we have made to choose the Channel Tunnel Group. I am sure that that will be as welcome to Liberals throughout east Kent as it is to the Government. I congratulate him on his courageous support for what he knows to be right. Massive investment will be required by British Rail. A conventional-speed train system will need about £290 million, and a high-speed train system about £390 million, and there will be futher investment in the shuttle rail equipment, which will be undertaken by the Channel Tunnel Group. Some large orders from the promotors and the railways are to come for this part of the project. It opens up great new opportunities for extending the railway system right from the north of our country into the farthest corners of Europe. I join the hon. Gentleman in hoping that the Select Committee on the hybrid Bill will be prepared to travel and hear evidence in the affected areas of Kent.

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend recognise that his statement will not allay the deep and legitimate concern in east Kent about the implications of a fixed link? Therefore, will he accept the need for close and continuing consultation with the local interests likely to be affected? Can he give the House any reassurance that there will be a proper and continuing role for the ferries and ports of Dover and Folkestone? Will he reassure the House that any extra economic activity generated by the fixed link will be retained in east Kent and not be drawn to north-west France?

Mr. Ridley: I should like to be as helpful as I can to my right hon. and learned Friend, who has done so much to represent to me the views and fears of his constituents —as has my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) who, as we all know, cannot speak for himself.

My hon. and learned Friend has made clear, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), the views and fears of constituents on the south-east coast of Kent. As a result of their representations I have decided to set up a joint committee consisting of officials, local authority representatives of the area and the promoters. It will be chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and it will go into all the points of local concern and difficulty, in the hope of improving the impact of the scheme on both the environment and the economics of the affected areas.

I cannot accurately forecast the effect on the ferries to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred.

[Mr. Ridley]

However, I believe that there will be a continuing role for them, even after the link has been opened. Dover has some of the longer distance routes, as well as short sea routes. The growth in traffic is expected to be very great, and I am sure that the ferries will have a share of it. I am also certain that many people will prefer to choose one mode of transport rather than another.

When it is opened, I believe that this huge new artery will carry an immense number of passengers as well as a vast amount of trade between the continent and this country and that it will act as a magnet for new economic development and investment. If the planning policies of the local councils are right, there will be great opportunities for additional development in the east Kent area.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that some of us view this project as simply the biggest election bribe in history? It is clear that this decision has been arrived at without due consideration of its implications for Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom and of its effect upon the merchant service. Will the right hon. Gentleman hold up this project until a commission has fully investigated all these aspects?

Mr. Ridley: The link will greatly benefit constituents throughout the country, including those in Scotland. If goods can be sent to the continent more quickly, more cheaply and without the risk of delay, and if people can travel to the continent more quickly, more cheaply and without the risk of delay, that will aid the competitiveness and trade of the whole country. These are not Government funds which could be spent in other directions. A great deal of this money will be international money. A great deal of this capital will go only to projects which are chosen internationally. It will not be possible to direct it elsewhere.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the Government have made by far the best and most sensible choice by choosing the Channel Tunnel Group's scheme from among the other fixed link options? Will he also accept that this is the only scheme that ensures that a substantial amount of the growth in traffic will still go to the ferry operators? Will he say a word about the plans for streamlining the handling of customs and immigration, in particular the possibility of on-train customs handling, since this would represent an important asset for the project?

Mr. Ridley: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. I welcome his support because he, too, studied this matter in depth when he had my responsibilities. He is correct in saying that this choice means that the opportunities for continuing the ferry operations are great indeed, although it is difficult to be specific about the precise amount.

My right hon. Friend asked about customs and immigration. We are working hard on this matter. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury is still hoping to find ways to improve this service. For many reasons, we shall need both customs and immigration. The reasons include the prevention of disease through plants and animals being carried through the link. Controls will therefore be needed.

I am anxious that a special arrangement should not be provided for the through trains which use the link which would be competitively disadvantageous for the ferries or for any other forms of transport. To concentrate both the French and the English controls at the point of departure in each direction will mean at least that passengers are stopped only once, and that control acts only once.

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): In making the decision to have a fixed link, I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on following the guidance of the Select Committee on Transport. I only wish that he had done so on the occasion of the Bill dealing with buses. The courage of the Minister has been mentioned, so I congratulate him on taking the hazardous line of disagreeing with his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her reported preference for another scheme. Will the Minister give an undertaking that when the White Paper is published he will make strong representations to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to ensure that it is debated and that a decision is taken by the House before the treaty with France is signed?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The report of the Select Committee on Transport was most helpful. I am pleased that we have been able to agree with it entirely. The hon. Gentleman did a quick and expert job, and the Government are grateful to him.

This has been a rather frustrating time for the press, because its members have been unable to discover what has been happening. Some hon. Members may have seen misleading statements in the press, which, I am happy to say, are untrue. The Government are united in their choice, and we agree with the French as well.

Debates are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, but there will be a Second Reading debate on the hybrid Bill.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his optimism about the future of the ferries is not shared by some of the ferry operators? Will he consider the matter carefully, to ensure that this decision has not sounded the death knell for the British merchant marine, which has served this country so well?

Mr. Ridley: Some ferry operators are more pessimistic than I have been this afternoon about the prospects. However, it will be seven or eight years before any link can be opened. During that time we expect a massive growth in traffic to the continent, which will result in extra business for the ferries. The extent of the business that they will retain is hard to predict, but I am not pessimistic about the prospects for my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): As the transport unions have been especially careful to offer positive co-operation, will the Secretary of State suggest to the chairman of the Channel Tunnel Group that it is unhelpful to give the impression that he would be prepared to use non-union labour on a fixed link?

Mr. Ridley: Far be it from me to make suggestions to the chairman of the Channel Tunnel Group after we have made our decision and accepted the final proposals as modified. However, there may be some disagreement about what the hon. Lady has said. The customers using the link will place great reliance upon the fact that it will not be subject to strikes and interruption. The hon. Lady's question is a strange one. To ask to ensure the possibility of unionised activity and strikes is to sound a warning note of the true face of the Labour party.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware of how bitter the opposition is in east Kent to the proposition? Is he further aware that, although I give the proposition my support on national grounds, I am sorry that I am unable to carry my constituents with me? Will my right hon. Friend offer my constituents and the environmental societies more than a hybrid Bill as a means of registering their complaints? Will he offer them consultation with officers in his Department, so that they will feel that they are being heard and that something is being done about their complaints?

Mr. Ridley: I am fully aware of the feelings in east Kent. My hon. Friend and I have visited the area and discussed the matter with local people. I share my hon. Friend's view that there is still much apprehension. In response to this, we shall undertake a major consultative programme in the area and, in addition, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will chair a co-ordinating committee of the local authorities, the promoters and the Government as problems arise. The procedures of the hybrid Bill Committee will allow almost anyone who is affected to make representations, not just to the Committee in this House but to the Committee in another place. Those are full and proper arrangements for hearing local objections, and I confirm that the Government and the promoters will do what they can to adapt the scheme to local requirements.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Secretary of State aware that many of us are resolutely opposed to a Channel fixed link, whether this project or any other, for the reason which the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged in answer to a previous question, namely, that this will suck further economic activity into the south-east of England, which is the last place in Britain that needs such stimulus? This is just another project that will widen the north-south divide, and it will be bitterly opposed, especially in Scotland.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friends who represent Kent have expressed concern about the effect on Kent, although not in the sense that it will suck jobs from Scotland into Kent. I believe that the link will create some growth in jobs. The orders that will be placed for rolling stock and other manufactures will be of great benefit to the entire country. The fact that Scottish exports will be able to reach the continent more cheaply and more quickly should be recognised as a help to the competitiveness of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents and, therefore, to their advantage.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. Friend conduct careful consultations about conservation before producing a White Paper? Will he have discussions with the Nature Conservancy Council, which is the Government's adviser, and which wishes to put strong points to him?

Mr. Ridley: We are always keen to take what action we can to assist in improving arrangements for conservation. My hon. Friend will know that geography dictates where the tunnel will come out and where the service area will have to be. It would be difficult to change that now.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Secretary of State aware that I and the majority of my constituents completely oppose the building of the fixed link? We live in an area of high unemployment, and we cannot understand why the Government can encourage the expenditure of billions of pounds on building a hole in the ground, instead of encouraging such expenditure on building structures above the ground. The construction of new schools, houses and hospitals would reduce unemployment in my area. This project will increase unemployment there.

Mr. Ridley: This is not Government cash which could be used to build schools, hospitals or other structures in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It is international capital, which will go to projects only where investors believe they can earn a reward. It is far better that that capital should be used to build a Channel link than to build factories on the continent, which might make the competitiveness of the hon. Gentleman's constituents even worse. I repeat that a most useful benefit to the north of England and Scotland will be the fact that goods will be transported more cheaply to their markets. Transport is an important factor in industrial costs, and anything that we can do to reduce transport costs will help industry.

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great opportunities that will be created for new employment in Kent, despite fears of early local unemployment on the ferries and elsewhere? Will he encourage Kent county council and the district authorities to grant planning permission, so that Kent may grow, with great prospects for our people? In north Kent unemployment is as high as it is anywhere in the country.

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is great potential for further development arising from the link. However, such development must depend on the planning policies pursued by district councils. I have been in close touch with the chairman of Kent county council, who came to Lille with me early this morning. We have throughout discussed the problems and opportunities which the link presents. I undertake to keep in close touch with the Kent local authorities to ensure that every opportunity is taken to help.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Given the considerable public interest in having a drive-through link in addition to the rail tunnel, does the Secretary of State accept that the year 2000 seems a long way off? What steps will he take to encourage the CTG to tackle the technical problems involved well before that deadline, and how firmly committed are the French Government to the concept of a drive-through link at a future date?

Mr. Ridley: Both Governments would have liked to see a drive-through link, but the problems are fairly formidable, in the sense of a 5 or 6-kilometre stretch near the French coast where the strata are difficult and unknown. It will be of great assistance to drive the bored tunnels of the CTG through those strata, when more information about the possibility of a bigger tunnel for a drive-through link can be gathered. There was always doubt about the ventilation system proposed by Channel Expressway. With further advances in that technology, and with the greater geological information that we hope to obtain, it may be possible to drive a bigger tunnel through at a later stage. The CTG's undertaking, which will be spelt out and put into the White Paper, makes it possible to do that fairly soon, or, in default of that, for a further invitation to be made to promoters so that a drive-through link would come into existence by the year 2,020.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must bear in mind that we have an important debate after this. I know that this is an important matter, but many hon. Members who are now rising also wish to take part in the subsequent debate. Therefore, I shall allow questions to continue for a further 15 minutes. However, I ask for brief questions, because that will probably lead to briefer answers.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As a non-interventionist Minister, can my right hon. Friend explain why all his busy intervening in the past few days has not achieved the winner for which he and the Government were pressing last week, and instead has resulted in what many hon. Members see as game, set and match to the French? Moreover, in view of the widespread misgivings in all parts of the House about the project does he understand that his Bill now faces a grim uphill struggle through the House, and that Parliament will do the job which, because of the timetable, the Government have not yet been able to do, which is to scrutinise the project thoroughly and defend Britain's and the public interest?

Mr. Ridley: I assure my hon. Friend that negotiations with the French were at times quite hard. We achieved what we wanted on a number of matters, particularly in the area of railway finances and railway deals, and in respect of the many matters which will be the subject of the treaty and the concession agreement. I can further assure him that everything that he has read in the newspapers is not accurate; that, although we finally agree, there was a good deal of argument with the French, and that the British Cabinet has achieved its preferred objective, which is the Channel Tunnel Group scheme.

Regarding the time scale, it will take more than a year for the hybrid Bill to pass through both Houses of Parliament, and it will be possible to carry it over at the end of the Session, so ample time will be available. It will be up to hon. Members who sit on the Select Committee, and noble Lords, to ensure that all these matters are fully considered and explored in depth. That is the right time to carry out such an in-depth exploration, because we could not possibly have done that with three or four schemes.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If this project, which the Minister has welcomed so enthusiastically today, is to bring fresh employment and renew our economy, it no doubt had a high priority on the list before any prudent Government. Now that the Government's responsibility for financing the project has been taken over by private captial—we hope entirely—may we assume that that has freed a considerable sum which can be used to finance projects in regions which are at present hard hit, for example the through-Manchester rail link, or even the retention of the Oldham-Rochdale rail link?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman makes a mistake which is typical of the Socialist party, in that he does not understand the difference between Government money and other people's money.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Will my right hon. Friend be as forthcoming as possible about the independent advice that he has received, and in particular give us maximum information about the environmental impact study, which is extremely important to Kent?

Mr. Ridley: The environmental impact study will be published with the White Paper. I agree that it is extremely important, and we want to give the maximum amount of information we can, together with the other matters dealt with in the White Paper.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): What on earth has possessed the Government to recommend that this expensive, unnecessary and vulnerable project should go ahead, except as a stunt for electoral considerations on both sides of the Channel, without even a public inquiry into the profound environmental effects and the damaging implications for the regions?

Mr. Ridley: The Government have been persuaded to go ahead because there appears to be a strong desire for better communication links with the continent. It would be a foolish Government who sought to frustrate that when the link does not cost any public money. For a whole day on a motion from the Opposition Front Bench the House debated whether there should be a public inquiry, and it decisively rejected the idea, in my opinion, rightly.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am thankful for the fact that a scheme has been chosen which will have the least short-term bad effect on north-east Kent, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for recognising the need for Thanet to be able to compete on equal terms for cross-Channel traffic. Therefore, I am particularly grateful for his undertaking that, given the consent of Kent county council, he will commence immediately the trunking of Thanet Way. Since his visit to Thanet in December, what further consideration has he given to the communication links between Thanet and the Channel tunnel, so that Thanet and the whole of north-east Kent may benefit, as he suggests, from such a venture?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he says, but both Thanet Way and the other routes to which he referred are in the main local, not national, roads. If Kent county council puts forward any of the schemes for priority treatment, we shall do our best to assist under the TSG allocation, but the council must suggest the priorities. My hon. Friend went so far as to suggest trunking Thanet Way. I promised to look into that, and I cannot yet give him a definite answer.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that this is another example of Common Market madness, and that all the talk about jobs for people making the products needed for the Channel tunnel is similar to what we were told by his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when the Tory party was dragging Britain into the Common Market without a vote? Why have the Government come up with this without a mandate from the British people? It is a stab in the back for the north, the midlands, Scotland and Wales, as opposed to the few down in the golden triangle. Why does the Minister not give all the hon. Members who dragged Britain into the Common Market a shovel and let them build the tunnel? We shall never get one then.

Mr. Ridley: It is interesting that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is the first hon. Member to mention the Common Market this afternoon. As far as I am concerned, the agreement is an Anglo-French agreement resulting in an Anglo-French treaty to facilitate Anglo-French trade. The vote on this matter in the House in December seemed to be a good mandate for proceeding.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that while in the medium and long-term the economy of Kent may benefit from the project, in the short-term places like the Medway towns may find that their already inadequate road systems are grossly overloaded by any additional prosperity coming into the area? Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will give sympathetic consideration to proposals to improve the road structure in that area?

Mr. Ridley: During the next eight years there will not only be many people employed in constructing the link, but there will be an increase in ferry traffic. In the next eight years, direct employment will continue to improve. I note what my hon. Friend said about roads, and I have made it clear that the Government will be sympathetic and assist with road programmes in Kent which are affected by any fixed link. As projects come forward, they can be considered by the committee to which I have referred. The Government will do all that they can to assist any untoward effects that the link might have upon transport in Kent.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is it not a constitutional outrage that a project of this size and importance should be lumbered on the country following consultation in a Cabinet committee and a Cabinet meeting, when the building of a power station can call for a public inquiry lasting three years or more? Is that not scandalous. The Minister lectures my hon. Friends about Socialists not understanding the difference between public money and other people's money, but he does not seem to understand that the enormous cost of the project will be met out of national resources. I can think of 1,001 better ways of using national resources in my neck of the woods, rather than using them in south-east England.

Mr. Ridley: What is an outrage is to take 10, 20 or sometimes 30 years to make up our minds about major infrastructure projects when other countries can do that in a matter of months. If we are serious about development and jobs, we should of course consider environmental, wildlife and employment aspects, but we ought to be able to do that more quickly than we do. If we really want to see the employment that should arise from the link, we must take action within a reasonable time scale.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in principle and specifically, I welcome the historic decision revealed today? I also welcome the rapidity with which the decision was reached. Nevertheless, is my right hon. Friend aware that, while welcoming the commitments that he has given today, the House will continue to press him and succeeding Governments on two points that he has made? I am referring, first, to the consultation arrangements to take into account the real concerns of people throughout Kent; and, secondly, the commitment by the Government and the promoters that the project will not require public money, now or in the future.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. It has been suggested that the Government have taken this decision with undue rapidity and that we have been rushed. I assure my hon. Friend that in delivering the decision today, 20 January, as promised, we have not been unduly rushed and that we did not need more time to come to a decision. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of consultation with Kent and, as I have said to several of my hon. Friends, the Government intend to pursue that vigorously. I give a categorical undertaking that, apart from the improvement of road and rail infrastructure, no public funds will be made available for the project.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Secretary of State does not want to be aware of how offensive the project will be to everywhere north of Watford, as he did not mention the unemployment consequences there. Can he tell the House specifically how many jobs will be lost in the northern regions of England, in Wales and Scotland? Can he also tell the House whether the moneys that British Rail will spend, will be spent in two regions, in the south-east, and in the rest of the country?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman seems to have misunderstood. The vast majority of the investment, both by British Rail, which will be in rolling stock, and by the promoters, which will be in rolling stock for the shuttle service, will provide work for railway workshops and such installations. That work should find its way to many factories in towns and cities in the north of England. It is astonishing that instead of welcoming that the Opposition do not seem even to have understood it.

The hon. Gentleman should withdraw the word "offensive" from his remarks. If providing jobs from the private sector by massive orders of this kind is described as offensive, the hon. Gentleman's claim to be concerned about unemployment in the north is hypocritical.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why is my right hon. Friend so optimistic about an undersea rail tunnel when the only comparable tunnel in the world, just completed in Japan, has been a total and complete financial disaster? Can he at least assure the House that the prospectus issued to investors will make it abundantly clear that if the money runs out before the tunnel is completed their money will be lost and no Government funds wil be made available to complete the project?

Mr. Ridley: There is a difference between the Channel fixed link and the tunnel in Japan, in that the tunnel under discussion will go from Britain to the continent of Europe, while the tunnel to which my hon. Friend referred goes from Japan to the north island off the coast of Japan, where very few people live. I believe that there are many people living on the continent of Europe. I repeat the assurance that I gave in my previous reply. No public money will be made available to rescue the project if it gets into financial difficulties.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Secretary of State not understand that a good many people living north of Watford do not see any long-term benefits flowing to them from Maggie's monument? Does he not understand that that results from the fact that the project has been steamrollered through in the interests of a tiny group of people who will make a lot of money? Does he not understand that as the Government have refused a public inquiry, and have failed to give any guarantees about British orders or British jobs, there is no more faith in the project than there is in the Government's position over Westland?

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman is correct and a small number of people will make a lot of money from the project, they will make that money out of people coming from the whole of the United Kingdom to use the link,

[Mr. Ridley]

either to send their goods through by rail or to travel themselves. The money will come from his constituents and from constituents in the north of England and Scotland, who voluntarily and willingly decide to spend money on the link because they believe it to be to their advantage to do so. If the hon. Gentleman does not have the good grace to tell his constituents that the project is something that will benefit them, his constituents will find that out for themselves and his advocacy will thereby be devalued.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order, In view of the interest shown, I shall allow an extra five minutes, but only five minutes.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members give a wholehearted welcome to his courageous decision today? Will he confirm that the decision that he has announced offers the greatest possible benefit to those carrying freignt across the Channel and offers the greatest possible benefit to the regions of any of the proposed schemes. Therefore, in his discussions with British Rail about investment, will my right hon. Friend give the maximum time possible to the proposition that the more investment British Rail can place in its regional facilities, the more that will benefit the nation?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments, but I am still waiting to hear whether his co-chairman of the all party Channel tunnel group, the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), agrees that this is one of the best decisions that could have been taken and that he entirely supports it, as my hon. Friend the co-chairman of the group has so rightly done. However, answer comes there none.

It will be a massive opportunity for railways on the direct London-Paris link, and there will be opportunities to travel from further afield to the link, to cross the Channel by means of the link and to go further into Europe. The project will open up a new opportunity for the railways, and I hope that they will take it. We have demonstrated that our attitude to railway investment, provided that it is commercial, is not to stint it. I think that the railways will confirm that they have not been held back by a lack of funds and that they will be able to make a worthwhile investment.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are many of us who believe that he has made the right decision, but who are worried and apprehensive that the eventual benefits to accrue will not find their way to Wales, Scotland and the north of England? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the existing track in the south-east of England will not be sufficient to cater for the Channel traffic and the London traffic, and that cross-London links are inadequate? Can he give the House a guarantee that British Rail will be able to do a proper job and provide first-class capacity in the south-east and through London to connect the tunnel to the north of England? Will he assure us that the money will not be made available at the expense of other works that British Rail should be undertaking?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman takes a reasonable and sensible attitude to the project, which represents a major opening of opportunities for railways. There is nothing to stop through trains from travelling to the link from all parts of the country. The necessary connections can be made where they do not currently exist. These developments will be of benefit to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and to others from the north and west of England and from Wales and Scotland. It is not planned to increase the standard of the track that runs from Folkestone to London to enable it to take very high speed trains. Such work would cause major disruption and would inflict immense damage on the environment. We have made it clear that that will not happen.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I apologise to my right hon. Friend for missing the first few minutes of his statement. I congratulate him on taking a historic decision. I regret that the technical ability to construct a road link is not presently available, but my constituents will welcome the fillip to employment that the project will produce in north-west Kent. However, they will continue to be mindful of the environmental problems that may accrue with the link, especially with the link to the north through the Dartford tunnel, which will have an effect on the whole of north-west Kent.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I note carefully what he has said. I hope that we may keep closely in touch with opinion throughout Kent. I am sure that the promoters will want to do so. We shall do all that we can to help meet any problems that are created by the opening of the link.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Secretary of State has referred to the potential for railway development. Does he realise that that will go down very well in Rotherham, where the works producing products for the railway and the ring road were planned for closure last week? His remarks will go down very well also in the light of the thousands of jobs that have been lost in railway workshops during the Government's lifetime. Does he accept that the principal difference between France and Britain is that the land in France that will be adjacent to the tunnel is the area of France that is most in need of development, while the area of Britain that will be immediately adjacent to the tunnel is the one that is least in need of development? The link could scarcely be sited further away from our areas of immense and growing unemployment.

Mr. Ridley: I think that the hon. Gentleman says that, fully believing it to be true. Many of my hon. Friends, especially those from north-east Kent, have said that they, too, have high levels of unemployment in their constituencies.

Mr. Hardy: Rubbish.

Mr. Ridley: These levels are often higher than those in constituencies represented by Labour Members. It is right to consider unemployment levels in a non-partisan way. If the construction of the link brings extra jobs to any part of the kingdom, I think that we must all be pleased.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the nervousness of many of us stems from the Government's well-known reluctance to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on essential infrastructure in the cities? It seems that there is a great willingness now to spend many hundreds of millions of pounds on ruining that which already exists, and thereafter to spend on what will be

called restructuring. Will he accept that many of us will take it very much amiss if the moneys that are spent on the link come from the hard-pressed cities, which need the moneys to put right what is wrong already?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend must know that the Government have a responsibility to build roads wherever there is need for them and to improve roads that are overladen. We shall have to improve the roads to the Channel ports, irrespective of whether the link is built, because the amount of traffic using them is increasing quickly. The House will be aware that we have built roads to the east cost and south-coast ports, in Glasgow and in the north-east. Currently, and to a large extent, we are constructing roads on Merseyside and in the north-west. We build roads wherever they are needed. We may have to build roads in slightly different places and rather more quickly because of the opening of the fixed link. However, that does not mean that special favours have been given. I am sure my hon. Friend will acknowledge that it is not possible to draw an analogy between that matter and what may or may not be desirable for the inner cities.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Can the Secretary of State assure the House that the White Paper will provide a detailed assessment of the net effect on jobs of the fixed link project? Will it set out the Government's view of the number of jobs that will be won or lost during its construction and during the operation of the tunnel in each of the affected industries, especially the maritime industries, and in the various regions of the United Kingdom that will be concerned? Will he provide assurances to the House and to British Rail that British Rail's external financing limit will not be allowed to put any constraint on BR's investment in the Channel project?

What effect does the right hon. Gentleman expect his decision to have on the supposed and forthcoming closure of the Swindon railway works, and on the compulsory redundancies at the Glasgow railway works? If the project is to bring benefits to the engineering sector of British Rail, there should be reprieves for the works that are threatened with closure.

I move on to environmental considerations and urge the Secretary of State to keep the Cheriton terminal as small as possible, so as to reduce the environmental impact on the south of England.

As for industrial relations, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the chairman of the Channel Tunnel Group that the recruitment of non-union labour is no guarantee of long-term industrial peace, as any sensible manager in industry will be the first to tell him?

Finally, the Secretary of State asked me about my own attitude to the project. I have always supported the idea of a railway fixed link with the Channel. I voted against the previous Labour Government's cancellation of the project in 1975. I should like to know more about the right hon. Gentleman's attitude towards the four schemes that were submitted. It is fairly well known that he denounced all of them as madness. He said what we heard him say this afternoon because he was told to do so by the Prime Minister. Compared with him, the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is a model of courage and consistency.

Mr. Ridley: If that was support and a welcome, I have never known a better disguise. I have always voted against Channel tunnels which have had to be financed out of taxpayers' money. We now have a private sector project, and that is a valid difference. I support it, and I have done so since the beginning of the scheme. We shall publish in the White Paper all the information that we can on the job consequences of the link both before and after it opens.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the confidence that he places in the Government. The bulk of the expenditure on investment by British Rail will take place in about 1989, 1990 and 1991, and I have already approved that investment in principle. It will not be cut by the EFL. The hon. Gentleman's confidence that I shall be presiding over that investment as well as the EFL in 1990 is something that gives me great pleasure. I am always grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the kind and generous way in which he treats me.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, Swindon and Glasgow workshops are maintenance establishments and would not be relevant to the type of new build that will be necessary for the project. Everything possible will be done with the promoters and local authorities to contain the effects of the terminal at Cheriton to the minimum and to that which is most acceptable to the residents.

The hon. Gentleman ended on the same sour note as his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I never knew that they got on so well together in these matters. He insisted that there should be trade union participation in the shuttle train operation. This is a matter for the promoters to decide, and they will doubtless want to make sure that they can provide the maximum of continuity of service. It would be wrong for me or for the hon. Gentleman to invervene in such a matter.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. About this North sea bubble, when the right hon. Gentleman refers to the benefits to Anglo-French trade——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called the hon. Gentleman to put a question to the Secretary of State. It sounds as though he is putting another one.

Mr. Faulds: The terminology is incorrect. When the Minister refers to the advantages to Anglo-French trade, is he being specific about the benefits to England——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order is addressed to me, and the hon. Gentleman is now addressing his comments to the Secretary of State. If the hon. Gentleman will address his point of order to me, I will see what I can do to help him.

Mr. Faulds: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is time that we in the House clarified our terminology in describing the whole of this island. In describing the benefits of this scheme as being to England——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is drawing me into country into which I should not be tempted to go.

Westland plc

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order. Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that we have been told that certain documents are not to be made available to the Select Committees on Defence and Trade and Industry, I would like to raise a point of order following upon your ruling in column 1211 of the *Official Report* of 16 January when, following a point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), in which he referred to quotes from official documents and the need for those documents to be placed in the Library, you said in your ruling:

"I do not think that there was a quotation from a document."

You then went on to say in the same column:

"that if Ministers quote from an official document, as opposed to paraphrasing an official document, it is our rule that that official document should be laid."

You did not include letters and memoranda. In column 1212, the Prime Minister, in an intervention, said:

"The first thing is, therefore, to check *Hansard* to see whether what was said was given as a direct quote from the document. That is the first thing that we must find out. What follows from that is a matter for the House, not for me."

In cloumn 1214, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said:

"Since a reading of that column nowhere suggests that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was quoting from any document other than the notes of his speech, this is not a matter that should detain us any longer." —[*Official Report*, 16 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 1211-1214.]

You concurred with that view, Mr. Speaker.

The quotation that was being examined is to be found in column 1167 of 15 January. It reads:

"At that meeting, Sir John Cuckney referred to what he described as the Government's preference for a European minority shareholder in Westland. I said that a European minority shareholder was in both the commercial and political interests of the Government."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 1167.]

That is a quote by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Parts of that statement are from the official document. They are drawn from a letter, which is precluded under the arrangements as outlined in "Erskine May", but equally from a minute. That minute exists. It is known to Members of the House. I quote from that minute where it meets exactly the words as spoken by the Secretary of State. The words are:

"The Government's preference for a European minority shareholder in Westland",

and, secondly,

"a European minority shareholder was in both the commercial and political interests of the Government".

Those are direct quotes.

I have consulted my hon. Friends, Mr. Speaker, and during the course of the speech by the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Secretary of State he actually referred to documents which were before him. It was clear that he was quoting. It may be that in the *Official Report* it was not printed as a quote, but it was a quote. It may be that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry sought not to represent what he was saying as a quote, but it was a quote.

In so far as it was a quote——

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member come to his point of order, because 33 right hon. and hon. Gentlemen are anxious to get on to the next debate?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sure that the House will bear with me. It is a point of order about a matter of great public controversy.

My point of order is simply to establish whether, in the light of what I said, and in so far as the Minister was not paraphrasing, as you suggested to the House that he might be, in so far as he was quoting directly, you would now intervene, Mr. Speaker, and make a ruling as to whether that document should be laid on the Table, as is required in our manual on procedure? This is referred to specifically on page 433 of "Erskine May", where it says:

"A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a dispatch or other state paper not before the House unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table. Similarly, it has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interests. A Minister who summarises a correspondence"—

which was not being done in this case; it was being referred to specifically—

"but does not actually quote from it, is not bound to lay it upon the Table. The rule for the laying of cited documents does not apply to private letters or memoranda."

We are referring here to a minute, Mr. Speaker, and I put it to you that you might care, following the fullest consideration, to rule.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the end, it is a matter of interpretation. Is it not right that during the debate to which the hon. Member referred no one from the Labour Benches rose to assert that a direct quotation was being made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I did.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If a Minister makes a short statement of Government policy, obviously, from time to time and coincidentally, that statement can be found in confidential documents. What the hon. Gentleman is saying is that every document, every secure, confidential Cabinet document should be placed before the House. That is manifest nonsense.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You heard what the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) had to say about no one from the Labour Benches rising to challenge the Secretary of State at the time that he was reading from those documents. That statement is not correct because, at the time that the Secretary of State was making that statement, there were several of us—and I was sitting about four places below—shouting from our seats and standing up, calling to the Secretary of State that he was reading. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was also on his feet, making the same point. "Lay it on the Table" is what we were saying. I think that it would be sensible, Mr. Speaker, for you as Speaker to look into the request made by my hon. Friend so that we can make absolutely sure that the matter is dealt with properly.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The panic on the Government Benches certainly seems to justify the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has raised. It has been referred to previously in the House, and several Members have asserted that they actually saw the Minister reading from a document.

Clearly, we do not want to prejudge the issue. Can we ask you, Sir, to ask for sight of that document and to look at it in that light? If not, Sir, you will have to tell us how we judge whether something is a quote. If a Minister happens to bring a document, as is suggested, to the Dispatch Box, reads a piece of it and does not submit it to *Hansard* when he gives his speech notes, as is normal, this is a way of evading the controls that "Erskine May" envisaged. I ask you to take this away, not to give a judgment immediately, but to come back and give us a ruling on whether it was a quotation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair must interpret the rules and the rules, as set out in "Erskine May", have been fairly and fully quoted by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). If the Minister was quoting from a document, it is his duty to lay it. I shall look at *Hansard*, but I have no means of interpreting what was in the Minister's mind and whether he was or was not quoting. That is a matter for him. I am concerned only about the rules of the House and I shall faithfully follow them.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Importation of Live Fish of the Salmon Family Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Rate Support Grant (England)

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) that I am not able to select his amendments.

4.40 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 140), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

This afternoon we shall be considering the three rate support grant reports which I laid before the House on 18 December. Before I describe them in detail, I should like briefly to remind the House of where we stand on local authority spending.

This year local authority current spending amounts to about a quarter of all public spending and it is for that reason that the Government seek to influence it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear the Secretary of State say whether he was taking the three reports together.

Mr. Baker: Yes, I would ask for the House to take them all together. The other two motions are:

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 2) 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 587), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 138), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: It seems that the right hon. Gentleman has the leave of the House to do so.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do not want three debates like this.

Current spending by local authorities for which they get grant has grown by about 4·5 per cent. in real terms since 1981. This means that local authority spending is growing at about 1 per cent. a year above the rate of inflation, despite all our efforts to encourage restraint. We have had some success. In the present financial year there has been no real increase at all. This is an improvement on the 1960s and the 1970s when councils were spending at about 5 per cent. more in real terms each year than the rate of inflation. That was when Tony Crosland went to Manchester city hall and made his famous speech about the party being over. But the party did continue in full swing and it was not until 1979 that one began to see a significant downturn.

I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree that we should continue our policy of expenditure constraint. But I do accept how strongly some shire counties have felt that they have more than played their part, and some indeed have. I must tell the House that on average since 1978-79 shire counties have increased spending by nearly 5 per cent. in real terms and only seven counties have cut their current spending over this period.

Having said that, in no way do I want to denigrate the work that the shires do. They have done much better than many of the high-spending Labour-controlled authorities. Indeed, so great has been the extravagance of those that we have had to introduce rate capping to curb their expenditure. The sort of levels of expenditure that one has been seeing among those authorities is: Wolverhampton, up 8 per cent. in real terms since 1979; Kirklees up 11 per cent.; Sheffield up 14 per cent.; and Hackney, at the top of this unenviable league, up 46 per cent. We have had to

[Mr. Baker]

introduce rate capping to restrain the expenditure of Hackney and many other central London high-spending Labour authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: Not just yet.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Would my right hon. Friend care to make an amendment to the public expenditure White Paper which has just been published and which shows that, so far from the increase in expenditure for the shire counties being 5 per cent., as he mentioned, the figure appears to be 1·5 per cent., 9 per cent. for metropolitan areas and 13 per cent. in London? Disregarding that point, will he now make an exception for those shire counties that have consistently spent less than their grant-related expenditure and allow them at least the progression that has been accorded to them in each of the past two years?

Mr. Baker: May I answer that point, which is known as the GREA exemption proposition, in a moment, when I have cleared up the other two reports? I agree that that is central to the point and I am aware that many of my hon. Friends feel that local authorities should be allowed to spend up to GREA without loss of grant.

First, may I deal with the two subordinate reports before dealing with 1986-87? The first is the third supplementary report for last year, 1984-85. That adjusts block grant for 1984-85 in the light of the latest information about authorities' expenditure. The other report is the second supplementary report for the current year, which takes account of late budget data received after the first report which was laid last July. The very fact that, in these two subordinate reports of the reports relating to this year and last year, the grants of local authorities are being changed as the year is progressing, or in the case of last year, when the year is over, shows how deeply unsatisfactory the system is. No treasurer either this year or last year has been able to know the exact amount of grant that his authority is likely to get.—*[Interruption.]* I shall be bringing forward proposals in the Green Paper next week which will change that.

Let me make a technical point which is important because two local authorities—one has just sent me a telex which I received on coming into the House—have submitted revised budget information for 1985-86, too late to be taken into account for this report. I shall, of course, be making further supplementary reports in the current year so that the authorities need be in no doubt that their revised spending will be reflected in their final grant entitlements for the current year. However, the figures in the second supplementary report have been used as the basis for caps and nets on grant changes in the 1986-87 report. I do not at present propose to redetermine the caps and nets in the light of late information about spending in 1985-86.

The main issue before us is the report for 1986-87.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I want to deal with this and then reply to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern).

The first point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that the amount of grant which the Exchequer, and that means the taxpayer, will pay to local authorities next year is £11·8 billion. This is the same figure as we announced a year ago for the current year. It is, however, about £400 million more than we actually expect to pay out this year because of penalty holdback and I want to come to that later in my speech as it is of material concern. This means that next year the Exchequer will be funding about 46½ per cent. of local spending. Local authorities have known this since my predecessor's announcement in July. Also in July my right hon. Friend announced that we were providing for £22¼ billion of local authority spending next year. This is nearly £1 billion more than was provided for the current year.

Those are substantial increases and at the time the local authority associations protested. They wanted on top of that a further £1¼ billion. But the Government could not agree to that substantial increase and I do recognise—this is at the core of many of the problems affecting the shire counties represented by my hon. Friends—that the figure announced last July does imply real term cuts in this year's budgets.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: No. I want to come to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: What about the fall in the Exchequer grant from 61 per cent. to 46 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend asks in parenthesis about the fall in the Exchequer grant from 61 per cent. to 46 per cent. We have made it clear that we have followed that policy because we have wanted to reduce the Exchequer support to local government in an attempt to improve local accountability. My hon. Friend has a distinguished career in local government and we are agreed that local government in Britain would be much enhanced, without a shadow of doubt, if one could improve local accountability and reduce controls from the centre.

I come now to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham about the GREA exemption. I remind the House that local authorities knew when my predecessor made those announcements in the summer that the Government were not prepared to underwrite expenditure of that level. I am sorry to say that many local authorities appear to be ignoring the advice about budgeting which my predecessor issued and largely as a result of that they are now facing substantial rate increases.

I must say in defence of the Government's policy that we should not be blamed for that. Take, for example, wage settlements. I have seen several delegations in the past fortnight with county treasurers, county councillors, district councillors and their Members of Parliament. So have many of my ministerial colleagues. Many of the delegations have said that it was all very well for the Government, in the summer of 1985, to say that we were only prepared to fund a 3·5 per cent. increase in expenditure but many of them are having to bear high wage bills this year of 7 or 8 per cent. I have had to say to them that when, for example, the negotiators who were discussing the manual workers' wage claim just before Christmas in October and November said that they would offer 8·2 per cent., I said to the negotiators—which is a

mixed team from all parties—that if the offer was made and settled they should not come to me at the end of the day and ask central Government to make up the difference between 3·5 per cent. and 8·2 per cent. If local government agrees to an inflationary wage settlement of 8·2 per cent. it must be up to local government to pick up the difference. In reply to that they said that it would not be an inflationary wage settlement. They said they would make offsets and savings. I thought that that was callous because, in effect, they were saying that they would lay people off and their wage bill at the end of the day would be no more than the 3·5 per cent. suggested by the Government although they would actually be paying 8·2 per cent. I have had to say to the treasurers and the various delegations that I have seen during the week that if they are building wage settlements of that level into their budget forecasts the Government will never find that extra amount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am anxious to hear every word of the speech and I would be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would address the Chair more directly and not turn his back on it.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): He is worried about his back.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for allowing me to intervene, particularly as my question is on the matter of wage settlements. Is it not the case that the report before the House does not enable local authorities to receive sufficient money even to accommodate the wage offer that has been made to teachers, which the Secretary of State for Education and Science has approved? If there is an even higher supplement, does that not mean that the gap between what the local authorities can pay and what the Government are offering will be even larger?

Mr. Baker: I have a comment, which I was going to make later, but I shall make it now if the hon. Gentleman wishes to know the exact position on teachers' salaries.

Some more grant will be available next year for education authorities for lunchtime supervision. I made that point to several of the delegations that I saw. I notice that some of them had anticipated that and some had not. In addition, if the local authority employers can negotiate a satisfactory agreement with teachers on duties and salary structures, we would make block grant available to help finance another £150 million worth of expenditure in 1986-87 on teachers' pay in England. Clearly, that additional provision would have consequences for education GREAs, which I am sure the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) appreciates. Our present thinking is that the education GREA totals would be increased by the £150 million rise in provision in 1986-87. With an overall percentage of grant of 46·4 per cent., that would attract an additional £70 million to education authorities in grant, not at the expense of non-education authorities. That depends on my right hon. Friend's conditions about agreement on duties and salary structures being met. The longer such agreement is delayed, the more difficult it will be to make the necessary adjustments in local government finance in 1986-87.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I understand the answer that my right hon. Friend has just given. He does not fully deal with the main point that the current offer of around 6·9 per cent. has to be financed out of a settlement that implies a decrease in spending of 3·5 per cent. I do not see how that can be done. It seems to me that the basic assumption that the increase in local government spending will be 3·5 per cent. is simply unrealistic.

Mr. Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made clear in the various negotiations on wage settlements for the current year that there is no extra money on the table. In my talks with delegations, treasurers have told me that they have taken this into account in their forecasts. I hope that what I have just said suggests that there is a possibility that they will have a further flow of grant in the next year, 1986-87, to meet the extra wage costs.

The most important feature of the settlement next year is that we have got rid of targets. That decision has been commended by the Public Accounts Committee in its valuable report published last week. I believe that Members on both sides of the House welcome the abandonment of targets and penalties. I was repeatedly pressed by all authorities, not just the shire counties, to do that. However, I accept that some authorities are disappointed that we have retained strong pressures for restraining expenditure through the new slope schedule that we have introduced. Some of my hon. Friends have made that point to me.

Those slopes mean that as authorities spend more they get less grant. Even those authorities spending below GREA, which is the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham, will lose grant if they increase their spending. The possibility of granting what is called the GREA exemption was put to me earlier in the debate. That would mean allowing authorities to spend up to GREA without incurring any further penalties. I asked my officials to calculate the increase in public expenditure if that were extended to all authorities spending below GREA. I have been told that the increase in public expenditure would be an additional £1·1 billion. If that exemption were granted, they would certainly spend up to GREA. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham that I understand the case he is making for West Sussex.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh) *(rose)*——

Mr. Baker: Please allow me to deal with one matter at a time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham is quite right to say that West Sussex is the lowest spending of all the shire counties. If there is to be a GREA exemption the national consequences for all authorities would be an extra increase in public expenditure of £1·1 billion. I can think of few Conservative Members who have been so resolute in supporting the Government's overall economic strategy that is based upon the containment of public expenditure.

Sir David Price: What is the point of GREA in the circumstances explained by my right hon. Friend? Why have it at all? I thought that it was expenditure up to statutory responsibility as determined by the Department.

Mr. Baker: The GRE assessment of needs is not a target in that sense. The authorities below GREA are better off on the new system than on the old system of targets and penalties. The loss that West Sussex would suffer for every extra pound that it spent above target this year would be £3.10. However, under the new slope it will sacrifice only

[Mr. Baker]

74p. That means that it can move towards GREA with considerably less penalty loss of grant next year than in 1985-86.

Sir Peter Hordern: With the greatest respect, that is not the case. Under the old target and penalty regime West Sussex, being the objective low spender, was allowed the largest increase of any authority below GREA. The proportion was an increase of 4·625 per cent. before any penalty was attached. It could at least be argued that that was higher than any authority received, and that those authorities which spend, and continue to spend, well above GREA were not allowed to spend even a small proportion. How can it be argued that it is a good thing to do away with the target and penalty system when the result of that abandonment, as my right hon. Friend has explained to the House, makes it much worse for the county of West Sussex than it was before?

Mr. Baker: I may not have explained the point clearly. The new system undoubtedly places authorities such as my hon. Friend's in a better position than the target and penalty system. It does so for three reasons. First, low spenders, which is what West Sussex is, would receive more grant at their present level of spending than they would have received if we had not scrapped the targets and steepened the slopes. Secondly, they receive more grant for spending at GREA than they would have done. Thirdly, they have a much reduced rate of grant loss if they reduce spending from present levels. I should be happy to set out that point to the treasurer of West Sussex county council and to my hon. Friend.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I represent part of a shire county. Of course, it is a lower spender than I should like. *[Interruption.]* It is. It does not provide a proper level of services. If it were to spend enough to meet the standard services that the Government require, the rates would have to go up and the level of grant would be reduced. How does he explain that absurd position?

Mr. Baker: The answer lies in the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham. Under targets and penalties there is no doubt that the authorities in those areas that the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend represent would be much worse off. I am afraid that that is how the system works and has worked. That is why we have abandoned it.

At the centre of the debate lie the estimates of expenditure for next year that have been made by various shire counties and all district councils and metropolitan authorities. Local authorities are estimating what their budgets will be. I received a delegation from Buckinghamshire last week. The meeting was attended by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir. I. Gilmour). I shall give my recollection of the meeting. If it does not accord—*[Interruption.]*

When I asked the chairman of Buckinghamshire county council what its budgeted increase in expenditure was for next year, he said that it was 12 per cent. He set out the reasons why he was budgeting for an increase of 12 per cent. I told the chairman—I believe that my right hon. Friend will agree — that in no way could the Government be expected to finance that degree of overspending. It is well above the rate of inflation and the level announced by my predecessor in July. I said that it was pointless for authorities to come to me and say, "Please fund that level of spending with central Government grant." The chairman wrote to me after the meeting and said:

"The presentation I made and the notes I have left you with did, I trust, bring out the essential financial problems facing the County Council, but I should like to re-emphasise that the exercise to examine our projected expenditure level next year is still at an early stage and depends on decisions not yet made about the extent of budget reductions the County Council may choose to impose."

The point that I want to make is that all local authorities are now making up their budgets. They are, to some extent, negotiating not just with the various members of their councils, but with central Government. It is clear that Buckinghamshire's estimate was a preliminary one. If there were to be an increase of 12 per cent., there would be a substantial rate increase. The chairman has gone away and is to examine with his committee chairmen whether they can make any savings. I expect that they will be able to make savings.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I do not dispute in any way my right hon. Friend's recollection of that meeting. The county council chairman has now written a second letter to him, which I believe I am at liberty to quote. He points out how the 12 per cent. was arrived at. He reiterates his points, but says that he is still going to look for economies. He shows that what he said about the 12 per cent. was nothing like as tentative as my right hon. Friend has inadvertently suggested.

Mr. Baker: It is a strange parallel. I received the letter literally as I came into the Chamber. In the penultimate paragraph of the second letter, the chairman says:

"However, I must continue to stress that the County Council is actively seeking ways to reduce its expenditure in 1986-87 both by real terms reductions and further management efficiencies."

I applaud him for doing that.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If I may continue——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: My right hon. Friend referred to the fact that local authorities are now making up their budgets. Would he care to contrast the negative view taken by the Lancashire county council, which has been profligate over the past four years and has increased rates massively, with its excellently conducted, but Conservative-controlled, city council which has not raised rates at all over the past four years but which may have to make a small increase this year?

Mr. Baker: I am glad that I gave way to my hon. Friend. She has shown that some authorities continue their high-spending habits. Lancashire county council is one of them. Another group of councils that is substantially increasing expenditure consists of those councils that have no overall control. Those that have no overall control, which are the nirvana of coalition politics, seem to be in agreement on only one thing — spend more. Hung councils mean high-spending councils; high-spending councils mean high rates.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: May I move on, please?

Mr. Ross: The right hon. Gentleman must be fair to this Bench.

Mr. Baker: May I move on and say——

Mr. Ross: The right hon. Gentleman is dodging the issue.

Mr. Baker: —that, having sought to make the points that I have, I none the less accept that it has been said to me repeatedly during the past few weeks that shire authorities have suffered a disproportionate loss of grant.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West) *rose——*

Mr. Baker: May I get just a little further on before I give way again?

One of the foundation stones of the rate support grant system is called resources equalisation. That is why something like £1 billion each year is transferred through the grant system away from London and the south-east to the rest of the country. Few people appreciate how the grant system works — *[Interruption.]* — as a major redistributive element. That is one of the fundamental——

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Defects.

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend that it may be a defect. But it has been in the system for a long time. It means that when the available block grant is reduced, all authorities lose a common rate poundage of grant but that loss is greater in cash for the higher rateable value authorities such as the home counties. This principle of resource equalisation is reputed to have been inspired by the late Sir Winston Churchill when Chancellor of the Exchequer, the late John Maynard Keynes and the very much alive Earl of Stockton. Some of my hon. Friends, though not all, would consider that an impeccable pedigree.

In answer to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), I should say that the Green Paper on local government finance, which I shall bring out next week, will raise the issue of resource equalisation. In the period of consultation which will be available, Members and outside interests will be able to comment upon this. It is central to the grant system. I want to consider whether it should continue at its present level or at a lower level as a less significant feature of the new arrangements. It is a fundamental and important part of any change in the grant system and accounts for some of the loss of grant this year to the home counties.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose——*

Mr. Grylls: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: May I press on?

Mr. Grylls: My right hon. Friend, as a Surrey Member, will know that there is a feeling of outrage in Surrey. Surrey has lost £22 million in grant this year, yet it is the second lowest spender after East Sussex. People cannot understand that. Will my right hon. Friend look at that aspect and seek a fairer distribution? We are asking not for more public expenditure, but for a fairer distribution and no penalties for economic and efficient local government.

Mr. Baker: Like me, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) represents a Surrey constituency. I saw the Surrey delegation with the treasurer last week. Surrey is budgeting for an increase of 5·7 per cent. That is one of the lowest in the range of expenditure increases.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): But a rate increase.

Mr. Baker: I think that the rate increase in Surrey will be significantly less than 20 per cent. However, there are several other factors still to be taken into account, some of which I shall come to in a moment.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stephen Ross: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: I will take one intervention.

Mr. Ross: Does the Secretary of State agree that the GREA methodology has been reduced this year? If the Isle of Wight spends the GREA, it will still have a rate increase of 16 per cent. The island has had the worst settlement of all, except for Bedfordshire. Will the Minister listen to our pleas? The Isle of Wight is under Liberal control, but it has not overspent.

Mr. Baker: I do not have to hand what the level of budgeted expenditure will be for the Isle of Wight next year. I dare say that that will be a material fact if there is to be a rate increase of that level.

Another feature of this document is the support given to the inner cities. I want to meet this issue head-on. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham made a speech on this matter just before Christmas. My right hon. Friend and other hon. Friends will agree that the problems of some of our towns and cities are acute. High levels of social deprivation, large numbers of single-parent families, pockets of poverty, pockets of unemployment as high as 50 per cent. and the problems of large ethnic minorities require extra resources. I have thought it right to recognise that. No Secretary of State can walk by on the other side when faced with those problems.

Some say that, while they recognise the needs of the towns and cities, those needs should be met from resources other than through the rating system. But if more resources are to be found, they have to be found either from the ratepayer or the taxpayer. At the end of the day the resources cannot come from anywhere else. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West has pointed out, my own constituency is making a contribution to that shift this year, and I steadfastly defend that policy.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will agree that not all his right hon. and hon. Friends come from the shire counties. Will my right hon. Friend look again at the GREA formula? I am the only person here from any party representing Leeds, which has a deprived inner-city area, acute ethnic problems and the largest percentage of defective housing in the country. How is it that the formula has given us fewer resources this year than last year?

Mr. Baker: I shall certainly look at the GREAs. Some have suggested that I should not look at GREAs and that they should remain the same, but I believe that it is necessary to do so. This year, Leeds has a grant of £111 million and next year Leeds could qualify for a grant of between £123 million and £128 million. I am not familiar with the expenditure pattern, but I will look at what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I do not doubt the sincerity of my right hon. Friend when he says that he wishes to tackle head-on the problems of the inner cities. Why is it that

[Mr. Beaumont-Dark]

when he tries to help Birmingham, we always come out as the sufferer? With help like that, Birmingham is not encouraging any enemies. The rate of penalties for Birmingham is 180 per cent. Over the past two or three years Birmingham has spent within the Government guidelines and spent below the wretched GREA principle — which I warned the Government against years ago. Why should Birmingham now be penalised for doing what the Government wanted it to do? It seems not common sense but lunacy.

Mr. Baker: I received a group from Birmingham before I made my statement in December. There was then talk of a rate increase in Birmingham of 60 per cent.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: They always do.

Mr. Baker: There is an element of negotiation in estimated rate increases. As I understand it, the rate increase will be substantially lower than that this year.

My hon. Friend asks if the Government will do anything about the GREA. The Green Paper makes two specific proposals on grant. One is an infinitely simpler system of grant, and the other is the need for a simpler set of formulae other than GREA. The system has become over-complex, and we are attempting to fine — tune elements of local government expenditure which should not be fine tuned.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: I shall not give way again.

Mr. Banks: The Minister has not given way once.

Mr. Baker: The problem of London and grant recycling will critically affect the level of rates next year. A central issue for all London boroughs, both inner and outer, will be the levy of the London Residuary Body. The chairman issued a proposed budget involving a high proportion of capital items. If that had been the basis of the levy, London rates would have been very high. The chairman has now written to me with a much lower budget of about £60 million.

Mr. Banks: Who leaned on him?

Mr. Baker: The chairman proposes to use capital receipts from mortgage repayments and GLC balances to meet some of the obligations of the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Banks: There will not be any.

Mr. Baker: That seems to me to be a reasonable basis for determining the levy.

In addition, London Members will know that I have been consulting about the basis of how the balances should be distributed—whether on a rateable value basis or on a population basis. I have decided that the balances should be distributed on a population basis.

Mr. Banks: That helps Croydon.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will appreciate that the inner and outer London boroughs are similar to the shires. The outer boroughs have been prudent but are to be penalised. The budget of the London Residuary Body was £170 million, but my right hon. Friend says that that has been cut to £60 million. Does that mean the elimination of the redundancy payments within that budget? Any redundancy payments due to the abolition of the GLC should not be carried forward, but should be settled by the GLC before it is abolished.

Mr. Baker: The answer to that question is yes, it does exactly that.

Dr. John Cunningham: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way again—he has given way a great deal. Is he saying that the London residuary body will have total freedom to use however much of its capital receipts it thinks fit—in contrast to the rigid controls that the Government have put on the capital receipts of local authorities?

Mr. Baker: As for capital receipts, one of the major items of the Budget was £70 million of mortgage repayments. One of the original proposals was that that should be recycled to the boroughs, but the collective view is that those capital receipts should be used against capital items.

Dr. Cunningham: So the answer is yes.

Mr. Baker: I am not so sure that it is. I shall look carefully at what the hon. Gentleman has said. The main item here is the adjustment of mortgage repayments. I shall now consider grant recycling.

Under the old system of targets and penalties, the grant lost by the high spenders was surrendered to the Treasury. Last year, this holdback amounted to £450 million and this year it is about £430 million. Under the new system, the grant that will be lost by the high spenders will form a pool which will be recycled to local authorities. Therefore, if traditional low spenders can keep their spending right down, and if the high-spending Labour authorities cannot break the habit of a lifetime and spend as usual, substantial amounts of grant will flow back to the low spenders.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I regret not.

From the picture that is emerging of budgets for next year I have little doubt that there will be significant extra grant available from this source. I cannot estimate the figure precisely, but I have exemplified the effects of a pool of £400 million which is a little less than holdback this year. If such a pool existed, it would be distributed on an equal poundage basis. This would mean that Bedfordshire could get an extra £4·5 million, Buckinghamshire nearly £6 million, Cambridgeshire just over £5 million, Devon nearly £7 million, Dorset £5 million, East Sussex nearly £6 million, Essex £13·5 million, Hampshire over £12 million, Hereford and Worcester over £5 million, Hertfordshire nearly £9·5 million, Kent over £11 million, Norfolk over £5·5 million, Staffordshire over £7 million, Suffolk over £4·5 million, Surrey £9·5 million, Lincolnshire £3·7 million, West Sussex over £6 million and Wiltshire over £3·5 million. I had that exemplification in my Box last night and I think that I had better put it in the Library.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No.

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: I really should finish my speech but I shall give way once more.

Mr. Macfarlane: Might any of the outer London boroughs such as Sutton or Croydon be added to that list?

Mr. Baker: When I put the figures in the Library, my hon. Friend will find that that is the case.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but no. I have already given way once to a Liberal, and that is disproportionate to their representation in the House.

I want to stress that I cannot guarantee that this extra grant will be available since it will depend upon the extent of the overspend, but it is quite clear from the meetings that I have had with the treasurers that some are anticipating in their budgets some flowback, because they too have done these calculations. It is a question for them and for their finance committee to judge how much could reasonably be estimated.

I think it right to set out for the House the position on the recycling of grant since this is the first year in which it will operate in this way. During the coming weeks, treasurers and finance committees will want to consider how this is likely to affect their cash position and how in turn it is likely to affect the rates which they will agree.

In a few moments, we shall hear from the Opposition. I hope that the hon. Member for Copeland will set out the Opposition's policy on local government finance. Would he increase grants from the Government next year? If so, by how much? How much would go to the shires? Would he stop rate capping?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes.

Mr. Baker: Has he estimated the cost of ending rate capping? How many hundreds of millions of pounds would it cost? How many millions of pounds would then be thrust to the most extravagant councils in the country? Before he poses as the friend of shire counties, will he spell out what role he sees for them? During the past year, he and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) have made speeches advocating new regional councils and powerful district councils.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: Where does that leave the shire counties? What functions will he move away from the shire counties? Social services? Roads? Education? Police? Fire? Will such functions go up to regional councils or down to district councils?

Mr. Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I am being asked by several of my right hon. and hon. Friends to try to square the circle between increases in spending well above the rate of inflation and low rate increases, while holding down total local government expenditure and curbing the excesses of the lunatic Left. I make no bones about it——

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: No.

Mr. Fraser: I speak for the lunatic Left.

Mr. Baker: If the cap fits, wear it.

I make no bones about the fact that the settlement attempts to keep the lid on rising expenditure while recognising the efforts made by lower-spending authorities. It is well known to the House that I am not enamoured of the system of local government finance——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: Very well.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: If my right hon. Friend is not enamoured of the rating system of local government finance, why does he increase the proportion of local authorities' income from that system and reduce the proportion from the system of which he presumably is enamoured—central Government taxation?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend might not have heard what I said earlier—[HON. MEMBERS: "He did."] I have been asked to square the circle between expenditure that is rising well above the rate of inflation, to secure low rate increases and to contain Government expenditure. The containment of general Government expenditure lies at the heart of the Government's economic policy and that is why I have not been able to agree with the GREA exemption and why the settlement cannot increase grants significantly. However, as a result of recycling, higher-spending authorities will contribute significant grant to lower-spending ones. My hon. Friend's criticisms of the system are well known.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Next week I shall bring out a Green Paper which deals with the fundamental question, which is as my hon. Friend said, the constitutional question whether we want more central control or more local accountability. I stand firmly on the side of those who want more local accountability. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come off it."] The House will be able to judge that statement when it sees my Green Paper. Until a new system, which will involve fundamental changes, is in place, I commend this fair settlement to the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State referred to a document containing figures of how much might return to shire counties this year. It is a key element in the debate. The right hon. Gentleman said that he would put it in the Library. Can it be put in the Library within minutes, rather than hours, so that it is available to hon. Members during the remainder of the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the Secretary of State, not for me.

5.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House is asked today to approve the seventh major rate support grant presented to Parliament by the Conservative Government since they took office. There have been many supplementary reports, and there are two more of those before us today. Entertaining as it might be for the House to discuss Labour party policy on local government, that is not the purpose of the debate. I am happy to say that if the Government will provide a day for such a debate, we will be more than willing to participate.

[Dr. John Cunningham]

During the last six years the Government have introduced many major policy changes — major reconstructions of the methods and systems employed to distribute grants to local authorities. They have introduced many more powers for Ministers to employ, scrutinise, control, and direct what councils can and cannot do with their money and with the money that they receive from the Department of the Environment, through this and similar reports. They have been seven hard, difficult and often confusing and frustrating years for many councillors of all political parties, for local government as a whole and, I might add, for some Conservative Members too.

It is interesting to reflect that the report was a matter of such little controversy during the period of office of the last Labour Government that in one year the Conservative Opposition chose not to debate it at all. It went through on the nod. Each year since the Conservative Government came to office there have been significant changes to understand and accommodate, and this report is no exception. Indeed, it introduces some of the most significant changes of all. I shall come to those later.

I must compliment the Secretary of State on at least one thing. In the presentation of his report he employed a certain amount of skill, not to say sleight-of-hand, in trying to deflect what he no doubt thought would be the criticism of his hon. Friends who represent shire counties. I should perhaps remind him that there are people on this side of the House who represent shire county constituencies, not least my hon. Friends and myself. I shall have something to say about that in a moment. Perhaps he felt like a Labour Cabinet Minister in the 1945 to 1950 Government who said, "The Opposition is in front of us and the enemy is behind". I say that because the Minister was certainly under some scrutiny from his hon. Friends. Following his uncertain and unconvincing performance, it will be interesting to see whether they will support the Government in the Lobby tonight.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman referred to the swing to London affecting the shire counties.

Dr. Cunningham: I did not refer to that.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman was talking about the practice affecting the shire counties. He was referring to representations made at the time of the Labour Government. I have a letter dated 10 January 1978 complaining that Lancashire county council was affected by the basic swing to London and complaining about the position as it applied to shire counties generally. That was when Lancashire started to suffer.

Dr. Cunningham: Lancashire county council, or any other county council, Tory or Labour-controlled, would give its eye teeth to have the 60-odd per cent. rate support grant that it was getting in those days compared to the 46 per cent. grant offered in this report. It is a massive tribute to the strength, stability and confidence of local government, and to local democracy, that in the main it is able to respond to this panoply of Government changes positively, vigorously and with considerable ingenuity to maintain services and employment, to provide efficient management and, perhaps above all, to retain the understanding of local communities.

Over a six-year period the Conservative Government have consistently pursued a number of basic policy objectives that are opposed by local government, and they have pursued those policies with mixed results. The original aims of the Government, some of which everyone could and would support, were to protect ratepayers. I almost forbear to remind the House that Government policy was to abolish rates altogether, to reduce Government controls over local government, to reduce central Government financial support to local authorities, to simplify the system, and to reduce local government current expenditure. The Secretary of State had something to say about the growth of local government current expenditure. It is nothing compared to the growth in central Government current expenditure. On a comparable basis, it is probably less than 50 per cent. of it, and I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman and his friends in the Cabinet should address themselves to that much bigger target rather than to local government current expenditure.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Last September the Cabinet had the benefit of a presentation from the Audit Commission, when it was pointed out that the county, borough and city treasurers were much better at estimating public expenditure than were central Government Departments.

Dr. Cunningham: The Audit Commission has recently published a report in which it compliments local government on its competence, on the management of its affairs and on its handling of the precious public resources at its disposal.

From the start of this Government's period of office there have been massive internal conflicts at the centre of local government policy. The strategy was incoherent at the beginning, and it remains so today. The centrepiece of Conservative policy is consistently and systematically to reduce the rate support grant year by year, and that is again proposed for the coming financial year. The grant has fallen from 61 per cent. of council expenditure in 1979-80 to 46 per cent. for the coming year.

In the absence of any other major change of policy towards local government income, this change can have only one result — major rates increases. The conflict, indeed the contradiction, of promises to protect ratepayers is obvious. During the Government's period of office, average rate payments in England and Wales have more than doubled. Comparing 1979-80 with 1985-86, one finds that average rates payments under the Conservative Government have risen from £3·73 per week to £8·27 per week, and the percentage increases have been 27·2, 21, 14·9, 7·2, 6·8, and last year there was an increase of 9·5 per cent. in the domestic rates.

In this Parliament, as in the last Parliament, the Government have simply abandoned their promise to abolish rates. Far from protecting ratepayers, the Government have consistently and deliberately shifted burdens from high income taxpayers to lower income ratepayers, and they continue to do this in the report before the House.

Each year since 1979 the amount of Government cash provided to local authorities through the rate support grant has been cut substantially. In accumulated terms, at 1985-86 prices, the loss to councils amounts to a staggering £16·1 billion. The grant losses have been felt by all local authorities, and the average level of domestic rates has risen far in excess of the rise in inflation. In 1978-79 the average unrebated domestic rate bill was £128. Last year it rose to £345, an increase of 169·5 per

cent., or 82 per cent. in real terms. Between 1979-80 and the last financial year, the overall average increase in local authority current expenditure was 98 per cent. The increase for central Government was much higher, at 106 per cent.

The loss of grant is the biggest single reason why rates have risen so sharply. Without these deliberate cuts, average rates levels would be at least 25 per cent. lower — equivalent to £86 per annum, or almost £1·70 a week, for the average family paying rates. In a press release entitled "Surrey's message to Kenneth Baker", Surrey county council's policy chairman, Tory Councillor Douglas Robertson, said:

"The authority's carefully worked out plans to have a rate increase in single figures have been shattered by loss of grant."

The press release stated that Councillor Robertson asked the Secretary of State to

"tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer that rate increases should not be used to reduce taxes and . . . to look again at the grant formula which year after year has penalised Surrey".

Those words are not from any Labour local authority leader or the leader of a hung council or a council controlled by the Liberals or the SDP; they are from true blue Surrey.

After six years, local government is more rigidly controlled from Whitehall than ever before. Grants are now specifically controlled and, consequently, accountability to local communities has been eroded rather than enhanced — another failure of Government policy, and contrary to what the Secretary of State has told the House is one of his personal objectives for Government policy.

It is not unreasonable for the House to ask the Secretary of State why, after almost seven years in office, the Conservative party has failed to reach most of its policy objectives for local government and why it has simply abandoned others. Are we and the electors and the colleagues of the Secretary of State to be thankful and to console ourselves with the words of Cicero:

"Promises are not to be kept if the keeping of them would be harmful to those to whom they have been made"?

That certainly seems true of most promises made by the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues.

The right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) must have been delighted to reach the Cabinet table finally, but his pleasure must have been shortlived when he realised that, with one bound, he was up to his neck in a bog. We now know that that is how he feels about this matter, because he was candid enough to tell us so during the Tory party conference in October 1985. In an almost Reaganesque one-liner he described the achievements of his Government colleagues after six years in local government finance as

"a maze, surrounded by a marsh, shrouded in a fog."

After seven years of consistent Conservative legislation, massive changes and more central control, the trail to the Department of the Environment, which is littered with abandoned election promises, apparently leads to a maelstrom of political doom, a charnel house of political ambitions. We should reflect on the whereabouts of the right hon. Gentleman's predecessors in office, Mick, Tom and Pat — those well-known builders of local government financial systems. One was sacked, one resigned and one fled the country. Typically, while those maze manufacturers, quagmire constructors and fog fabricators have almost disappeared without trace from the local government scene, poor councillors have been left to deal with the bills.

For several years successive Conservative Ministers have promised that, in the end, their policies would benefit low-spending authorities. As the Secretary of State asked me about this, let me make our position clear. We are not sure why such authorities should be helped, because experience shows that often they are the authorities offering a range of low quality or even mean service provision, from education through housing to social services.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: In many cases, local authorities are low spenders because they have such slender financial resources, because their rateable values are low, and the incomes of the people are low. Because their populations are so scattered, the cost of administering is high. That is why they have a policy of low spending.

Dr. Cunningham: That argument will come as a surprise to residents of stockbroker belts in Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Kent. I am prepared to accept that that may be true in some parts of the area represented by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). Low spending is not the same as efficiency or good management, any more than high spending can be equated with carelessness with public money, as the Audit Commission continues to demonstrate in successive reports.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman's description of low-spending authorities and inadequate resources — for instance, for education — fits Somerset county council under its previous administration. That council was hounded by Her Majesty's inspectors for inadequately fulfilling its education requirements. Is it not an appalling indictment of what the Secretary of State now proposes that the maintenance of that scandalous neglect of Somerset, which was the hallmark of the previous Tory Administration, will still require a rate increase of 20 per cent.?

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with that. Much the same could be said of the county of Norfolk and many other Tory-dominated counties.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not leave the House with the impression that lower spending is synonymous with inefficiency. In counties such as Essex—my county—low spending is a product of prudent financial management. It has been praised on the Floor of the House by successive Secretaries of State. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pursue that argument.

Dr. Cunningham: It is an argument which I would be more than willing to pursue, but I shall let the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) pursue it with my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), who also represents an Essex constituency. She put an entirely different point to the Secretary of State.

Systematic reductions in rate support grant cannot ensure better value for money. In any event, councils of all political persuasions are surely entitled to believe that their good management—this is the point, with which I agree, made by the right hon. Member for Castle Point —and their efficiency should benefit their communities and not lead to further loss of grant from central Government. Surely central Government's task should be to reinforce good local authority management, not to undermine it.

[Dr. Cunningham]

This year, the Government's failures are more exposed than ever. It is clear that the Rates Act 1984 has not helped the counties, as was frequently promised it would. It is clear also that money from a smaller pool has been transferred from counties and districts to conurbations in an attempt to cover up the cost to boroughs of the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC. Government policies have seriously damaged the county councils' share of RSG, as we always said they would. Anger and dismay in the Association of County Councils is widespread and deep, so much so that the association has written to all hon. Members asking for this report to be rejected by the House—an unprecedented move by that local authority association.

Last year's county council elections saw the Conservative party humiliated in its heartland. Now, even the last bastions of Toryism are saying enough is enough —Surrey, Suffolk, Norfolk and others. Captain Robert Sheepshanks, Tory chairman of the East Anglian Consultative Committee on Local Government, said:

"There is considerable frustration in East Anglia — the settlement will lead to a very high rate increase across the region."

Mr. Soley: He is being fleeced.

Dr. Cunningham: He is indeed.

In this report, the Government have imposed on shire counties the largest year-on-year cut ever imposed on any class of authority since the block grant system was introduced. This is a measure of the change that is being imposed on the counties.

In addition, there have been large grant losses for county councils because of the impact of new grant-related expenditure assessment. How can Conservative Members from counties vote for this report? It represents a massive kick in the teeth for rural communities, which in many cases—as in my constituency, the borough of Copeland and Cumbria county council—are massively disadvantaged. People in rural boroughs and districts are thus hit, not once, but twice by the proposals. It comes as no surprise that the Association of County Councils is forecasting rate increases next year far in excess of the rate of inflation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hon. Gentleman has quoted some comments about this rate support grant settlement from various parts of the country. Exactly what would he propose instead? Would he increase the grant this year, how would he vary its distribution, by how much would he put it up from 46·5 per cent.? Who would benefit, because if the hon. Gentleman abolishes rate capping, some of the most extravagant local authorities will benefit? Will the rural authorities benefit as well, and if so, by how much?

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps sooner than he would like, the Secretary of State will have the opportunity to debate a Labour Government's rate support grant report. I am astonished at his surprise at my commitment to abolish the Rates Act. On Second Reading, a long time ago, I gave that commitment, which we retain. As for our distribution of rate support grant, the right hon. Gentleman and the Minister will have to bide their time. They will see soon enough. In every year of office of the last Labour Government the rate support grant settlement was higher than in any one year of this Government. That is a measure of our record on rate support grant, and it is a record that is a million miles in advance of the miserable performance and proposal that the right hon. Gentleman has put before the House.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am sure that my hon. Friend will make a far better speech on the rate support grant when he is Secretary of State for the Environment, because his material will be so much better. He was talking about how Tory Members should vote when the time comes. Will he quantify these figures, which I hope I have got right? Is it true that the 1986-87 settlement gives London an extra £221 million, while the shires lose about £250 million?

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend has the figures near enough to make no difference on this side of the House. We wonder whether they will make any difference to the Tory side.

The Association of District Councils has given its view of the Government's proposals in this report. Councillor John Morgan, another Conservative, and chairman of the ADC, says of the report:

"Ironically, many of those most badly hit by the settlement are those which have always responded to Government exhortations to keep their expenditure within targets set by Whitehall — including many who have suffered severe grant losses in the current year".

Illustrating that, Councillor Morgan said that some of the metropolitan districts that stood to be "most badly hit" ranged from those in the depressed areas of the north-east to others in the south-east stockbroker and commuter belt. He said:

"The unfairness demonstrated through the current grant settlement highlights the wholly inaccurate assessment on the part of the central Government of what local authorities need to spend in their own areas."

The Government's rate support grant system is clearly now nothing more than a

"crude device to hold down spending right across the board."

That was confirmed by the Secretary of State when he met the executive council of the ACC and said:

"The Government was not prepared to support present policies expenditure levels of local authorities"—

whatever their performance in the past. The implications of that statement clearly point to cuts in services and in jobs. Today, almost in a throwaway line, the Secretary of State said that GREA was a measure of need but not a target. The reality of that is that meeting need is apparently not a Government target.

We cannot accept the Government's claim that the settlement will bring major benefits to urban authorities either. Indeed, we reject the principle of taking more resources from rural areas to transfer to the cities, as we reject the implication that urban communities can be helped only at the expense of rural areas, where, often, deprivation can be equally serious and service provision totally inadequate. The Government claim that improvements have benefited metropolitan areas. While any increase is welcome, that included in the report is less than 0·5 per cent. of the national total of grant-related expenditure.

Like other authorities, urban councils are badly affected by the real cuts in the total grant available and by the shortfall, in the Government's view, of current expenditure plans compared with what councils require simply to maintain present levels of community services.

In no way do the proposals make up for the loss of income caused by the abolition of the metropolitan councils and the GLC.

The Association of London Authorities believes that grant gains are more than outweighed by the additional costs resulting from abolition following the transfer of duties and responsibilities. It believes that the Department of the Environment has failed to take proper account of the higher levels of GLC funding of services in many boroughs. This will lead to higher than assumed expenditure and subsequent loss of grant. Councils in Birmingham, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds might all say the same.

I have a technical point for the Secretary of State. I shall try to put it simply, because it had to be put simply to me so that I could understand it, but it is an important matter nevertheless. It concerns the treatment of grant for metropolitan districts which have taken over services from the soon to be abolished metropolitan counties. Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1985 makes specific provision for the Secretary of State to determine the amount of additional grant which a successor district would have received in 1985-86, the current financial year, if abolition had taken place a year earlier. The purpose of that provision in the Local Government Act 1985 is to ensure that a proper comparison can be made between this year's figures and next year's figures. If the Secretary of State wants to cap gains, as he does, he needs to have a fair basis for doing so.

The Secretary of State has never published what the additional grant would be. For example, Birmingham wrote to him in October 1985 and asked how the figure was to be worked out, but it has never received a reply. To continue the Birmingham example, it appears to the city council that it has been allowed only an additional grant of £2 million, despite being a theoretical major gainer from the new grant system. Prima facie, this appears to be an unreasonable use of the Secretary of State's powers to cap grant gains. I do not expect the Secretary of State to rise immediately and respond, but I hope that we will have an explanation of the implications from the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government when he replies to the debate. If this matter cannot be clarified to the satisfaction of the House, the only proper course is to withdraw the order and resubmit it to the House when the matter has been properly and fully explained.

After seven years of Conservative government the local government finance system is now much more difficult to understand and predict than ever before. The figures issued by the Government on the entitlements of individual authorities are misleading, because they ignore the "close-ending" factor. The Secretary of State cleverly made seductive promises this afternoon to right hon. and hon. Members about what their authorities might get. Does he suppose that responsible councils and treasurers can fix budgets and levy rates and precepts on what they might get after close ending? Of course not. He knows that that is a preposterous suggestion. He knows that no responsible local authority would dream of budgeting on that basis or of fixing a rate on that basis, not least because if it did and its hopes were dashed the councillors would be liable to surcharge and disqualification. That is the reality of making wild guesses about what income might or might not be forthcoming. It was absolutely dishonest of the Secretary of State to suggest that Conservative Members should go into the Lobby and support these proposals on that basis.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment. Is the Secretary of State suggesting that they should go into the Lobby on the basis of a wing and a prayer? He knows as well as we do that councils will not budget and fix their rates on that basis.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point that we need firm assurances from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, the hon. Gentleman went too far when he suggested that councillors would be surcharged. They could take in more from reserves, on the assumption that they might get this amount from my right hon. Friend and then repay the reserves.

Dr. Cunningham: The House is aware that the implication of that suggestion is even bigger rates increases than many councils are now facing. I do not regard that as either sensible or good management. It would be much simpler and clearer for everybody, the House and local authorities included, if the Secretary of State were a little more candid about what is to be the fate of these authorities.

Large losses of grant under this system seem to be likely in London and in the metropolitan areas next year and in later years because the so-called safety nets and caps are only temporary. Local authorities will still suffer penalties because the report ensures that an additional £1 of spending costs all but a few authorities much more than £1. In 1986-87, 32 authorities will have their budgets and rates or precepts fixed by Whitehall under the Rates Act 1984. Over 15 per cent. of total local spending is involved. We deplore this major erosion of local democracy and freedom.

Specific grants and supplementary grants have increased disproportionately. Such trends do not make local government more accountable, and they do not reduce central Government interference. On the contrary, they increase it.

This rate support grant settlement introduces the biggest changes that have been made to the system since it was introduced. While targets are dropped, penalties remain under another name. The report attempts to deal with the consequences of abolition and the second year of the Rates Act, but the situation is more confused, uncertain, unstable and unfair than ever before. It fails to meet the needs of local authorities by a massive £1·4 billion, as demonstrated by the updated expenditure group's costing of present policies in 1986-87. The Government have long accepted the basis of those figures.

The report assumes less for the teachers' pay awards than is currently on offer, and it assumes nothing at all for a conditions of service settlement, thus demonstrating to parents and teachers alike the Government's indifference to what is happening in our schools—in particular, the damage to the future careers of the thousands and thousands of people in secondary education.

After six years in office, the Government have run out of excuses. It is to the credit of local government that the determination to fight to preserve its freedom,

[Dr. Cunningham]

accountability, community services and jobs is as high as ever, despite the Government's absymal failures. The Labour party rejects this report. I ask Conservative Members not just to denounce it in their speeches, but to join us in the Lobby to defeat it.

6.6 pm

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I think that all right hon. and hon. Members agree that the complexity of this subject, especially the method of distribution of grant, is such as to make it almost incomprehensible. It feels like a machine that is out of control. It is reminiscent, I find, of Charlie Chaplin in "Modern Times". I rather wish that he had been spared to make a similar film about computers. Any system that is so incomprehensible as this must be unacceptable. Therefore, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on bringing forward his Green Paper on rates reform next week. Obviously we must not prejudge it, and obviously the consultation process will take some time, which I am sure is very wise. But the corollary of the delay in changing the system must be that the present arrangements will continue for some years and will therefore continue to be of significance.

The report before us today disposes of the old penalties and targets which received so much criticism, but in their place there are three new devices that are equally powerful and that hit the shire counties hard. My right hon. Friend gave to the first the elegant title of slope schedules—the point at which grant is reduced as expenditure rises. I am all in favour of a system that provides an incentive to save expenditure, but in Cambridgeshire that point has been set at £127 million, which is 54 per cent. of grant-related expenditure. Grant-related expenditure is the figure that is deemed to be appropriate for the authority to spend, taking into account all its circumstances. Under this system, Cambridgeshire will incur penalties when expenditure reaches a figure that is just about half its GRE: just about half the figure that the Government admit is appropriate for Cambridgeshire's expenditure needs. I call that a very severely set slope schedule. The second device is that of thresholds set at GRE plus 10 per cent., at which point the penalty increases further. It is not applicable to Cambridgeshire, so I will not dwell upon it, but it is a device in the new system.

The third device is that of spending assumptions, which amounts to a type of target. The assumptions are out of line with reality. They make the sums come right from the Government's point of view, but they are unrealistic in terms of local authority expenditure.

The gap between GRE and what used to be targets, which are now spending assumptions, is increasing. In East Anglia in 1983-84 the gap was £25 million. In 1986-87 it is expected to be £75 million. That is in addition to the overall reduction of grant on a national basis from 48·7 per cent. to 46·4 per cent. Cambridgeshire was never up to the national average. In 1986-87 the block grant as a percentage of budget will fall from 37 per cent. to 23 per cent., which is a big drop.

So the result of the report is bound to be a substantial and unavoidable rate rise in the counties in East Anglia, unless services are cut in an unacceptable and unwise way. Bearing in mind that Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing counties, that is unacceptable. Under Conservative leadership my county council achieved considerable additional efficiencies through privatisation of various services, central purchasing and the establishment of computers. In the Department it is well thought of as an efficient and low-spending authority. The parties that now control the council—the Liberals, the SDP and Labour—are considering additional expenditure which I and my colleagues—the Conservative councillors — believe to be unnecessary and too expensive for the ratepayer. Even without that expenditure, a substantial rate rise is inevitable.

I have three basic objections to the system. The first is that it is unfair because it penalises authorities that have been careful, that have shown good management and that have responded positively to the Government's policy of reducing expenditure. The system is in breach of undertakings given to me by the Government two years ago. I and others believe that last year's settlement was in breach, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) believed otherwise and we gave him the benefit of the doubt. I cannot say that the undertaking has been fulfilled this year.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite assurances, the system is still basically at fault? If the political will had been there, something would have been introduced this year that would be fairer to the low-spending councils such as Norfolk county council and Norfolk district council.

Mr. Pym: There is no doubt that the system is at fault, but as so often happens in politics, it is the operation of the system that is crucial. That principle remains so as long as the system exists. I am glad that my right hon. Friends are introducing new plans to change the system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will my right hon. Friend clarify his remarks? The system is at fault, but the cause of the problem is the important matter. The Government have not provided sufficient money from the Exchequer to meet the divers objectives of controlling local government expenditure.

Mr. Pym: It is always arguable how total public expenditure should be divided. My point is that, whatever the limit for local government spending, the system as we know it today is unsatisfactory and I believe that the Government and the House regard it as such.

My second objection is that the system is contrary to Government policy, or, at the very least, a contradiction of Government policy. In respect of the anti-inflation policy, the effect of the report will be to raise rates far more than inflation, however good the management is or however the authorities conduct their business. In East Anglia it is expected that rates will increase between three and five times the rate of inflation. That is inconsistent with Government policy.

The settlement is hostile to small businesses. The establishment of small businesses is a central plank in the Government's employment policy. I support totally the Government's encouragement of small businesses and the grants that they provide. I support the fact that the Secretary of State for Employment is trying to reduce the number of forms and the amount of red tape. Yet we are being asked today to send small businesses a large extra bill for rates. That does not strike me as being coherent.

Another contradiction of Government policy is that payment for services is being shifted from general taxation, which most hon. Members regard as relatively fair, to rates, which are grotesquely unfair. Most hon. Members agree that rates are unfair. It must be wrong to increase taxes by this unfair method of transferring resources.

The third basic objection is that the £200 million worth of extra resources for the inner cities and urban areas, which the Government are rightly providing, is to be paid for entirely by the ratepayers of the shire counties. I believe that it is right to give more support and finance to the inner cities. Their need is greater than anyone's, but that is a national responsibility that should be met in the fairest possible way by the nation as a whole.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that he is not referring to the inner cities of Bath and Hove, which are receiving massive increases in Government funding at the expense of the truly rural areas?

Mr. Pym: I plead guilty to using the jargon of the moment by referring to the inner cities, which are those areas in the older cities that are especially badly hit. However, I do not believe that it is right for the whole amount to be funded by shire county ratepayers, including the commercial and industrial ratepayers, who are the lifeblood of Britain's economy.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman quantify the amount of money that he understands is being removed from the shire counties in the 1986-87 settlement?

Mr. Pym: It is almost exactly the same amount as the sum being provided for additional resources for the inner cities.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Bedfordshire has been hit hard by the settlement. However, when one talks of shifting shire money to the inner cities, the Government appear to forget that for 25 years Bedfordshire has been helping the inner cities by taking London overspill and paying for all the necessary social services so as to make overspill a sensible reality in Bedfordshire.

Mr. Pym: That is in line with what I have said. My right hon. Friend the Minister spoke about rate equalisation and about how it all began in 1929. Does he not consider that in this settlement he is taking that sound principle—which should remain part of any system—too far?

I believe that my objections to this report are formidable. However, I strongly support giving incentives for greater efficiency and economy. It is right to encourage authorities to spend less and to save money. By applying that sound principle too harshly, I suspect that the results could be counter-productive.

It is clear that I am not in favour of the settlement. However, the Secretary of State says that there is to be a recycling of extra funds, which is extremely welcome and which should help. If Cambridgeshire receives the £5 million that the Secretary of State speculated that it might receive in certain hypothetical circumstances, the problem is not solved, but it is helped. On my calculations, the difference in Cambridgeshire would be a rate increase of about 20 per cent. instead of one of more than 25 per cent. That would be extremely welcome, but it is none the less a large increase.

I hope that we shall hear more tonight before the vote is taken, and that the Government will reconsider the distribution of available resources, because that would make it possible for me and some of my right hon. and hon. Friends whose constituencies are similarly affected — and for the Government — to keep faith with our ratepayers.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Those of us who are masochistic enough to be regular attenders at these debates will recognise several themes that regularly flow through our discussions. The first, complexity, was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym). To be fair, rate support grant has never been easy to understand. I recall the criticisms levelled at the old regression analysis system. However, when the Government came to office, they assured us that their Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 would give us a system of distributing rate support grant which was more logical, defensible and comprehen-sible. The trouble is that legislation rapidly followed legislation, and every year has seen a major change in the administration of the rate support grant. To accuse the present occupants of the Treasury Bench of being adherents of Leon Trotsky is an unusual charge to make, but when they approach local government finance it seems that they believe in the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): When the Local Government, Planning and Land Act was being considered, I was the Conservative whip on the Association of District Councils. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was trying to dream up a simple system, but the local authorities kept saying, "You must have this factor and that factor". Of course, it became more and more complicated and we ended with a much more complicated system than was originally proposed.

Mr. Cartwright: That is an inherent criticism of the attempt to establish a GREA approach. We cannot blame local government for some of the legislation that came thereafter, including the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and the Rates Act 1984. Whatever the reason, we ended with a system of local government finance which was so complicated that the Audit Commission commented last year that many officers and members of local authorities had totally abandoned any attempt to understand it. To some of us, it became patently obvious that the Ministers responsible for it did not completely understand it, either. Like Frankenstein, they created a monster which got out of control. Like Frankenstein, they then took fright and promised that we should have simplification.

As a trailer to this rate support grant settlement, on 25 July last year, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) assured us:

"The RSG settlement that I am proposing will be less complex than in past years."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1317.]

On that basis, many right hon. and hon. Members will have turned eagerly to the documents that support this

[Mr. Cartwright]

year's debate. Anyone who has tried to read them and to master the complexities of caps, nets, close ending and grant recycling will have been sadly disappointed. The most pointed comment about the alleged simplicity of this year's settlement came in the circular letter from the Association of County Councils, which apologised for the fact that it had not produced its normal detailed brief on the settlement. Its reason was that

"the RSG Settlement this year is so complex that a full brief would either be a very lengthy document indeed . . . or it would be incomprehensible to the non-professional reader."

So much for simplicity.

The second theme of the debate is uncertainty, which the Secretary of State also mentioned, in the operation of the system. Local councils have been forced to await the results of the RSG settlement, rather like a punter waiting for the result of the annual lottery. Like a lottery, the rewards seem to bear little or no relationship to the efficiency, effectiveness or spending performance of the authority. Last year, the Audit Commission said this about the situation:

"There are too many unnecessary uncertainties inherent in the system. These inhibit authorities from planning ahead."

The Audit Commission went on to say that local authorities had been building reserves at the rate of at least £400 million a year during the past three years, which was more than 2·5 times the average rate of increase in the period before 1981-82. The reason is easy to understand. The Audit Commission believes that the unpredictability of the system encourages local authorities to build up reserves as a prudent hedge against the uncertainties of the future.

This year's settlement is no different; it has built in uncertainty once again. London and the metropolitan areas appear to have done well, but the safety nets and caps that protect them are only temporary. The authorities that have gained this year know only too well that their apparent gains can be snatched away in next year's spin of the Secretary of State's roulette wheel. The pattern of our RSG settlements during the past six years has been that one year's winners can be the following year's losers in Marsham street's version of snakes and ladders.

The third issue that constantly crops up in such debates is that of fairness between authorities. On 25 July, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford promised that the new arrangements would be

"fairer to responsible, low-spending authorities." — [*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1317.]

The results, as we have already heard, are very different. The settlement has had some extraordinarily bizarre effects. For example, Gillingham district council could cut rates altogether because of the RSG bonanza that has descended upon it from the heavens of Marsham street, yet neighbouring authorities in Kent have done badly. Ashford faces increases of 19 per cent., Sevenoaks of 15·5 per cent. and Tonbridge and Malling of 16·5 per cent. Two other authorities—Bath and Hove—are in the happy position of being able to set a zero rate as a result of the RSG settlement. Small wonder that the Bath city treasurer is quoted in the *Local Government Chronicle* this week as saying:

"We are looking at it as a one-off bonus."

Others have not been so fortunate. When the initial announcement was made by the former Secretary of State last July, the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) sought confirmation that what he called,

"the history of financial rectitude by the county of Dorset"

would be recognised. The right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford assured him:

"Dorset will find that it has its rewards in this rate support grant settlement."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1325.]

I have examined the figures and I understand that Dorset will lose £15 million of grant if it spends at GRE level, and it faces an implied rate increase of 30 per cent. I am not sure whether that was the sort of reward that the hon. Member for Dorset, South had in mind.

The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East told us about the problems in that county. He will recall that he and one of his hon. Friends pressed the former Secretary of State hard for assurances that if Cambridgeshire followed a spending pattern similar to the one that it had followed in the past, it would not be penalised in the RSG settlement. Those assurances were given. I have examined the figures for Cambridgeshire, and I understand that if the new administration's medium-term plan was followed it would imply a rate increase of 32·2 per cent. That includes an improvement in services. If Cambridgeshire spent at the GREA figure, it would imply a 28·1 per cent. rate increase. But if Cambridgeshire was not to improve services at all—if it remained at a standstill—it would still need a 23·3 per cent. increase in rates. That is a strange way of honouring the undertakings that were given last July.

On the overall impact of the settlement, right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned the fact that once again there is a reduction in the proportion of local authorities' relevant spending met by Government grant from 48·7 per cent. to 46·4 per cent.—the sixth successive year in which there has been a reduction. The proportion has decreased from 61 per cent. in 1979-80 to 46 per cent. next year. The Association of County Councils estimates that this latest drop is equivalent nationally to a 7·8 per cent. increase in rates, which clearly undermines the Secretary of State's suggestion that rate increases next year will be no higher than those of this year.

The Secretary of State has confirmed the consistent policy of switching the burden of paying for local services from national taxes, which are broadly fair, to local rates, which can be extremely unfair. It will strike many ratepayers as a strange way of fulfilling the Government's undertaking to protect them.

I noticed that the Secretary of State sought to justify that cut in the proportion of local council spending met by national taxation by implying that it improves local accountability. That is an extraordinary argument. It is true that some who have argued for increasing local accountability have said that dependence on central Government grant is a threat, and that grant should be reduced. But this must be accompanied by a new source of independent finance to enable local government to stand on its own feet. The Government have given us the worst of all worlds. We have a cut in the proportion provided by the national Exchequer and ever-tightening restrictions on local authorities to prevent them from using their one and only source of income—the rating system.

The situation on GREAs is again extremely unsatisfactory. I object to the way in which Ministers

constantly parade GREAs as a model of scientific and impartial assessment. All hon. Members know of the considerable deficiencies in information going into those assessments, which cast great doubt on their validity, and certainly help to produce their rather strange results. It is also suggested that GREAs are the result of detailed consultations with local government. Yet the Secretary of State made it absolutely clear in his statement on 18 December that, although he had received many representations from local authorities about the deficiencies of GREAs, he had rejected them all and decided to continue with his own approach. That is a strange definition of consultation.

It is clear that GRE is being asked to do things which it was never intended to do. That may be justifiable as a way of distributing grant, although I have grave reservations about that, but it is certainly not justifiable to use GREA arrangements to control local spending. In recent years we have seen a cynical manipulation of the GREA machinery, which is why there is widespread distrust throughout local authorities of the whole GREA exercise.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I welcome the Government's intention to provide more resources for the inner cities. However, their targeting seems to have been a little inaccurate. I cannot understand why Gillingham, Hove and Bath should be the recipients of so much extra help when some hard-pressed inner city areas have not done so well. I strongly endorse what the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said. If we want to produce more resources for the hard-pressed inner city areas, that should be a national responsibility, funded from national taxation, and should not be paid for by adding to the burdens of ratepayers in the shire counties who often have inferior services and who may have grave difficulties in meeting the extra burden involved as a result of the changes.

In Greater London the total grant has increased in cash terms by £221 million. That is presented as a generous settlement for London. However, many of those gains could be dramatically reduced or wiped out. First, they are only cash increases, and in real terms they are equivalent only to increases of £166 million. Secondly, they depend on the Government's assumption that councils will spend at 1985-86 budgets plus an increase of 3·4 per cent. The transitional costs of abolishing the GLC make that unlikely, and if the councils spend at the 1985-86 budgets with an increase of 4·5 per cent., which is the Government's assessment of inflation—in other words, if spending genuinely stands still—the benefits of the extra rate support grant will not be £221 million, but in real terms only £130 million. Even that could be threatened as a result of levies being imposed by the London Residuary Body. They are being charged, not on a rateable value basis, but per head of the population. The first indication suggests burdens between £3·6 million and £8·6 million per borough, depending on size.

I welcome what the Secretary of State said about the possibility of easing those burdens. However, for rate support grant purposes the levies count against the boroughs' spending, although boroughs have absolutely no control over them. The grant mechanisms impose high costs on London councils which increase their spending. The more that councils spend or are deemed to spend, the more grant they lose. That could mean that London ratepayers will face a double blow. They could first face the problem of paying the residuary body levy, and then have to pay higher rates to make up for grant losses caused by the levy. I hope that the Secretary of State will not merely seek to ensure that the levies are reduced, but will consider the rate support grant element, and try to ease the impact of the levies, either by providing additional GRE for the London boroughs involved, or by disregarding all or part of the levy for the purposes of the penalty arrangements.

The much-publicised new approach set out today seems to have produced a chaotic mess. The Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee have cruelly exposed the defects of the present system. The most appropriate epitaph came in the editorial of the *Local Government Chronicle* on 17 January which stated:

> "The government's tinkering has only served to illustrate rather than correct the failings. It has done nothing to deal with the basic flaw identified by the PAC and establish a clear relationship between a council's spending decisions and the rate that is set. At present a council can spend vast amounts above the rate of inflation without penalty and without increasing its rate whereas other councils can hold spending and yet be forced into increasing rates massively. Councillors are bemused and the public just plain fed up."

That is an accurate assessment, and that is why we shall vote against the orders tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members are waiting to speak. I am sure that the House will appreciate brief speeches and minimal interventions. I call Sir David Price.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to detain the House, but it is within your recollection that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that a paper relating to the reallocation of moneys for various shire counties would be placed almost immediately in the Library. As it seems material to our debate and it is now more than two hours since he spoke, will you make inquiries why that essential paper is not yet available to hon. Members?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have asked for the paper to come, and I will check immediately where it is.

6.37 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I shall be as brief as possible, and I hope that the House will bear with me if I go at a gallop.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) told us, the reports are bad news for the shire counties. The House will not be surprised to know that Hampshire is no exception. In view of your injunction to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not go through the details as they affect Hampshire. I am sure that they are similar to the effects on many other counties. I shall content myself by summarising the position as I have it in a letter from the leader of Hampshire county council. It states:

> "Hampshire's past record in restricting its expenditure levels whilst maintaining efficient services is exemplary. Its ratepayers, both domestic and business, will feel badly let down when they realise that these efforts are unrecognised and in a single year could be asked to pay one fifth more for their services."

I expect that that is the experience of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends in other shire counties.

Regarding the assumptions behind the reports, I see three major errors in the Government's calculations. First, they have assumed no element of real growth. Overall

[Sir David Price]

Government policy is full of growth consequences for local government, and I shall give three examples. The first is the new youth training scheme and the merger of mode A with mode B. The move from one to two years will have considerable financial consequences. The second relates to the consequences year by year of joint funding with the National Health Service. The House will know that initially that is gentler in its expenditure consequences on local authorities, but that as the years progress the local authority takes over more of the cost of the particular scheme. Therefore, there is a higher expenditure for the local authority. Thirdly, there is the move towards more care in the community. As a member of the Select Committee on Social Services, I am a strong supporter of more care in the community, but it was made clear in the Select Committee report that that could be achieved only by a transfer of resources from the NHS into local authorities and to voluntary bodies.

The second error is the lower rate support percentage grant. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East and other hon. Members have spoken about that. If we had an entirely reformed structure of local government finance and local government taxation, there would be a strong case in favour of such a move. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has anticipated such a change and he is bringing in one of the bonuses of such a change before the change has taken place. It is rather like spending the income from a new job for which one has applied before one gets the job.

The third major error concerns the shift in grants from the shire counties to the deprived inner city areas, and in particular to London. Like some hon. Members who have already spoken, I agree entirely with the policy of more resources going to deprived areas. However, I strongly object to the fact that the shire county ratepayers will have to finance that. In any reformed model of local government taxation, even one in which counties like my own might be asked to pay virtually the whole of their expenditure if they were equipped with the proper taxation, it would still be proper that the national taxpayer should pay for the extra aid that went to deprived areas. That was the concept behind the original deficiency grant system. I suggest that we return to the principles of that system.

For the three substantial reasons that I have described, I believe that these reports are most unsatisfactory. The heart of the matter is the inadequacy of the rating system as the sole source of local government taxation. Hon. Members will know that I have been a consistent critic of the rating system for many years. I remind the House that in February 1970, in the debate on the Redcliffe-Maud report on the reform of local government, I said:

> "To discuss local government reform without having proposals for the reform of local government taxation is like attempting to act the Prince of Denmark without Hamlet."—*[Official Report,* 18 February 1970; Vol. 796, c. 513.]

That has remained my consistent view.

I should like to remind the House briefly why the rating system is so inadequate, unsatisfactory and certainly untenable as a method of redistributing resources from the shire counties to the inner city.

First, the rates form too narrow a tax base to be the sole tax available to modern local authorities, with their extensive responsibilities and the inevitable financial consequences. One immediately thinks of education and, increasingly, of the social services.

Secondly, the rates bear little relationship to the ability to pay. They are regressive. Thirdly, the liability to pay rates bears no relationship to the individual ratepayer's use of the services provided. Fourthly, the capacity to pay local taxes brings us to the current complaint from commerce and industry about the burden of rates upon their enterprises. I was interested in what my right hon. Friend had to say on that matter, as that is extremely pertinent.

Fifthly, as a tax the rates are not buoyant. They do not keep pace with the growth of local authority services, and they are not inflation proof. Sixthly, the rates do not necessarily produce the same income for individual local authorities with similar needs. Indeed, they often do not.

Seventhly, there is the uneven and inconsistent nature of domestic valuation. All hon. Members know that this has been a major source of complaint. Eighthly, there is the related criticism that when there are extra earners in some households who use the local services, they do not pay extra local taxes. That is a familiar criticism. Finally, domestic rates are a tax on property betterment, even when that betterment is in direct line with national policy.

I am conscious of the fact that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to speak. Those are just a few of the major criticisms of the rating system as a form of taxation. They are a devastating sum of criticisms, so I am astonished that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, whom I regard as realistic and progressive in these matters, should bring forward reports based on the assumption that the rating system is a proper mechanism for the redistribution of resources. I believe that it is not.

If my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench think that I am being excessively aggressive to the Government and their problems, I should like to quote the following words:

> "We are all concerned about very high rates. The system was never designed to bear the levels of taxation now being placed on it."—[*Official Report,* 4 November 1981; Vol. 12, c. 20.]

I agree with that, and I should like to consider with my right hon. Friends who said that. That was a quotation from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her speech in the debate on the Address on 4 November 1981. That was four and a half years ago, when the Prime Minister was proposing the legislative programme for that year. My right hon. Friend was then promising a Green Paper on rate reform.

With that form of authority, I suggest to the House that those of us who are unhappy with the reports, and who will find it impossible to vote in favour of them, are being consistent with the leadership of the Conservative party. I am disappointed that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State finds it necessary to bring these reports before the House. I was not elected to the House to be oppressive to Hampshire and reports are oppressive to Hampshire and the shire counties——

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen) *rose——*

Sir David Price: —without fulfilling any countervailing national purpose. I shall therefore be unable to support the Government today.

6.48 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I shall try to continue the endeavour to be brief.

There are few people who pay their rates without some sense of disgruntlement. That is hardly surprising, considering the complexity of the subject. Even the permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment admitted, under questioning in the Public Accounts Committee, that only 20 or 30 people in the Department fully understood the complexities, although others were experts on certain aspects.

Realising how unpopular the rates were and are, the Prime Minister decided that they should be abolished, totally ignoring the many efforts over the years to do just that. But the Prime Minister also ignored the fact that it is much easier to point to the faults in the rating system than it is to come up with a viable alternative. The present Secretary of State for the Environment is the latest recruit in a line of predecessors trying to carry out the Prime Minister's wishes. Not that they have not tried. Each in his turn has tinkered with the system making it more divorced from reality at local government level, more complicated, and shifting the goal posts halfway through the financial year so that forward planning is impossible.

Only one aspect is consistent—the steady reduction in the amount of support for local authorities. That forces local authorities to increase the rate poundage if they are to maintain their services and employment at the present inadequate levels, thus confirming the view fostered by the Government that local authorities are spendthrifts. Despite the fact that local authorities keep to their budgets far better than any Government of whatever political complexion, their efforts to explain the situation through local news sheets is now to be stifled at birth.

The Secretary of State is no exception to the tinkering that has gone on. In his announcement of the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87, he abandoned the targets which had been a feature of the grant system since 1981-82 and replaced them with new block grant mechanisms, combined with the grant changes made necessary by the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties, making the 1986-87 settlement the most difficult to comprehend since the new grant system was introduced. It is small wonder that the shire counties are complaining that it is unfair to expect their ratepayers to bear an extra burden as a result of a policy decision to give more help to inner cities.

The letter sent by the Association of County Councils to all hon. Members has already been quoted. The association contends that the current expenditure plans are deficient by more than £1·4 billion, compared with the updated expenditure group's costing of local authorities' present policies in 1986-87. It contends that the Government have long accepted the basis of these figures. Moreover, the £1·4 billion assumes less for the teachers' pay award than is currently on offer, and nothing at all for a "conditions of service" settlement. The deficit may therefore be even greater. The Secretary of State's explanation still leaves a gap to be filled by local authorities. It appears that the outcome will be a substantial overspend relative to the Government's plans —as I said earlier, there will be large rate increases unless balances are plentiful—or cuts in services.

I appreciate the dismay of the shire counties, but it should not be thought that metropolitan districts are faring any better. The national cash freeze on rate support grant means that the proportion of local authority spending that is met by central Government has fallen again, from 47·4 per cent. to 46·4 per cent. That will cost the ratepayers of Coventry over £2 million—the equivalent of a 5p rate.

Nor does the abolition of the old system of targets and penalties mean that the Government are not still controlling local authority spending. Settlement is based on local authorities spending 3·4 per cent. more than the 1985-86 budget, and penalties are now imposed through loss of grant for spending more than that. Under the new system, Coventry city council will lose grant of £5 million for so-called overspending. The city council disbenefits especially from the new system because its expenditure is higher than the Government's measure of need — the grant-related expenditure assessment — despite the fact that it has never spent more than its target. Such "overspending" will add at least 11p to the city council's rate. Yet it is an authority whose real expenditure is under control and has even fallen slightly compared with 1985-86.

The abolition of the previous system of targets and penalties is not neutral in its effects because of the high, Government-set, maximum rate precepts and expenditure limits for the joint boards, which are being treated more favourably than local authorities. That is likely to cost Coventry ratepayers over £7 million, which will mean another 17p on the rate. Coventry ratepayers face a rate increase of up to 30 per cent. in 1986-87, which can be reduced only by measures which will increase the 1987-88 rate.

The national distribution of grant is crucially dependent on the expenditure assumption of 3·4 per cent. above 1985-86 budgets. In the longer term, as the temporary multipliers are withdrawn — that is, the series of arbitrary caps and safety nets on particular system changes —ratepayers in the metropolitan areas are likely to fare worse because of the impact of the new grant mechanisms.

Far from being simpler and fairer, local authorities face a mass of technical complexities, distortions and uncertainties. To suggest that it could be illegal for local authorities even to attempt to explain this maze to their ratepayers is adding insult to injury. To say, as the Secretary of State did, that he is in favour of more local accountability is to fly in the face of the facts.

6.55 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Like everyone else who has spoken so far, I am in favour of giving more money to the inner cities, but that is a red herring in the context of this debate. There is every reason to give more money to inner city areas, but that should be done by increasing the rate support grant or by general taxation. There is no reason why it should be done at the expense of shire counties. I realise that the fault lies with the Treasury — which can think of nothing other than reducing income tax—not with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Therefore, the Treasury is squeezing my right hon. Friend. However, he is in the unfortunate position of being responsible for Government policy. I am not criticising him personally except in one respect to which I shall come later.

I shall proceed from the particular to the general and use the Buckinghamshire county council to demonstrate the full idiocy of the system. My hon. Friends the Members

[Sir Ian Gilmour]

for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) and for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) have asked to be associated with my remarks about Buckinghamshire.

No one suggests that Buckinghamshire county council is inefficient, badly managed or extravagant. Indeed, it is extremely efficient, economical and well managed. It does a great deal to try to obtain value for money. No one has ever criticised it for spending too much. Indeed, some have criticised it for spending too little. All the evidence shows that its expenditure is at average or below average levels compared with other authorities. In common with all authorities, a great deal of its expenditure is fixed, and that part of its budget cannot be touched in any way. For example, it cannot sack 100 teachers or put them on half pay. The idea that there is scope for substantial economies is moonshine. There must be a substantial increase in expenditure if only because, contrary to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) said, Buckinghamshire is the fastest-growing county in the country and obviously needs additional resources.

How have the Government dealt with the extremely simple situation of an economical and efficient local administration serving a fast-growing population? First, the Government have taken no account of the increased population of Buckinghamshire. Their figures are wrong by at least 4 per cent., or 23,000 people.

Secondly, instead of increasing its GRE by more than the average, they have increased it by less than the average. The Government's new and rather dubious methodology has resulted in Buckinghamshire receiving a GRE that is probably £3 million less than what it would have been.

Thirdly, and as a result of the absurdities of the system, if Buckinghamshire spends its GRE figure next year, which is £236·6 million, it will lose £20 million, or 37 per cent., of its grant compared with this year. In fact, it is unlikely to get its spending down to its GRE figure, and it would probably be disastrous if it did. However, a great deal more is being asked of it than that.

It is true that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that he would consider the question of burden payments for Milton Keynes, and we are grateful for that. However, that will be only a minor palliative. It remains a fact that the result of what is being proposed is indefensible and unacceptable. It will lead to a rate increase of up to 30 per cent.

That brings me to the point where I take issue with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He should have said from the outset how serious the assessment was for the shire counties. It would have been much better if he had come clean before Christmas instead of producing the answers that he gave to our questions. I draw attention to the answer that he gave me, for a reason to which I shall come, when he said that the Buckinghamshire grant this year is £54 million, that if the present system had continued it would have got only £46 million, and that it had a chance of getting as much as £59 million, £52 million or £50 million. In fact, to get £59 million the county council would have had to cut its expenditure this year, compared with last, by at least 5 per cent. in cash terms; in real terms, taking inflation and a rising population into account, it would have had to cut it by about 20 per cent.

It is inconceivable that anyone should do that. It shows —this became plain at the meeting of which my right hon. Friend spoke — that the Department of the Environment is working from the wrong figures. It got the Buckinghamshire expenditure wrong last year by no less than £12 million. That sort of error produces the kind of idiocies about which we have all been talking this afternoon.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): A modest householder in my area on the average industrial wage will pay £150 more in rates per year, equivalent on his wage to 2p on income tax.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is an extremely serious situation. I hope that the Government will think about it when considering tax cuts.

The reason why my right hon. Friend was misled and misleading is, I think, that he thought that if he abolished targets and penalties that was all there was to worry about: everybody would be so pleased by their abolition that no one would worry. I congratulate him on doing that, but the fact is that he has not totally abolished penalties. He has abolished a very bad system and put in its place merely a bad system, so our gratitude is modified. He has not abolished penalties altogether because the so-called "taper", as far as my county council is concerned, works very much as a penalty.

Since 1979 we have had 10 different local government finance systems — more than one a year. The present one is not the worst on record; only the second worst. Like its predecessor, it suffers from two fundamental defects stemming from central Government arrogance. The first is the idea that Whitehall can lay down what local authorities should spend. They simply are not equipped to do it. Every local authority has different needs and different resources. A few civil servants and Ministers, however able, in the Department of the Environment simply cannot know. That is why we get the idiotic things that have been mentioned today. The whole system is fundamentally wrong. There is no basis for the Department of the Environment thinking that it can do what it purports to do, so I hope that it will stop doing it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks: So would the right hon. Gentleman be in favour of central Government support to the rate support grant being increased from its present low level of 46 per cent?

Sir Ian Gilmour: That is what I have been saying for the past three years. In other words, what I have opposed is its reduction year after year, because that can only lead to a substantial increase in rates.

Secondly, in pursuit of the dogma that all public expenditure is bad, the Government seek to impose on local authorities quite unacceptable economies. They seem to forget that local authorities have statutory responsibilities. My right hon. Friend is asking local authorities to impose cuts and economies which he would not impose if he had the statutory responsibilities for those services. The Government are asking local authorities to do things that no Minister would conceivably do. Ministers seek only to impose savage and totally unrealistic economies because they provide the money — although it is not enough — and the local authorities provide the services.

That, again, is a fundamental defect of what the Government are trying to do. They should take note of the statutory responsibilities of local authorities.

My right hon. Friend has said that he will announce a new system next week. That is very gratifying, provided that it is not worse than the present one. I am bound to say that, from what I read in the newspapers, I find the idea of a poll tax distinctly unappetising. In any case, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said, it will be several years before it comes about, so we shall have to live with the present system. The idea that we can go on with the sort of absurdity that everyone has mentioned this afternoon is quite wrong. The system is totally unacceptable. The way in which it is operated is equally unacceptable.

The Government are treating Buckinghamshire county council and the ratepayers of Buckinghamshire, both commercial and ordinary ratepayers, in a way which is totally undeserved and quite intolerable. Therefore, I cannot possibly support the motion.

7.5 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): Like other Members who have participated in the debate, I shall confine my remarks in the main to the area that I represent. The effect of these reports on Lancashire will be catastrophic. There will be rate rises later this year on an unprecedented scale. It will be a question of record rate rises or massive cuts.

If one looks at the alternatives to cutting spending, one sees that there is no choice at all. Reports prepared by county council officers outline the effects of cuts of up to £25 million on the people of Lancashire. They make extremely grim reading. The figures show that just to continue spending on services at their present level would mean a rate rise of more than 46p in the pound.

If Lancashire were to cut spending by £25 million—a move which could be achieved only by sacking 2,500 employees—ratepayers would still be faced with a rise of more than 25p in the pound. Teachers would have to be sacked. Fire service manpower would have to be reduced. There would have to be fewer police officers, at a time when more are needed. Not only would the increasing demand for home helps, for example, not be met, but there would be a fall in the number now provided. Homes for the elderly would close, concessionary bus travel would be scrapped, fire engines would be taken off the road, libraries would close and roads would be left to deteriorate.

Many of these forced cuts would affect the young, the elderly and the disabled. The Labour group on the Lancashire county council will not be party to cuts of this magnitude. Its members will not make wholesale redundancies. To do so would make a mockery of everything worth while being done by Lancashire county council to create jobs in its area.

In common with many other shire counties, Lancashire did not create the crisis in local authorities. The Government must accept full responsibility for the situation. They have demonstrated ever since 1979 that they have not the slightest interest in the welfare of the people of Lancashire.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) referred to profligate spending in the Lancashire area. With myself and others, the hon. Lady attended a meeting last week in the House, called by the Lancashire county council, to consider education, the rapidly falling level of building maintenance and the rising number of old schools that require replacement. At that meeting she said nothing about profligate spending. I am sorry that she is not in her seat at the moment. It seems possible that when local authority delegations come down to the House Conservative Members can say one thing and then, in a different situation in the House, say something totally different.

Happily, Preston borough council has some reserve funds. In 1980, when the £2 million subsidy to the housing revenue account wiped out the Government's policies, the council dipped into those reserve funds. Preston has some appalling deprivation. In areas such as St. John's, Ullswater road and Deepdale it is worse than in parts of inner London. In several blocks of high-rise flats in the central ward of Preston the unemployment rate is 77 per cent. Not only do the people there reside in bad housing, but there are many one-parent families and deprivations of various types. It is to such inner town areas that the Government are said to be allocating special resources.

Preston should be spending nearly £13 million. The Government say that it should spend £9 million. It will again have to seek recourse to reserve funds. That cannot go on, because the reserves will soon run out. Preston needs £13 million for capital expenditure, but it will be able to spend only £2·6 million. Housing capital schemes must be cut from £10 million to £1·5 million. It is against such a background that public expenditure on other services has been cut. Ambulances in the Lancashire area will be cut. Public expenditure on hospital beds is highly questionable, and we are facing major problems in education in terms of school repairs, books and so on.

I mention only one aspect of housing, because several cases have come to my notice recently. On the basis of the Government's public expenditure plans, nothing can be done to alleviate the circumstances of disabled people who require minor adaptations to their homes to make them more accessible or to make it easier for families to cope with their disabled relatives.

I hope that Conservative Members who have received the same letter as we have from the Association of County Councils will heed its request and vote with us tonight against the Government's policies.

7.12 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): This is a short debate, so short that we might have had the presence of the Secretary of State for a more generous proportion of it, particularly as it started late because of the statement on the Channel tunnel. I asked him to be here and he is not, so I am not very pleased with that for a start.

To set the scene, although targets have now been abolished, the system of penalties that has replaced them is based on the expenditure levels themselves formed by the target system. So already we start with levels of expenditure distorted by the target system. In fairness, and in setting the scene, I must point out that many of the low spenders, certainly those in my part of the world, have a posture of low spending not least because they were robbed during the tenure of the Labour Government, including when they were kept in office by the Liberals between 1974 and 1979.

It is as well to remember that—and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has not shown his face in the debate to date, and nor has the leader of the Liberal party—the alterations in rate support

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

grant between 1974 and 1979 while the Liberal-supported Labour Government were in office deprived Devon, to take one example, of £36 million. So it started from a low base, and, as with many other county and district councils, the target system was imposed immediately after my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) had introduced the grant-related expenditure system, and stated that never again would the low-spending councils be made to pay for the sins of the high-spending councils. He then introduced a target system which did the exact reverse of what he had undertaken. That is the history leading up to where we are today.

There has been much talk about the needs of the inner city areas; but is Bournemouth or Hove an "inner city area"? I believe that Hove will not be charging any rates at all because it does not know how to spend all the money that it will get out of the system. What about the district councils, about which we have heard so little? I shall give a second example from Devon, not because the problems of Devon are of obsessive interest to the House, but to illustrate what is happening in an area which I know best. What will happen to the impoverished rural councils which have a posture of low expenditure because their resources are so slender and because they have incomes so much lower than the national average and populations so dispersed?

We were glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) recovering and back in the House last week. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] West Devon will, if it increases its expenditure by what the Government consider to be only a standstill amount in real terms, get 2·54 per cent. more. Bournemouth will get 32·63 per cent. more. Mid-Devon, most of which is in my constituency, will get 2·8 per cent. more. Torbay—an "inner city"?—would get 15·3 per cent. more. Exeter, not noticeably poor, will get 23·5 per cent. more. Plymouth, bursting with money from every direction, will get 30·94 per cent. more if its expenditure is at a standstill in the Government's own terms compared with 2·54 per cent. for West Devon and 2·8 per cent. for Mid-Devon. What sort of madness is that?

Did the Secretary of State intend that or did it happen by negligence? He altered the composition of the formulas to try to achieve something. There is a case to be made for inner cities such as Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and parts of London: but that is a case for a transfer of funds from the fairest possible taxation system, which is the Government one which, presumably, my right hon. Friend supports as a member of the Cabinet, rather than by imposing further burdens on a notoriously unjust taxation system, which is the present rating system. We do not need another Green Paper, we need legislation. Until that legislation comes, we do not need a further transfer of the burden from the system of Government taxation under the direct control of the Cabinet in every Budget. That is where more of the burden should be borne until there is a replacement system of local government taxation. We should not go on, year after year, transferring more of the burden, from what is either the most just central Government system—if not, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the rest of the Cabinet should be doing something about it—to a system that the whole Government reject as deficient of logic and equity.

I believe that it is right for me to castigate the Government in this way, but there is no reason for complacency from the Opposition or the alliance. Devon is now controlled by a witches' brew of Liberal, SDP and Labour Members. There is not a single SDP Member in the Chamber, including the right hon. Member for Devonport

The leader of the council issued a press statement that is in today's papers saying that the council has written to all Devon Members and that he wants the letter used in today's debate. The letter was sent at 9.45 on Friday night to the House of Commons, not to Members' homes. No Members are here on Saturday and Sunday and they were not told that the letter was on its way. The hon. Members concerned had to look through 150 letters to find it, even if they did know that it was coming. That is the incompetence that adds to the matter. I had to read over that letter once I was in the Chamber. There are two arithmetical mistakes on the key figures on the front page, and the quantum of the clawback assumption is not quoted anywhere in the letter. As a result I dare not use the figures that the alliance-controlled council has asked me to use because of the evident errors in the ones that I have been able to check. I am not pleased about that.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: If the hon. Gentleman can produce a member of the Social Democratic party, I will give way. The fact that there is not a single SDP Member present in the House deprives that party of any say in the matter.

When we look at the increased burdens that local government is asked to finance from a decreased percentage contribution from central Government, I have to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State how he can expect county councils to take on an increasing burden from the National Health Service by joint funding when it is receiving a decreased percentage of its revenue from central Government, and is being subjected to penalties if it increases its expenditure. That does not make sense. At district council level the Government continue to impose more and more burdens. If the Government pay for the extra burdens that is fair. If they say that district councils are more efficient in their administration—as Devon ones certainly are—there is a case for that. There is no case when they do not pay for it.

The Government passed the Housing Defects Act 1984 forcing district councils to buy back defective houses. That left district councils with an enormous bill to pay. In Mid-Devon the whole of the housing investment programme will be used to pay for defective houses and rehousing the people from them for the next five years. It will also have to pay for the sudden emergency need to rehouse people who are moved out while the work is done. It is enjoined to use the most economical treatment on the house. Is it economical to repair, at great expense, a house with a life expectancy of not more than 10 or 12 years, instead of building new ones?

In the previous Parliament, when we gave the right to buy—of which I approve—we included a protection for designated rural areas where it was impractical to build more council houses so that the local housing authority could buy back those houses if necessary when they come on to the market, rather than letting them go as holiday homes. That has been nullified by the financial restrictions

that completely prevent local authorities from buying back those houses. One must not forget that a former Minister for Housing and Construction amended the original Act to weaken the safeguards. There is not enough council housing in rural areas now for old people, many of whose needs would have been met by their sons and daughters or nephews and nieces. They have to move into the towns, where there is nobody to look after them unless they live in warden-controlled bungalows at extra cost to the ratepayer. What provision is made for that by central Government? None.

It is the refusal of central Government to live with the consequences of their expenditure legislation that is becoming so intolerable. That goes on apace because Ministers will not look at the expenditure implications of the legislation that they put through the House. If they can pass the burden to another Department of State involving the same amount of Government money, they imagine that they have in some way eased the public sector requirement. They have not. If the burden is transferred from the Department of Health and Social Security to the Department of the Environment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer still has to budget for it. If it is transferred to district or county councils, they need more money from central Government, not less.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that this nonsense cannot be met by pushing out another Green Paper. It requires legislation to reform local government finance. There is nothing left to be said in the debate about the reform of local government finance that has not been said since 1964. There have been Royal Commissions and committees of inquiry. There is nothing left to say but there is much left to do. My message to my own Government is to stop transferring the burden from the central Government taxation system to the local government taxation system. The local government finance system is utterly unjust for reasons given earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). I do not need to repeat those reasons. Until that has been remedied, central Government must pay for a higher not smaller proportion.

That is why I shall vote against all of the reports tonight. I believe that many of my hon. Friends, with great reluctance, will also vote against them.

7.28 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): This is probably the most enjoyable rate support grant debate that I have been able to listen to. The speech of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) only enhanced the level of my enjoyment. As in recent years, the rate support grant settlement has taken on the appearance of Marsham street's great annual lucky dip. This year we saw a new Secretary of State playing his role of little Jack Horner sitting in the corner putting his finger in the pie and pulling out a plum. It is a bitter plum for the shire counties and it is a rotten pie all round.

The hon. Member for Tiverton and others have made it clear that the proportion of central Government support to local authorities has declined from 61 per cent. of spending in 1979-80 to 46·4 per cent. in 1986-87. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, that is an example of the hidden taxation that has been used by this dishonest Government to transfer tax burdens from central to local government and from the rich to the poor.

The hon. Member for Tiverton could perhaps have gone on to mention the same sleight of hand in which the Government have indulged with regard to gas, electricity and water prices, because they fall into the same category of hidden taxation that the Government have been using.

In last year's lucky dip from Marsham street, the shires thought that they were doing reasonably well. I remember the former Secretary of State. I wish that he were here this evening. I am sure that he would have enjoyed some of the discomfort being experienced by the present Secretary of State, because he experienced it so often himself. He could not pluck up the courage to be here.

With the last settlement, the shires were saying that they had at least reached a reasonable balance, but they were warned that it was not likely to remain because of the way in which the rate support grant system can be manipulated by Marsham street. In last year's settlement, London lost out. This year, the switch in funds is the other way, mainly because of the effects of the GLC's abolition.

The Opposition endorse what the Secretary of State said about putting more funds into the inner cities. We do not think that that should necessarily be at the expense of the shire counties. Of course, the Secretary of State's extreme discomfort at being attacked so much from behind was something that gave the Opposition great pleasure. Long may it continue.

The Government are finding out, with respect to London, just how efficient and cost-effective the GLC is in running London's strategic services.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend was making a point about assistance being given to the London boroughs. Does he feel confident that the Government would give as much assistance to the London boroughs this year if local elections were not going to take place in the London boroughs in May?

Mr. Banks: Not at all, because one realises that it is being done because the 1986 elections in London and elsewhere are on the way. I fully expect that next year's rate support grant settlement, assuming that there is a Conservative Government in control — there is no guarantee of that — will probably be switched back the other way yet again because of the effect of the revolt in the shires. That cannot be something that hon. Members on either side would endorse. We need a degree of certainty in local authority finances, not this constant annual backwards and forwards movement when no one who is responsible for administering public funds and public services in the town and county halls can have any assurance about the future.

The shires are up in arms, and one understands that. I should like the Minister to tell us the amount of money that the shires will lose this year under the 1986-87 settlement. Is it £250 million, £260 million or £266 million? I do not know. I should be grateful for the information and I am sure that Conservative Members would like to know.

We know, because the Association of County Councils told us, that this year's settlement is at the expense of the shire county ratepayers. It is remarkable but, as I said, most enjoyable for the Opposition to see the revolt of the bourgeoisie on the Conservative Benches. It continues Marsham street's amazing ability to get up someone's nose in a big way every year.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): It is not just the bourgeoisie that is up in arms. It is the constituents of

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

Hayes and Harlington in Hillingdon. We have had a 71 per cent. decrease in grant from central Government this year. In fact, because of the machinations of this settlement we shall be out of grant altogether. In 1983-84 we received £21 million from the Government. It is the working class of what is known colloquially as "Ayes and Arlington" which is fed up with this Government and their attitude to the rate support grant.

Mr. Banks: One always excludes the hon. Gentleman from any accusations of being bourgeois. His exceedingly muscular approach to local government, and all other subjects, gives us great amusement. He is merely pointing out something that the Government need to understand. Although there is an overall transfer on this occasion of about £21 million of grant to London, it is very much a differential transfer because some of the outer boroughs, including Hillingdon and Newham, will suffer badly from the settlement. Not all the London boroughs will benefit. In many ways, it is London Regional Transport and the other successor bodies to the GLC which will benefit.

The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on something about which all of us in the House are worried—that the rate support grant system has reached the level of low farce. It is complex, unstable, inherently unfair, and, as I have said, infinitely manipulable.

I shall try to demonstrate the manipulability of the system with regard to London. In broad and relative terms, the rate support grant settlement is good for London. London's grant in 1986-87 is estimated to be £221 million above that to be paid to London authorities in 1985-86. I say relative because the cumulative reduction in grants to London since 1979-80 has been £3·5 billion. That, of course, is the main reason for high rates in inner London.

London's more favourable treatment in the 1986-87 settlement has been achieved by improved GREAs for London boroughs and a technical adjustment to London Regional Transport's notional GREA. The GREA total for London represents an increase of 9·2 per cent. over last year compared with 7·3 per cent. increase in GREA nationally. Here is the sleight of hand—had the GLC remained in existence the GREA attributed to it would have increased by no less than 26 per cent. On the basis of this settlement, the GLC would have received grant of £128 million for spending £770 million—the level of the 1985-86 budget with an amount for inflation—and yet in 1985-86, with that budget, instead of receiving £128 million it received Government grant of only £36 million.

If we add the GLC's 1985-86 GREA to the notional GREA for London Regional Transport, the total GREA for London was up by 63 per cent. in one year. The 1986-87 settlement makes that position even more absurd, because we now have a further 26 per cent. increase in GLC GREA and a 67 per cent. increase in notional GREA for London Regional Transport resulting in a GREA some 11 per cent. greater than the Government estimates of expenditure on those services. Clearly, Marsham street's financial calculations have gone crazy.

Let us compare that with 1984-85 when the GLC allegedly overspent its GREA by 53 per cent. The position becomes more bizarre when one realises the size of the increase in the Government's expenditure target for the council, which increased by 63 per cent. between 1984-85 and 1985-86. That was achieved as a result of dropping the special rule, which applied only to the GLC. Thus, at a stroke, and using the rate support grant settlement, the GLC was transformed from being a massive overspender against target to an underspender not liable to grant penalties which could be passed on to London boroughs after abolition.

What an act of wizardry. What an act of necromancy by the Secretary of State. I am surprised that with so much expertise he has not already become the Prime Minister.

What was the reason for the switch? As I understand it—perhaps the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—the Government deliberately held down the GLC's targets in 1983-84 and 1984-85 better to accuse the GLC of the overspending which they then used to justify the abolition of the GLC and rate capping.

However, after abolition the effect of transferring those artificially low targets to the London boroughs would have had an adverse effect on the cost of abolition to the London ratepayers, and hence the dropping of the special rule which increased the GLC's targets by some 63 per cent. Now we have lies, damn lies, statistics and the rate support grant settlement. The Government gave costs as one of the major reasons for the abolition of the GLC and yet destroyed that argument with the 1984-85 settlement. We still do not know about costs. Try as one may to get statistics out of the Government about the cost of the GLC, the result is a refusal to give any information.

During the early days the Government plucked a figure of £100 million out of the air and said that that would be the saving to London from the abolition of the GLC. We were never told where the £100 million came from. I have just received another reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). I asked if he will make it his policy

"to update the estimates of savings and costs regarding Greater London council and metropolitan county abolition given by Ministers during the passage of the Local Government Act 1985 and included in the explanatory and financial memorandum to that Act".

The reply was, no. Marsham street has not the foggiest idea how much abolition will cost London ratepayers. The Labour party, and I suspect the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), will say that it will cost a hell of a lot. One has only to look at the circulated provisional budget of the London Residuary Body to appreciate that. We understand that Tag Taylor has been leant on by the great bulk of the Secretary of State and he has changed the budget yet again. When the London boroughs look at the costs of replacing services, especially in the outer parts of London, they will find that they have not got the money from Government to maintain those services. When the charges and levies come through from the London Residuary Body and all the other quangos inheriting services from the GLC, the real cost to London ratepayers will be seen and it will be high.

My own borough of Newham will suffer badly because of the rate support grant settlement. The Minister is well aware of the problems of Newham. According to the Department of the Environment's own calculations, Newham is the second most deprived borough in the whole of England. This rate support grant settlement will not assist Newham. Partnership status would assist the borough of Newham, as would the disregard of the expenditure of £11·5 million for 1983-84 and the revision of the 1985-86 target. I understand that the Secretary of

State has refused this revision of our 1985-86 target. If this situation is left as it is Newham will end up with a revenue deficit at 31 March. Will the Minister or the Secretary of State be prepared to meet a delegation of hon. Members from Newham, councillors and officers who would explain the extreme difficulties in our deprived borough? I would be grateful if the Minister would give an affirmative reply to this.

In the meantime we are left with a patchwork quilt of rate support grant settlement. It is an administrative and economic chaos. The Secretary of State deserves such chaos as his role in clambering up to the top in the Department of the Environment leaves much to be desired. This is especially true with regard to his loyalty to his own predecessor, the poor old right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) who is not present today, probably because he is too embarrassed to show his face. The rate support grant settlement is a mess and so is the Government's policy on local authorities. The sooner the Front Bench of the Labour party is transferred to the other side, the sooner we will get some order back into local authority expenditure.

7.43 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I should think that it is now painfully obvious to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that those of us who represent shire counties are dissatisfied with the way in which the rate support grant has been calculated and distributed. Why should this be? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State defended what he has done, with his characteristic good humour and grace, on the ground that it is necessary to ensure that total public expenditure is kept within bounds. That is an objective that all Conservative Members share. It is right that local authorities which were overspending —some in a reckless fashion—should be brought to heel. It is right that local authorities should be obliged to curb waste and to avoid excessive rate increases, especially when so many small businesses are struggling for survival. But what is the reality?

I have had the honour to represent an Essex constituency for nearly 36 years and I can safely say that the Essex county council, for the earlier period Labour-controlled and later Conservative-controlled, has always been a prudently led and economically run local authority. Why is it that such an authority—there are others, too—which has for many years been a low spender and done its level best to meet the requirements of successive Governments, and which has been praised by Secretaries of State for its performance in this regard, is now penalised by the formula that the Government choose to determine the distribution of rate support grant?

There is no rhyme or reason in the system they employ. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), in his spirited speech, went so far as to describe it as one of "madness". I do not know about that, but, whatever it is, there is no justice in it. No reasonable person would deny that, given the serious problems of our inner cities, there must be some shift of resources in that direction. The Association of County Councils agrees with this. But it is unfair that the shift should be wholly at the expense of the shire counties, with the result that there will have to be substantial rate increases if the present level of our services is not to be reduced. I understand that the cost of the shift is equivalent to a 5·7 per cent. rate increase. We simply cannot reduce the level of our services.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if, in the Budget in March, there is a significant reduction in taxation, Essex constituents will require all that rebate to pay for increased rates?

Sir Bernard Braine: Yes; that had occurred to me.

If one went into the ramifications of all this, perhaps what my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton said is correct—that it is madness. The full implications have not been understood by the Government and have not been grasped. How can we reduce the level of services, which are now at the lowest level consistent with our county authority carrying out the obligation put upon it by Parliament? The level of our services is now irreducible. When it comes to finding the resources for the proper maintenance of our school buildings, the situation has reached a dangerous point. Our spending is far below what is required if we are not to face masssive capital expenditure on replacement and reconstruction in a few years time. Under the present system, this will certainly raise the rate. Putting the whole burden of shifting resources to the inner cities from the shire counties is unfair and wrong and—I suspect that many of my colleagues will agree—unacceptable.

Mr. Dicks: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that today he is making the same points as he made two years and one year ago and that nothing has changed?

Sir Bernard Braine: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall come to that in a moment.

Thus, to maintain its present level of services, Essex county council must increase its current year's spending from £500 million to £548 million. The increase is due mainly to commitments arising from 1985-86 — inflation, including index-linked pay awards for police and firemen, provision for teachers' pay and restructuring and allowing for underprovision for pay awards in 1985-86. The RSG announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 18 December 1985 means that to meet that increase our county rates will have to increase by 18 per cent. and grant would go down from £132 million to £115 million.

The Government have set the Essex GRE at £552·77 million, which is their assessment of the cost of providing a standard level of services in our county. To increase expenditure to that level will mean a rate increase of 20·3 per cent., while grant will be reduced to £105 million. That underlines what my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said a moment ago.

Ever since the system of targets, GREs and penalties was introduced, Essex has consistently made the point that it penalises the low-spending counties. Every year from 1979-80, the RSG has meant a continuing grant loss for Essex. Every year, Essex's expenditure has been far below GRE, the Government's estimate of the cost of providing a standard level of services, and below target. Every year, budgets have been based on standstills and cuts in expenditure. Against that background, how can there be any planning for the future? If there are to be rate increases, such as I have mentioned, how can business and industry in the county plan confidently for the future? This, mark you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a county that has been expanding and, as a result of the M11, offers great possibilities for industrial grants. What is now proposed will have an adverse effect on the high hopes for develpment that we held a couple of years ago.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Every year since 1979, the chairman of Essex county council and I on behalf of the county of Essex Members of Parliament have taken a deputation to successive Secretaries of State. Each time we have been told that our circumstances are understood and that if we are patient it will eventually come right. Targets have been abolished, but RSG settlements have cut Essex's grant. We were surely entitled this year to a correction of the unfairness of our position compared with London, but we are worse off than ever before.

I should like to respond to what my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) said and give some idea of the assistance that has been given to us. On 23 January 1984, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) said:

"I would expect in 1985-86 and thereafter to be able to set targets which take greater account of GREs and thus recognise the efforts which low-spending authorities have made . . . When I draw up the targets next year I shall take greater account of those authorities which have budgeted carefully and which could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be called high spenders."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1984; Vol. 52, c. 642-43.]

On 25 July, he said:

"The RSG settlement that I am proposing will be less complex than in past years; it will be fairer to responsible, low-spending authorities; it will maintain pressure on higher-spending authorities to find savings; and it will place firm control on the most extravagant authorities. If local government responds sensibly, average rate increases next year should be in low single figures."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1317.]

Maybe, but not in Essex.

On 16 January 1985, my right hon. Friend's successor, who inherited these assurances, said:

"Thus, low-spending authorities will benefit from rate capping. For authorities which budget in the coming year, 1985-86, to spend at or below both target and GREA, targets for the following year, 1986-87, will take account of those further savings to be achieved from rate capping the highest spenders. To answer my hon. Friend's intervention, these low-spenders' targets in 1986-87 will therefore be both more favourable than they would have been but for rate capping, and more favourable than for authorities which budget this year to spend above either target or GREA."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 417.]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford, on 25 July 1985, went on to say:

"I can certainly give him the assurance that low-spending authorities, spending below or close to the GRE will, on average, stand to gain grant, but of course will continue to face grant pressures against increased spending."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1320.]

Not in Essex, which has been a low-spending authority for a long time. Its budget has always been below GRE. It is the very type of authority that successive Secretaries of State have said need helping once a new system of grant is introduced.

In 1985-86, the Essex GRE was £524 million. The county budget was well below that at £500 million and the grant received was £132 million. For 1986-87, the GRE is £552 million. That is an increase of 5·5 per cent., to include the extra money that is required just to stand still, to keep pace with inflation and to pay increased wages. Under the new grant system, if Essex contemplated doing no more than increasing its budget by a similar 5·5 per cent. and spending £524 million, what would be its grant from the Government? Surely, one could confidently expect the grant would be similarly increased from last year in accordance with the promises that the Government had given to authorities like Essex to provide a fairer settlement. Not at all. I am assured that, on those figures, if Essex was to spend £524 million and no more against its GRE figure of £552 million, its grant would be no less than £21 million below that of last year.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government was told yesterday by representatives of the three parties on the county council that a budget has not been finally agreed, but for some increases in our expenditure there is no escape. I did not intervene during the Secretary of State's speech, but he seemed to be taking out of account those factors that make for increased expenditure over which local authorities have absolutely no control. For example, there are statutory wage awards for the police and the fire service over and above inflation. Essex can do nothing about this —it is automatic. There is the minimum replacement of buildings that are falling into disrepair. The council can do nothing about that either. Indeed, it would be failing to perform its statutory duty if it did not patch up a few windows and doors and give its buildings a lick of paint. There is not one constituency in Essex where such problems are not being faced.

Mr. Madel: Does my right hon. Friend agree there is also another unavoidable cost? I have in mind debt charges on schools which had to be built, not least in Essex and Bedfordshire, to cater for the overspill from London. That is yet another example of Essex and Bedfordshire, to name but two, helping the inner cities.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are now getting down to the nitty gritty. In its wisdom this House passes legislation which puts increased burdens upon local authorities. We do this because we consider it to be right. Take, for example, the provision of increased residential care which the care in the community programme requires. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) will testify, Essex has a high proportion of elderly people, and that is placing an increasing burden upon the local authority. We cannot escape that burden because Parliament expects us to respond to the need.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the lower income groups will be badly affected by this settlement? In my constituency, we are putting burdens on the lower income group which it cannot afford. Those burdens should be borne by the taxpayer, not by the ratepayer. Over many years in the House I have said that and asked for reforms. Alas, they have not come about.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about this hit and miss system. He has been a Member of this House for many years and is a doughty champion of the elderly in our county. I am sure that is well recognised. The effect of all this on a county like ours, with an expanding population, an increasing number of retired people and an increasing need for services, is devastating. Perhaps I may adapt a phrase associated with our county's most distinguished parliamentarian, "Up with this unfairness we in Essex will not put."

8.1 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) referred to some of the difficulties facing Lancashire, and I fully endorse his comments.

I listened to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). It is remarkable that time after time when we debate the RSG settlement they criticise the Government, but when it comes to the vote very few Government Members vote with us. They will come back in a year's time and hear the Government again say, "We believe we have got it right this time. We will still pursue Conservative party policies." They will not solve the problems facing local government.

The front page of Thursday's *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* carried an article warning of big rate rises. The article tried to show the problems that will face Lancashire. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston highlighted those problems when he spoke about the type of rate increases that Lancashire will have to face in order to stand still, purely allowing for inflation and a rise in costs.

In its budget, Lancashire works on the basis of a 6 per cent. rise in wages and a 5 per cent. rise in prices. Those are not unreasonable figures on which to base an estimate. In opening the debate the Secretary of State referred to the manual workers' settlement and said that the settlement reached in November last year of 8·2 per cent. was wrong and a bad settlement, and that local government should carry the burden for anything over 3·5 per cent. He failed to say that that settlement was particularly aimed at the lowest paid workers in local government. It was not a flat rate settlement which gave all workers an 8·2 per cent. increase, because it gave a greater pay increase to those at the lower end of council service. We have to accept that many people employed in local government and in public service as a whole are paid extremely low wages. It is time we did something to ensure that they have reasonable and fair wages. The RSG settlement should take those points into account.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that in practice there will be an extra £400 million to be recycled to local authorities as a result of some of the spending decisions by local councils? Would it not be helpful if the Government would at least determine a minimum amount from that £400 million which local authorities could take into account in setting their rates? Unless that figure is given, we will get ridiculous rate suggestions. If the Government could give an indication of a minimum amount from the £400 million, it might at least persuade me not to vote against the Government.

Mr. Pike: I think that the hon. Gentleman has been slightly misled by what the Secretary of State floated in his speech. He floated that £400 million in his speech without anything to guarantee it. It was an offer without any evidence to prove that it would be carried out. The Secretary of State did that purely to confuse some of the doubters on the Government Back Benches and to persuade them not to go into the Lobby and vote with the Opposition, but to abstain or to vote in support of the Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend has made a valuable point. Because of the way in which the rate support grant settlement was ordered this year, it is likely that those previously alleged high-spending Labour local authorities will be low-spending authorities in terms of the Government's calculations. Therefore, they will not attract a penalty and there will not be a £400 million kitty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I appeal to hon. Members for brevity and remind them that many interventions make long speeches even longer and prevent other Members from being called?

Mr. Pike: The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is correct and important.

The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) spoke about the problems of Lancashire county council. Her intervention was totally misleading and needs to be taken in perspective, having regard to the situation in Lancashire. The RSG settlement that the Government are proposing will by itself mean that Lancashire will be faced with a 13p increase. When Labour took control of Lancashire county council in 1981, it had to put right many years of neglect.

The cash target system on which we will operate until the changes now proposed take place was based on a low spending year when the Conservatives were in control. Because of the arbitrary date on which the cash target was based, many councils were placed in difficulties. All along, Lancashire has been spending less than its grant-related expenditure assessment. If it had spent up to its grant-related expenditure assessment, it would have been penalised.

Most people in local government now see the Government moving towards a point where the grant-related expenditure assessment is replacing the target. The Government are saying that there cannot be exemptions for councils spending up to the grant-related expenditure assessment. Several hon. Members intervened when the Secretary of State made this point, and he replied forcefully that it would cost the Government over £1 billion if they were to make that exemption. The Secretary of State was misleading the House, because he was making the assumption that every local authority now spending below its grant-related expenditure assessment would spend up to that figure. His argument was questionable and needs to be put to the test. Even if it were true and every authority spent up to that amount—if the Government want to base the system on grant-related expenditure assessment—how could they accuse those authorities of being profligate? It would be nonsense to do so. This proves that the Government have always had a system based on something which they cannot justify and prove.

Lancashire needs to spend an extra £44 million over the next five years to put its schools into good order. Two schools in my constituency are almost not suitable for use. More than half of Burnley Wood school has been secured because it had to be quarantined as a result of dry rot. Another primary school, Stonyholme, is in a similar condition. I shall visit it on Friday to look at its state.

Lancashire county council has not been able to provide sufficient old people's homes to meet needs. It has not been able to paint and repair them, yet the Government have failed to recognise that expenditure on maintenance provided at the time that it is needed often saves more in the end. If the council had been able to repair the Burnley Wood school when it first needed it, the cost would have been £150,000. On the last estimate, the cost was

[Mr. Pike]

£399,000. I looked at the school only a fortnight ago, and I think that the cost of repair would be £500,000. The county may have to demolish that school and build another.

Another example of where the council is considering saving money is the pulveriser in Burnley, which serves the whole of north-east Lancashire, not just the council area. The county council is considering stopping the use of that waste disposal unit, taking the waste as it comes off the waste wagons and disposing of it on an infill site. That would be a retrograde step. Although that measure is designed to save the county council money, it will cost the borough council an additional £140,000. That will be almost equal to a 2p additional rate.

Because of the changes in RSG, Burnley will need a 12p rate increase—a 25 per cent. increase on top of the existing 48p rate—just to maintain its position. Burnley is a deprived area which is designated under the inner urban areas programme. It is, of course, not exempt from penalties imposed by the Government with respect to expenditure arising from the urban programme. The council does not have the money needed to improve housing or to give grants. Because it cannot give grants, people cannot buy empty houses. Houses become derelict and, in the long run, the council has to demolish them, thereby creating greater expense for the authority and for the Government.

The Government always fail to recognise that capital expenditure by local authorities has revenue implications. Burnley's 25 per cent. rate increase to maintain a standstill position is after the safety net in this year's proposal, but we do not know what will happen in future years. What do the Government propose that Burnley should do? Should we stop improving our houses? Should we stop our capital programme? Should we close the recreational centre? Should we make massive cuts and impose

This RSG settlement has implications for section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. Under that section, local authorities are empowered to spend for the benefit of their inhabitants, where they have no other legal powers to do so, up to the equivalent of a 2p rate. As a result of the RSG proposals, the grant inclusive penny rate product is reduced. This reduces the amount that local authorities can spend under section 137. Most of the money spent under section 137 is used for worthy schemes. Because of the proposed changes, many local authorities will not have sufficient money to meet their commitments. The abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties will result in some of the money that could be used to the benefit of the people in those areas being lost.

The Government should undertake to maintain the present position, at least until after the Widdicombe inquiry has dealt with this issue. Burnley will suffer a 38 per cent. reduction under this measure. This year, the council could spend £262,000 under this heading, but the amount will fall to £163,000 next year. Burnley's reduction of 38 per cent. is by no means the highest in Britain.

I could go into great detail about how local authorities use section 137 money, but suffice it to say that the two main purposes in Burnley are attracting jobs and industry and helping voluntary organisations. They are both worthy objectives, but many local authorities like Burnley will not be able to fulfil them. The Government's proposals are wrong. It is time that they put the rate situation right once and for all and enabled local authorities to get on with the job for which they were elected.

8.16 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) mentioned capital investment because not only does capital investment now give rise to revenue expenditure later, but in recent years the pressure imposed on my county by inadequate RSG has meant that whereas, a few years ago, the county financed up to £3 million of capital per annum from revenue, the figure now is virtually nil. This means that, after a few years, the county will be paying out as much in increased interest charges as it was paying out in capital through the revenue account only a few years ago.

From a standstill budget, the increase in the Wiltshire county council rate for 1986-87 will be 28 per cent. In the event, a majority alliance/Labour coalition opposed by Conservative councillors has voted for increases in expenditure which bring the true proposed rate increases up to 32·2 per cent. As a result of creative accountancy and calling on balances, it should be possible to pull that figure back to about 26 per cent. If there had been no increases in expenditure, that figure would have been about 22 per cent. Even that level of rate increase is unacceptably high. It is a direct consequence of the RSG proposals.

I am not prepared to support proposals that can only bring about cuts in public services or huge rate increases, or both. Therefore, sadly, I shall vote against the Government. I should like to add that, within the Wiltshire county council budget exercise, the county treasurer has already taken account of the extra grant which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In this year's desperate circumstances, I think that Wiltshire Conservative councillors were right to vote against any increase in expenditure, but reality about the state of provision of services cannot be avoided. Wiltshire is one of the four lowest-spending education authorities. I am, therefore, constantly bombarded by parents, teachers and school governors concerned about the low level of capitation allowances and the poor state of school maintenance. That is understandable, as the new schools of the 1960s have now suffered 20 or more years of wear and tear. Likewise, it is self-evident to the most casual observer that the quality of county roads has deteriorated steadily over the past 10 years.

Personal services, police, fire and other services in Wiltshire are at, or below, the average level of expenditure. Therefore, in no way can it be claimed that Wiltshire county council is, or has been, extravagant. Indeed, the Audit Commission confirms that it is one of the classic low-spending shire counties.

The Government seem to forget that local government exists to provide services. It does not exist simply as a minor or even a major irritant instituted to interrupt and interfere in the otherwise smooth running of the mind of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He appears to forget that, even if local government did not exist, the services would still have to be provided and, given the relative inefficiency of central Government compared with local government, setting aside any other considerations, centrally provided services would almost certainly be more expensive.

The question that ratepayers will wish to ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer are

numerous, but I shall draw the attention of the House to a few. For example, if the economy is on course and doing as well as my right hon. Friend claims, why is it that the rate support grant has been cut? Why is it that he believes that our services can be further cut? Why is it that he is adding to inflationary pressures by instituting such huge increases in rates? How on earth can businesses, small or large, prosper in these conditions? What was the reaction of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Employment to the proposed size of the rate support grant? Did they not put in a good word for an increase in it? What is the point of even talking about tax cuts when any financial benefit that might accrue from them will be exceeded by rate increases?

It is slightly surprising that we have not had a Treasury Minister sitting on the Front Bench for the debate, as the Treasury is the main source of blame in this matter. But the Department of the Environment, too, has to face the wrath of ratepayers. I do not complain about the desire of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to give extra help to inner cities, taking account of their problems. However, having done so within the rate support grant, which takes little or no account of the real world, why add insult to the injury felt by shire counties by pretending, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did when making his announcement on 18 December, that rate increases can be similar to last year and, if they are not, it must be because shire counties are run by nincompoops who are led astray by county treasurers putting forward dishonest prospectuses? That said, I was glad to note my right hon. Friend's compliment to councillors today.

The truth is that the rate support grant settlement assumes an increase in total expenditure which, politely, can only be described as a figment of the imagination. Aggregate Exchequer grant is set at only 46·4 per cent. — the sixth successive year in which the grant percentage has fallen. That reduction alone equates to a 7·8p rate nationally. As well as that, shire counties have been given the lowest share of block grant and have suffered the largest year-on-year fall since block grant began. The shift in grant alone implies a 5·7p rate increase.

The figure of £200 million has been mentioned several times in the debate as the amount that is being taken away from counties. I believe that a more accurate figure is £224 million. That is not an insignificant amount of money, but it is relatively small in comparison with some of the talk, at least before Christmas, about what might be available to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for tax cuts. At that time we did not realise what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment meant when he told my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Pym) on 18 December:

"Low spenders . . . will get their rewards." — [*Official Report*, 18 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 312.]

To cap it all, the penalty system abolished with such a fanfare has been replaced by one with a different name, but which for some counties, and certainly mine, is far more vicious in its effects than its predecessors. What a muddle.

Year after year many of us have experienced doubts and opposition to the system of financing local government and to the treatment of shire counties in particular. Year after year, we have been told first that we are wrong and secondly, in contradiction, that it will be better next year. Year after year we are let down. We have been again, and therefore there is no alternative but to vote against the Government again tonight.

8.25 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): When I heard the Secretary of State speak about a Green Paper on rate reform, I felt that I was hearing the first cuckoo of spring. It is a sign that the Government are contemplating the results of the next general election when we start hearing about rating reform. The rating dance of the seven veils has begun, although one never sees the final veil come off before the election, and the matter is then left.

If the Government are to have a fair reform of the rating system they must look at the basis upon which property is valued. The Government were guilty of the grossest possible act of irresponsibility in putting off the rating reassessment about five years ago. In my constituency, there has been a price explosion in privately owned accommodation, but there are also many estates that are hard to let. One frequently finds that properties changing hands at £100,000 a time have the same rateable value as a flat in a hard-to-let council estate. That cannot be right.

This factor is equally true of commercial properties. There are places that used to be the most popular shopping areas, but which for one reason or another have since declined, possibly because of the decline in purchasing power or because property development has taken place elsewhere and shifted shopping from one part of London to another. Despite that, the high rateable values on shops and commercial premises remain. There are gross injustices between the resources of one borough and another, which are made worse the longer that revaluation is delayed.

It is wrong that for the Government have not been more flexible over what are called disregards. If Governments impose on a local authority additional statutory duties—custodianship is one example, but there are others—it is wrong that the local authority is penalised, as some are, because they have taken up such duties. Equally, it is wrong that for penalty purposes there should not be a disregard under the inner city partnership on those urban aid schemes that are accepted by a local authority when the scheme has become time-expired.

If the Government do not disregard these matters, all that a local authority is doing in supporting 25 per cent. of an inner city partnership scheme is to store up trouble and penalties when the scheme becomes time-expired, even if it has been a success. After all, the inner city scheme is partly intended to experiment with projects in the community that can become a permanent feature in the life of that community. I hope that the Government will look at this point again.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke about the irreducible level of services and the necessity to curb cuts. I felt that some of his phraseology was similar to that used by the leader of my local council, Councillor Ted Knight. I say that without diparagement to either gentleman. The only difference between their logic is that in Lambeth we expect the rate capping exercise to result in a substantial reduction in the rates that are charged. This council has been called "the lunatic Left" and has been accused of being irresponsible. The result of the settlement means that we shall be paying less in rates in the coming year while Essex will be paying more in rates.

[Mr. John Fraser]

In case the House thinks that the Government have deliberately shifted resources in favour of the inner cities, may I point out that that is not so. The shire counties are suffering from, and to some extent the London boroughs are benefiting from, the Government's incompetence over the dissolution of the Greater London council. When the GLC's expenditure approached £1 billion a year it found that it received no rate support grant and that it was being penalised heavily for its activities.

The GLC's expenditure is to be redistributed among the boroughs, residual bodies and joint boards, so the Government cannot logically impose the same penalties or the same holdback of rate support grant upon the individual London boroughs as they imposed upon the Greater London council. Almost by accident, therefore, additional money is to be given to the London boroughs. One cannot say that thereby resources are being directed to the inner city boroughs. It is simply the consequence of the Government's incompetence in abolishing the GLC. However, it does not follow that because Lambeth has a lower rate and more resources may be directed to it in terms of rate support grant, anything extra will be done for the inner city boroughs. The Government have pegged the level of expenditure in Lambeth to expenditure in the current year. This means that there will be a cut in real terms. The level of expenditure is pegged in cash terms, not in real terms.

We are faced with the extraordinary phenomenon that at first sight it seems that the shift in resources to the inner city boroughs means that more will be done there. However, that is an optical illusion. It is like one of those drawings in which one thinks that there is a box above the surface, but when one looks at it more closely one finds that there is a hole below the surface. Although, therefore, we shall receive additional resources we shall do less. We shall suffer a cut of 5 per cent. on the rate-capping exercise because of the way in which our expenditure has been fixed. We shall have less money to spend on voluntary organisations. Many of them will be gravely disappointed after the abolition of the GLC.

We shall have less money to spend upon the maintenance of local authority properties, yet a great deal of money needs to be spent upon them. This goes hand in hand with a cut of £5 million in the housing investment programme for Lambeth. This is happening at a time when we need to spend more money upon improving, repairing and upgrading our council properties. A little more money may be coming our way through the rate support grant, but there will be less expenditure and less activity.

Unemployment is increasing by leaps and bounds. Unemployment in some of the wards in my constituency is running at about 40 per cent. of the insured population. That is a disgracefully high figure. However, the result of this settlement, coupled with rate capping, means that less money will be available for local government services.

At the beginning of last year's rating exercise Lambeth was told, as a rate-capped borough, that its expenditure limit would be £116 million. However, in December 1985, following the issue of a writ by Lambeth council against the Department of the Environment and following also a few telephone calls, the Department of the Environment increased Lambeth's permitted expenditure for 1985-86 from £116 million to £124 million. Lambeth council was libelled and defamed for a year by this Government. The council was told that it was spending too much and that it was a lunatic council with a high expenditure record. However, without any great fanfare, at the end of the year the permitted expenditure level was raised from £116 million to £124 million, an expenditure level that will set the pattern of expenditure for the next financial year.

My advice to Conservative Members is that they should not be afraid to issue a writ against the Department of the Environment. It does not do any harm. They should not be afraid to keep up the battle throughout the rating year. They may have some success, as we have had in Lambeth.

The majority of Labour councillors in Lambeth are suffering in the High Court because of surcharging by the district auditor, yet all the assumptions that the Government put before them at the beginning of the rating year were disproved towards the end of it by the reassessment of expenditure at £124 million. After a year of incompetence, mismanagement and wrong calculations about expenditure in my borough, the very least that the Government ought to do is to swear an affidavit about their own incompetence and lodge it before a judge in the High Court in order to get rid of the case against Lambeth councillors who, at the end of the day, have been proved to be correct in their assumptions of expenditure levels.

8.35 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): Not a single Conservative Member has risen to say a good word about the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87. That may be a matter of some amusement to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but the fact remains that it is a sad day for the Conservative party. There have been repeated assurances by Ministers, and successive Secretaries of State believed that they had carried out those assurances. However, that is not the perception in the shire counties.

A number of right hon. and hon. Members have demonstrated the iniquities of the rate support grant. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has said, as have previous Secretaries of State, that, to say the least, the rate support grant system is unsatisfactory. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said it in this House in 1980. He did not carry the Cabinet with him on that occasion, and other Secretaries of State did not carry the Cabinet with them when a new system was produced that would have resulted in equity.

The reaction of the Great Yarmouth borough council has been fairly helpful. I have discussed these matters on many occasions with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold). I am always grateful for the careful attention that she gives to them. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State are victims of this system and of the failure by previous Secretaries of State to persuade the Government that this is a serious matter and that something must be done about it.

It is a fact that when, at the end of July, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) announced his proposals concerning the major elements of the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement, they were welcomed. The abolition of targets and penalties and the initial settlement for Norfolk seemed to be reasonably

good. The grant-related expenditure for Norfolk of £266 million for 1986-87 showed an increase over the 1985-86 GRE of 5·6 per cent. For shire counties the average increase has been 5·8 per cent. The increase for the metropolitan areas is 8 per cent. and for London it is 9·2 per cent. The overall increase nationally is 7·3 per cent. Norfolk has a long history of strict economy when budgeting and it has every reason tonight to expect as many of its parliamentary representatives as possible to impress upon the Government, as have other right hon. and hon. Members, that enough is enough.

I was the deputy leader of Norfolk county council when the last Labour Government were in office. Before this Government came to office with their determined effort to restrain public expenditure, Norfolk county council had already adopted a stringent approach towards its expenditure. We were criticised by our Labour opponents for being too ready to respond to the then Labour Government's demands to limit spending. During the past six years, Norfolk county council has continued to exercise a stringent approach to its budget.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): With his wealth of local government experience, does my hon. Friend agree that what we have wanted for the past six or seven years has been not a tinkering with the present system, which I believe has been tinkered with, but a major overhaul of the whole concept of the rate support grant to ensure a fairer distribution?

Mr. Carttiss: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley). However, for the time being all that I ask is that the Secretary of State and my right hon. and learned Friends on the Front Bench should carry out the promise of the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford. On 25 July 1985 he stated:

"Norfolk has been a sensible, moderate, low-spending authority—the type of authority that should benefit from my announcement today."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1331.]

Norfolk has not benefited from that announcement.

As a former teacher and former chairman of Norfolk education committee, I was pleased to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science look in briefly on the debate. Education takes up much of county council expenditure. Inevitably, education is where the demerits of the rate support grant settlement have the worst effect. The settlement hits the people who can least bear the effects of the RSG, such as the children in our schools. I commend the Government Front Bench to consult the Secretary of State for Education and Science on this matter.

Education in Norfolk has a GRE of £157 million. That is the Government's estimate of the money that a local authority, such as Norfolk, should be spending. In fact, the local authority spent only 97·2 per cent. of that amount. A 2 per cent. gap does not sound much, but it represents £4·5 million. With £1 million more devoted to education in Norfolk, we could create a system that would be more acceptable to my constituents. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West complains about the abolition of the GLC, which spends £13 million on supporting lesbians. In Norfolk there has been an unsavoury reaction to that because the result of the RSG is to switch money away from the shire counties to the metropolitan authorities. Nothing grieves me more than to be critical of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I was delighted to serve for more than 200 hours on the Committee that succeeded in playing its part in the abolition of the metropolitan authorities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman made a great contribution!

Mr. Carttiss: I made the contribution of being present. What little I said was more to the point than all the words of the hon. Gentleman.

The disastrous reorganisation of local government under the administration of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has much to do with the problems of the shire counties in 1986-87. I was pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State play such an effective role in abolishing those metropolitan authorities.

Hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), will enjoy the irony of the fact that my enjoyment in undoing the mistakes of previous Conservative Administrations in respect of local government has had to be paid for by my constituents.

On the admission of the Department of Education and Science, Norfolk has been in the forefront of economy-conscious LEAs, notably in school meals and in the removal of surplus school places. A letter from the Department of Education and Science shows that Norfolk has reduced the cost of the school meals service since 1979 by 43 per cent. That is more than double the average saving on the school meals service made by shire counties and it is four times the national average saving. The letter states:

"This is an excellent record".

Between 1980 and 1984 Norfolk closed 46 primary schools. That number of closures was not exceeded by any other shire county. About 3,000 surplus secondary school places were removed between 1980 and 1983. For much of that period I was chairman of the education committee.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, as a result of several commitments made by the Secretary of State during the past two years, I have been campaigning for improvements in the education service in my constituency and for the retention of several primary schools? How can I support the Government tonight and still face the county education officer, the divisional surveyor and the county surveyor?

Mr. Carttiss: Any hon. Member representing Norfolk is in a difficult position, bearing in mind the enormous economies that the county council has had to make, for which Conservative councillors paid a heavy price when they lost their seats in the 1984 election.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: My hon. Friend constantly refers to county councils. Does he agree that district councils are just as important? Norwich city council and Broadland district council are in my constituency. It is easy for me to see the unfairness in the treatment of a low-spending, careful-budgeting district council such as Broadland. What my hon. Friend says applies as much to low-spending district councils as to low-spending county councils.

Mr. Carttiss: The expenditure of a district council is a small part of, for example, sub-committee expenditure in an education authority.

In Norfolk, six secondary schools were closed between 1980 and 1983. Four of those schools were in my

[Mr. Carttiss]

constituency. I reveal those facts to illustrate to the House that no one has been more determined in 19 years service in local government to ensure strict economies in local public spending. I wish that there was the same determination at a national level to achieve the type of cuts that local services have had. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) called it a Charlie Chaplin system. Norfolk will have to find £6 million this year to avoid penalty. There must be something wrong with the Department of the Environment's GRE figure of £266 million, because the authority has engaged in heavy cutting. Other Departments have recognised that.

Although my right hon. Friend has abolished targets, the Government's new figures are based on assumed levels of spending. We no longer ask local authorities to worry about targets, but the Government still have in mind a figure for each authority, which they call its assumed level of spending.

I rarely address the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is most unfortunate that tonight I have almost lost my voice when I am attacking a Government that I admire and respect so much in every other way. It is an illustration of the depth of emotion that I feel when I think that successive Conservative Administrations have repeatedly said that they are willing to recognise and to reward low-spending authorities, yet they are still unable to do so.

In Norfolk, there is a gap of £36 million between the GREA and the assumed level of spending. For every pound spent over that assumed level, Norfolk loses 57p of Government grant. Yet, on last year's system of distributing RSG, the Minister knows that for every pound spent below GRE, grant would have been gained. The problem for a loyal supporter of the Government who is 100 per cent. committed to the aims and objectives of his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench is at what point he says, "I must oppose the Government, not just in words but in deed."

I remind the House that I made my maiden speech on this subject two years ago. I concluded my remarks then by saying that next year's settlement would be better. This year, the average ratepayer in my constituency who owns a house with a rateable value of £175 will pay £5 a week in county council rates. As a result of this rate support grant settlement, he will pay £6 a week. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—in his absence I expressed enormous admiration for him — will accompany me round the villages in my constituency and round Great Yarmouth to explain to each ratepayer in 40 seconds why this has happened to a Conservative-controlled local authority. Socialists and Liberals have never controlled Norfolk county council, and they never will, because I am confident that, recognising the strength of feeling among Conservative Members, the Government will introduce a more equitable system next year.

To encourage my right hon. and hon. Friends, I should tell them that, although I voted with them last year on the understanding that low-spending authorities such as Norfolk would get a better deal this year, that has not been the result of this year's settlement. Therefore, it would be dishonourable, after 19 years in local government service in Norfolk, to do anything other than join the Opposition in their Lobby tonight, confident, however, that the Government will produce a better system within the next two years to ensure that they will remain in office for a further five years.

8.56 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I never cease to be amazed by the audacity of the Government. They believe that they can fool all the people all the time. During his opening speech the Minister did what I have heard him do on several occasions: he berated local authorities for their high expenditure and he blamed them for the ills of the country's economic condition. Yet he has known for many years that Government public expenditure has been increasing year after year, while local authority expenditure has been forced down. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, the Minister is continuing to tell local authorities. "Do not do as we do, do as we tell you."

To some extent, I sympathise with those who live in the shire counties, because I would be the first to recognise the problem of rural poverty. But I have little sympathy with Conservative Members who represent shire counties because, since 1979, they have given full support to their Government in terms of cutting local authority expenditure. Suddenly the shire county Members discover that they are being hurt. They do not like it, and they complain about it. It is a bit late now. They should have thought of that a few years ago.

The Secretary of State said that his RSG settlement was designed to obtain a balance between rural and inner-city needs. It will not do that at all. Conservative Members and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) pointed out that much of what is happening today is a consequence of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties. Another cause is that the Government have recognised that the crisis in the inner cities is becoming profoundly dangerous to the fabric of society. We have had riots and crime in our inner cities of a nature and intensity that have not been seen in Britain for more than 100 years. That frightened the Government, so after years of cutting expenditure they are trying to direct a little more money back into the inner cities. The message from that, as some Conservative Members recognise, is that if the riots and inner city troubles are sufficiently great, those areas will receive a little extra money. That is the mess that the Government have got themselves into on this issue.

I sat with the Secretary of State throughout the Committee stage of the Local Government Bill. He was always looking forward to the money that he would save through the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils. Now, both he and his hon. Friends are sadder and wiser. They are making no significant savings, and in March and April many good voluntary and part statutory bodies will either lose money dramatically or go to the wall completely because no one will pick up the bill and ensure that they function. That will apply both in inner city areas and outside them.

There is a desperate crisis in inner city areas, and it affects constituencies such as mine. In Hammersmith and Fulham there has been an appalling loss of services, and there is a dire need for expansion of basic services, such as housing. While talking about Hammersmith and Fulham it is right and appropriate for me to say a word about the late hon. Member for Fulham, Mr. Martin Stevens, who died at the untimely and young age of 56.

He and I had strong basic disagreements about political philosophy. However, he spent a great deal of time in his constituency and was frequently seen there taking up people's problems. He will be a loss to the Conservative party, and many people in Fulham will miss him. It is right for the House to pay its respects to him. We knew that we were representing inner city areas with profound problems.

Hammersmith and Fulham council is run by a coalition of Conservative and Liberals who have a strong ideological commitment to privatisation and, above all, to dramatic cuts in public expenditure. We have a housing waiting list of 10,000 people, yet the Government, with the full, active support and encouragement of the Liberal-Tory council, are busy selling eight or nine blocks of flats in Fulham court. In doing so, they are decanting council tenants from those flats, and are even talking about taking eviction powers to remove people who have lived there, often all their lives, from the flats. That is a wholly unacceptable policy, and it does not merely affect those people, but others.

Today I received a not untypical letter from Hammersmith and Fulham council about Mr. and Mrs. Conlon in my constituency. It states:

"There is no possibility of a transfer as Mr. and Mrs. Conlon have no transfer points."

In other words, the council and the Government by cutting the housing budget for building, renovation and repairs are creating a housing crisis in our inner cities which makes the underlying problems far worse for people at every level.

Hammersmith and Fulham has the fourth highest public sector rents in London, yet we have the second highest rate of single-parent families, and many people on low incomes. Despite that, we wonder why more and more people get into debt, why their electricity and gas supplies are cut off, and why the rent is unpaid.

The social services were under the control of a Liberal councillor who is now the chairman of finance. During his period as chairman of the social services committee children on the at risk register, which was set up by the Government, were not being supervised by social workers because of cuts. Eventually they were given a social worker, but only after I, the press and others had exerted pressure. The chairman also tried to interfere with court decisions affecting care proceedings which the committee had set in hand, and had to be warned off by the clerk of the court. The director of social services, who was a good one, was driven from his job and the job was left unfilled for more than 18 months. That is how bad the position became.

We shall now see the full results of that. On Wednesday a report will go to the social services committee which is now under a conservative chairman. It will show that under the financing for the next 12 months it will be necessary to decrease the number of nursery places which have existed since 1984 by 13 per cent. The nursery provision is not keeping pace with the projected increase in the number of children aged up to four years.

Eleven of the children on that waiting list are in priority category 2. That means that there is a danger to the child's health and of serious neglect by the parent. However, there is no place for such children in a nursery school. There are another 86 children in priority category 4. It is considered in that category that there is a serious risk to a child's normal development. For example, the parents might be mentally handicapped or something of that nature. Again there is no possibility in the near future of nursery places for such children. There is a total of 756 children in the top five categories.

There has been a clash between the Government and their own Tory-Liberal council because the council submitted a financial package to the Department of the Environment. The Department rejected that package and the council is now going to have to drop some of its projects as a result.

To cope with that situation the social services committee is proposing, first, to close and sell three children's homes and one home for the elderly, although we all know that the problems of children and the elderly are among the most acute in the area. The social services committee is also proposing to close the student unit. I intend to discover in due course whether that closure will affect training for social workers caring for children on the at risk register. In view of the many recent cases, the last thing we ought to do is cut back on training for social workers. The committee is also to close a luncheon club. That is a measure of the crisis that is hitting the inner cities. The report ends with the words:

"The Services most affected will be the Area Teams, the Homes for the Elderly and the Day Nurseries where budgets will not be sufficient to maintain full staffing."

The social services committee also proposes to close Riverpoint hostel. Even *The London Standard* reported a few days ago that that hostel was taking homeless people not just from the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham but from all over London and from outside London. Hon. Members may forget that the inner cities have to pick up some of the problems from the outer London and shire areas.

The Riverside studios, the well-known arts theatre in the borough, will have to close because the council is rejecting a grant that was initially put forward by the Arts Council as long as the council was prepared to pay something as well. The Liberal chairman of the social services committee, Councillor Knott, said:

"There is no way we are going to fund the Riverside. We are off the hook and do not intend to get back on."

Finally, there is the problem of crime in inner city areas. A week or so ago the Secretary of State for the Home Department boasted of his Downing street seminar. Many of the things in that seminar involving crime prevention cost money. The Secretary of State mentioned 1·3 million houses needing basic improvements in their locks, doors and windows. The rate of grant necessary —which is something in the region of £400 per house or flat for the older properties that need more repairs— represents an overall cost of £500 million. Where will that money come from? Will it come from the shire areas or the inner city areas? Where will the money come from to pay for the caretakers who prevent vandalism and who help clear up graffiti? Where will the money come from for the other social problems that exist in the inner cities and shire areas?

I welcome those Conservative hon. Members who say that they will join Opposition Members in the Lobby tonight. By God, those hon. Members are six years too late. The damage that has been done to the fabric of the country is almost irreversible and will take years to put right. I must tell Conservative Members that it is not an answer simply to shift money from the shires to the inner cities. It must be recognised that at the same time as the

[Mr. Clive Soley]

Government are putting a greater burden on the inner cities and a greater burden on the shire areas through rates, they are actually giving more back in tax handouts to the rich than ever before.

Social Trends, the booklet published only a few weeks ago, shows that, without any doubt, the rich in Britain, and particularly the very rich, are getting very much richer and the poor are getting very much poorer. At the same time the low income groups in the inner cities and in the shire counties are having to pick up the bill. That is a recipe for disaster and if Conservative Members will carry their logic to its conclusion they will not only vote against the report tonight, but will make sure that the Minister never tries to get away with it again and reverse the policy.

9.10 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): It is difficult at this late stage of the debate, and somewhat invidious, to try to encapsulate all the issues that have been raised. It is rather like trying to squeeze a three-year pure science degree course into the space of five minutes. However, as I am charged with the responsibility of speaking for my constituency and on behalf of a number of colleagues who represent west Sussex constituencies, and who are in their places this evening, I shall do my best in a short time to put a few compelling and persuasive facts on the record.

As I said on 18 December, there is a widespread feeling of betrayal in the shire counties following the rate support grant settlement. I feel that there has been a gross breach of faith with statements made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, and with previously expressed intentions. Time and time again we have been told that the most prudent and lowest spending authorities would be rewarded with fairer allocations, but time and time again our best hopes have been thwarted. On this occasion the time is up and we are prepared no longer to put up with promises of jam tomorrow.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said, the position of the West Sussex county council is especially difficult. The national rate support grant has fallen by about 2·5 per cent., but it has fallen by 11·3 per cent.—from £54.4 million to £48.3 million—for the West Sussex county council. However, it is the lowest spending shire county in the country per head of population. At 141p, it has the lowest rate in the pound in the country. Its expenditure this year is £203.1 million, which is £20 million, or 9·1 per cent., below its grant-related expenditure assessment.

The council is planning next year to spend about 7·5 per cent. more, of which only 0·7 per cent. will be expenditure on real growth in services. The remainder will compensate for the inflation that we are experiencing. It was stated at a meeting today of the county council that the rate increase will be 19 per cent. This is well above the rate of inflation, yet, as I have said, I am talking about the lowest spending authority in the country.

The increase in spending of 0·7 per cent. on services, which amounts to an extra £1·3 million, includes essential expenditure on education to provide more teachers, books and equipment. The authority has managed to keep well below the average county expenditure per head on primary and secondary pupils. It includes expenditure on social services, including more home care and expenditure on the elderly. These are essential items of expenditure in widespread rural constituencies such as the one which I represent. Last but not least, there will be some modest improvement in the provision for the police to bring the Sussex police authority up to establishment and to meet new legislative requirements.

It was to be hoped that in rate support grant terms Chichester district council would mitigate the position of the county. However, the Chichester district council is faced with a block grant loss of about £200,000, even after reducing spending in volume terms. The rate may rise to 16p, an increase of nearly 20 per cent. on last year, and 45 per cent. over the past three years. If anyone doubts the authority's credentials for prudence, it should be said that it was able to peg its rate at 11p for five years. It is a prudent authority. There have been major reviews of staff and organisation by the county and district councils. When I am written to by the chairman of the district council and told that the council is being penalised persistently by remaining a low-spending authority, I realise that the time has come for me to do more than merely implore my colleagues to come up with a fairer deal. It is clear that the time has come to vote accordingly.

There is widespread concern on both sides of the House about the inequitable distribution of the total pool of rate support grant that is available and about variations year on year. If the total amount of cake for distribution to local authorities has fallen by only 2·5 per cent., there should not be such massive fluctuations in what county councils receive year on year. The circumstances of and the demands upon local authorities do not change so radically from year to year, and yet there have to be exaggerated changes to our rate setting because increases in expenditure have a disproportionate impact on the rates that have to be levied.

I consider that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could have done more to keep faith with the stated intention of looking after the lowest spending authorities more fairly, possibly by having a graduated scale, which would mean that authorities whose expenditure proved to be well below their grant-related expenditure assessment would be able to benefit from redistribution of close ending to a greater extent and would be able to spend nearer to the level of grant-related expenditure without having to incur such large and increasing reductions in their grants. It does seem inequitable to me.

I very much regret my decision, for it is one that nobody takes lightly, not least myself, having supported the Government consistently during my 11 years in the House. I know that my right hon. Friends the Members for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) and for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), and my hon Friends the Members for Horsham, for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), are with me in the Chamber tonight, and that some of us will find it difficult to support the Government. I for my part will be voting against these reports. I do so in the firm conviction that we must stand up for the interests of our constituents. A shot must be fired across the bows of the Government if we are to have a fairer solution next year.

9.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): What a score: for the Government, 1; against 16—and half of those from their own Benches. The only speech so far in favour of these reports has been that of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

This is the report that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) reminded us follows the promise given in the House on 25 July 1985 by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin). This is what we were told we would see:

"The RSG settlement that I am proposing will be less complex than in past years; it will be fairer to responsible, low-spending authorities; it will maintain pressure on higher spending authorities to find savings".

And the killer line:

"If local government responds sensibly, average rate increases next year should be in low single figures."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1317.]

What is the view of the experts? The Association of County Councils has written to every hon. Member. It takes, firstly, the unprecedented step of asking all hon. Members to vote against the Government's report and to request the Government to produce revised proposals which are not as damaging as those contained in the present report. Secondly, it says that the Government should be asked to make it clear that for the first time ever in local government finance history the shires are being asked to pay for the cities to such a large extent. It also asks that the Government should make it clear that this is a shift in policy and that they should not

"continue to maintain that low rate rises in the shire counties are still possible when the shift in grant alone requires a 5·7p rate increase."

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), speaking for a Conservative-controlled authority, has just told us that in his authority, which is one of the traditionally low spenders, the figure is 19 per cent. So there has been no addition to make a political point, an accusation which might be levelled at other authorities. That is the reality, and that is what the Association of County Councils has predicted from the moment the announcement was made in December.

Thirdly, as the association has said, what is clear above all is that, instead of a simple system, this year's rate support grant settlement is by far the most complex there has ever been. It

"is well beyond the grasp of elected members and most officers to understand exactly why their authorities have gained or lost money."

The litany that we have heard from the hon. Members on the Government Benches has been what can only be described as devastating. For the Secretary of State to think that his first announcement of rate support grant is a success would be a travesty of the truth. The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) said that the Government's machine was out of control: it will produce unacceptable rate rises, it is unfair, it penalises authorities, it is in breach of undertakings and it is a contradiction in policy terms. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said that the reports were bad news for the counties and assumed no element of real growth. The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said that, in economic terms, this was sheer moonshine and that Ministers would not do themselves what they were asking the counties to do.

From Devon the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) said that this was madness, wholly deficient of logic or reason. From Essex the right hon. Member for Castle Point said that there is no justice. From Wiltshire the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) said that it is a muddle and that we shall either have cuts or huge increases, or both.

Two other devastating points have been made. The right hon. Member for Castle Point said that for six years he and his colleagues had been banging on the doors of the Government to try to get them to change the system. The only conclusion that could be drawn was that instead of there being any sign of a listening Government the Government had been stone deaf to their friends as well as their opponents on the question of need.

The other devastating criticism was from the hon. Member for Devizes. In Wiltshire, where there is an authority under alliance control, the Government appear to have forgotten the principle that local government exists to provide services and services need money. That money has to come, at least in part, from the Government and from the Government's system as it is imposed on the ratepayers and the county councils.

In one of his rare interventions the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) said, not surprisingly, that enough is enough and that it is a sad day for the Conservative party. The hon. Gentleman is living proof of the Government's failures because he was a county councillor in Norfolk until his defeat by the alliance in May.

The strongest words came from the hon. Member for Chichester, although he may not have intended them to be stronger than those of his colleagues. He said that there has been a gross breach of faith; a betrayal of what Conservative Members have said.

There have been many interventions from other Conservative Members who have made it clear that if they do what they say, if they are to practise what they preach, they will come into the Lobby with the alliance and the Labour parties tonight. We challenge them to do so because power lies in the hands of Conservative Members. If they do not defeat the report, as they could, the rate increases of 20 per cent., 23 per cent., 26 per cent., 29 per cent., or 32 per cent. that will take place in shire counties throughout England in April and May this year will be their fault. They will not be the fault of the new incoming councils, largely alliance, now that the blue tide has rolled back from over the counties of England. They will not be the fault of the councils that have inherited often a low-spending budget with, as many Conservative Members have admitted, often substantially inadequate provision in school buildings, education, road building, social services and the like. Those increases will be the fault of Conservative Members who will have supported their Government and allowed them yet again to get away with a system that is grossly inequitable.

Mr. Powley *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has already intervened.

The remedy lies in the hands of the House tonight. The Secretary of State has said that next week we shall have the latest Green Paper. If the Secretary of State were a man of such vision, clarity of thought and understanding, he could have brought forward a reform. He could have ensured that what was proposed could have been done by now. He could have brought in a new system and he could have been fair to the inner cities as well as to the shire counties.

But we know the electoral realities. We know that two years ago there was a massive protest about the system from the Secretary of State's right hon. and hon. Friends.

[Mr. Hughes]

So a year ago the Government eased the burden a bit. They suggested that things would get better. Why then? Because county elections were just around the corner. The elections have happened and the Government realise that this year the electoral test is elsewhere, above all in London. So what have they done? They are making the shires, which do not have elections, pay for London, which does.

There would not have been this massive extra cost without the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties. There would not have been all the transitional costs that the boroughs have to bear, that the Greater London council used to bear. The figures bear that out. Even with the compensation for boroughs there will still be a deficit. In my borough of Southwark there will be a deficit of about £6 million on the cost of transition. Even with the manipulation of the residuary body, its budget and, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out, the variations, which mean that it does not have capital controls while everybody else does, there would have been a discrepancy.

The Government caused the bills that are now being charged to the shires to pay for what they believe will be electoral success in London in May. However, that will be misspent, as it was in 1985. They spent to buy the votes of the shires last year but they lost. They will spend to buy the votes in the boroughs and the districts this year and that will be lost, too.

The Sunday Times recently described today's events as the "great electoral see-saw". It has opened the system that the Government have sustained for six years to gross manipulation by the Secretary of State, the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. The results of that manipulation do not make their supporters happy. I say to the Government, when the whole world, their own supporters, the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee are saying that the system will not do, why not take away the reports and produce a Green Paper next week? If the Government are really concerned about doing something to reform local government finance and to ensure that people pay according to ability for the services according to need, they still have time to do it. They still have time to come up with something that will be acceptable. There would not then be a rebellion on the Government Back Benches.

The case has been proven. The electors have been betrayed and the shires have been deserted. The Government should be ashamed. Their economic management is a disgrace. It is up to the Tory Members to decide whether they share that responsibility or refuse to take it. We shall see who is on the side of the ratepayers. The alliance is on the side of the ratepayers and it will continue to fight for local government and the services that ratepayers need.

9.27 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): We are dealing with an extremely complex system of reports. I acquit the Government of introducing a complicated system of calculation in order to make parliamentary scrutiny of their measures more difficult. I do not think that it was their intention to introduce an extremely complicated report, but one of the consequences of our difficulty in understanding the precise nature of the calculations and considerations built into it is that it makes parliamentary scrutiny of these matters exceptionally difficult.

There are, however, at least three aspects of the policy which are easy to detect and upon which we should comment. The policy of squeezing local government spending is continuing, and this has two aspects. The Government are assuming that the 1986-87 expenditure by local authorities will increase by only 3·4 per cent., and the Government's contribution to local government expenditure, at 46·4 per cent., is, I think, the lowest ever. It is certainly lower than in 1985-86, when it stood at 48·7 per cent. Therefore, we see a policy of the Government continuing to squeeze local government spending.

There is a shift in resources from the shire counties to the cities. We are told that that shift is about £220 million. The Association of County Councils tells us that that implies a rate increase in the shire counties of 5·7 per cent. No indulgence is shown to the local authorities which are spending substantially below GREA.

The cumulative effect of the policies that I have just mentioned means that it will be impossible for those local authorities which wish to increase their spending towards the GREA to do so without suffering substantial holdbacks.

I believe that the authorities will not be able to maintain their present level of services without increasing rates by substantially more than the 7·5 or 8 per cent. that was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in December when he made his statement.

Those are four aspects of policy which I believe the House may well grasp even if, like me, some hon. Members have difficulty in understanding the more arcane aspects of the rate support grant.

Having, as it were, summarised the main features, one might be entitled to express one's anxieties. My first, and it is the central one, is that I believe that the Government are seeking to pursue a number of policies, most of which I support when pursued separately, but which are not inherently compatible one with the other. That is the great difficulty that the Government face.

First, there is the assumption about local government spending. I find it difficult to believe that the Government are entitled to assume that 1986-87 local government expenditure will increase by only 3·4 per cent. over 1985-86 levels, when one bears in mind a rate of inflation of 5·5 per cent., the 6·9 per cent. offer to teachers, and pay awards to the police and firemen which are essentially out of the control of the local authorities. If that spending assumption is too low, the grant is too low, because the matters are inextricably linked. I am worried about the low assumption that the Government have made.

My second point is that I am very much in favour of the broad policy of saying that those who spend money should raise more of it. I entirely agree with the policy of reducing the Exchequer contribution. In principle I do not object to it being limited to 46·4 per cent., but I question whether we can do that at the same time as making unduly low assumptions about local government spending and seeking to transfer about £200 million from the shires to the cities.

That takes me to my next point — the transfer of resources. I am prepared to accept as an assumption that there is a compelling argument in favour of spending more

money in the cities, but what I find difficult to accept is that I and my constituents as shire ratepayers should finance that transfer.

If there is a public need to carry through that policy, it is an Exchequer-taxpayer obligation, and not the obligation of the shire ratepayers. It is wrong in principle for the Government to go to the shire ratepayers and say, "Look, there is a problem in the cities. You finance it." Although the problems of the shires are not so apparent —they do not give rise to riots—and the symptoms are less acute, it is wrong to suppose that rural areas do not have problems. They do. They are just different. Even if I were wrong about that—I do not think that I am—one matter is wholly clear, and that is that the shires do not have the financial latitude that will enable them to lose the kind of assessment about which we are talking without suffering significant problems.

I shall deal swiftly with the subject of Lincolnshire county council. The Government are assuming an increase in spending of 3·4 per cent. over 1985-86. That is a spending level of £201·6 million. For that, Lincolnshire will receive a grant of £101·6 million—0·5 per cent. more than in 1985-86. We have done better than many of the counties represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends, because at least we have not suffered a positive cut under Government spending plans, but it is too low a figure. A grant increase of 0·5 per cent. will not enable authorities to maintain existing services without their being obliged to increase rates by substantially more than the 8 per cent. mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

There is a twist to this. The county council has planned to increase spending to £210 million, which is an increase of 7·5 per cent. over 1985-86. If that were done, the grant would be cut to £98·6 million, which in cash terms would be 2 per cent. below what the county received in 1985-86.

I hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saying that I am proposing an increase in public spending and I should not do that. I wonder whether that is right. Lincolnshire county council's GREA is £222 million. We are currently planning to spend £210 million. Even if the council's planned expenditure goes through and it spends £210 million, it will still be £12 million below the GREA expenditure. Why should the county council not plan slowly to nudge its expenditure up to GREA? If GREA has any meaning at all—I have come to the conclusion that it has not—it must be intended as a measure of need.

As I have my right hon. Friend under my eye, may I develop the point further. He need not be coy. I am not violent. On this occasion he will have to listen.

We are spending substantially below GREA. Lincolnshire's GREA for 1986-87 is an increase of 6·5 per cent., which contrasts with the average for the shire counties of 5·9 per cent. Why should a county such as Lincolnshire not move gradually towards meeting its GREA? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke eloquently of public spending and said that his Department had run through a model which showed an increase of £1·1 billion in public spending, but that increase assumed that every authority would try to increase its spending to GREA, and I do not believe that will happen. Local authorities would have to finance the greater proportion of increased spending out of rates. My right hon. Friend should not increase the grant for those authorities spending under GREA to enable them to increase spending up to GREA, but he should not take grant away. In other words, I strongly favour the policy of GREA exemption.

Whether one looks at it broadly or narrowly, I believe that the Government have made a mistake—not out of malice or intentionally. What they have tried to do is to pursue a number of policies that are not compatible. The Government must face the fact that more money must be put into local government spending by the Exchequer if moneys are to be spent in the city centres. It is wrong to ask the rural ratepayers to carry the taxpayers' obligation. For that reason, and unless I hear things that I do not expect from the Minister tonight, I shall not support the Government in the Lobby tonight. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will have a little more patience, I shall probably vote against the Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of balanced debate, do you think that before we continue you could ascertain whether any Tory Back Bencher supports the Government?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Yes, I do.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a helpful comment, but I now call Mr. Benyon.

9.39 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I approach this settlement with a note of desperation because we have been all around this course so many times before.

Two things are utterly wrong with the present system of local government finance. The first is that it is massively redistributive. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point. Ratepayers in Buckinghamshire have to pay a large increase in rates this year to finance inner cities and deprived areas. I am all for such extra expenditure in those areas, but it should be borne by the taxpayer, not the ratepayer.

The second defect is the fact that the settlement is angled on expenditure, not on the rate precept, and it is the rate precept that is important as people are worried about the rates that they pay.

Of course, I am pleased that the penalty system has been abolished, and it is right that there should be an inducement to spend below GREA. GREA means what it says—it is an assessment of the expenditure needed to finance the needs of a local authority. We can argue about how it is produced, but the principle is good. If an authority spends less than its GREA, because of good management, it should be rewarded. The weakness lies in the fact that the expenditure is concerned with the gross, not the net, figure, yet the net figure determines the rate precept.

The initial estimates of expenditure in Buckinghamshire for the current year are £249 million, with a figure for GREA of £236 million. We have balances that we could use, but we are not allowed to, for the assessment of block grant. We are allowed to use the interest but not the balances themselves. However, those balances have been provided by the ratepayer and the taxpayer and they should be used in these difficult circumstances.

I shall now consider the GREA. It works well for an area where the population is static or falling, but it is hopelessly inadequate for an authority such as mine in whose area the population is growing phenomenally. The

[Mr. W. Benyon]

population increase for the whole of England between mid-1979 and mid-1984 was 1·2 per cent., but in Buckinghamshire it was 11 per cent.

The figures used for GREA are always two years out of date, and the effect on Buckinghamshire has been catastrophic. The Audit Commission profiles show that the majority of spending areas in Buckinghamshire are at or below the national average. It is obvious that the new city of Milton Keynes plays an enormous part in that process as it is on a green field site and requires an entirely new infrastructure which must be provided by the local authorities. The county has to provide its share in advance of the population explosion. The old burden payment helped towards that, but it has been stopped for four years. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reconsider that decision.

Recycling moneys from recalcitrant authorities cannot be the answer, because no treasurer can consider fixing a rate on that basis. Indeed, there is some doubt as to whether the process is legal, so planning on that basis is just not on.

I intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) to point out my experience on Friday when I went to three different, modest houses in my constituency and asked the occupants what their rateable value was so that I could calculate the extra rate. In nearly every case it was about £150 on the figures produced to date. I said to the occupants, "Are you prepared to tell me your gross income?" In every case they did, and 2p off income tax would be required to pick up the sort of penalty that they will face unless something is done. Like many hon. Members who represent shire counties that have run a good organisation and kept their house in order and will now find themselves penalised, I am totally unable to support this settlement.

9.46 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I shall detain the House for only a few minutes to complain about the absurd position in which the Government's decision about rates has placed Essex county council. Essex is one of the low-spending authorities. Indeed, hon. Members earlier heard me say that its spending is too low. That is because, especially at my end of the county, social and education services are not adequate to meet the needs of the people I represent. In spite of that, the Government are inflicting further cuts on the county.

Essex county council decided that, in order to meet its present commitments, it would need next year to increase its current spending from £500 million to £548 million. If it does that just to meet its present commitments, the county rates will have to go up by 18 per cent. and the grant which Essex receives will go down from £132 million to £115 million. Even worse than that is the sheer absurdity of the Government's assessment of what Essex should be spending and the consequent reduction in the grant and the increase in rates. The Government's assessment of providing a standard level of services for Essex would mean spending in the next financial year of £552 million above what Essex already plans to spend. Increasing spending to that level will mean a rate increase of 20 per cent. and the grant will go down to £105 million.

That is nonsense, and the Government have done that to what is largely a Tory county council. I am the only Labour representative on that council. I am astonished that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) is the only Essex Member who has taken part in the debate. Many of the other Essex Members are not even present. That can only mean that they do not care about the cuts being imposed on the services provided by Essex county council and about the rate increases that their constituents can expect to pay in the next financial year.

Essex county council — which is no longer Tory-controlled, but is a hung council on which Labour is one of the dominant forces—would like to provide increased residential and community care for the elderly and the handicapped, especially as a large hospital for the mentally handicapped and mentally disabled will be run down over the next 10 years, releasing 600 patients into the community. They will require warden accommodation.

We should like to improve the schools in Essex, particularly in my constituency, because they are sadly in need of repair, and books and equipment should urgently be provided, especially in educational priority areas. The council also wants to restore the library book fund and to allow children to go to school before their fifth birthday.

Those are the sort of services that Essex wants to provide and that my constituents desperately need. They are also the services that the Government are absolutely determined to cut.

9.49 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The outcome of the rate support grant for Hillingdon this year is perhaps the most extraordinary in the history of this bizarre affair, because it seems likely that Hillingdon will go out of grant altogether. I think that I can say with confidence that it is the only London borough that will be treated in that way. Although I sympathise with the great difficulties of my hon. Friends from shire counties, I do not think that I heard any hon. Member indicate that his local authority was likely to go out of grant altogether. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government will tell the House why that will happen.

The position is complicated by the transitional cost of the abolition of the GLC and its transferred services and, above all, by the uncertainties that arise from the way in which the expenditure of the London Residuary Body is calculated. That will result in great difficulty for London local authorities, because they do not know how much the LRB will cost or what impact it will have on their financial position. I am, however, grateful for the information that I have received on this topic in the past week or two from my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government. I hope that he will comment on the possibility of permitting the LRB to operate in a way that will result in the maximum benefit to London ratepayers. I hope that my hon. Friend will also reveal how the LRB will operate in succeeding years. I hope especially that he will guarantee that the proposed reduction this year will take place. I say that because I have not yet made up my mind how I shall vote. Much will depend on the assurances that I receive.

I hope that my hon. Friend will give an assurance that he will permit the LRB to act with all possible flexibility in connection with the application of receipts. Many of my borough's problems stem from the fact that it is a so-called

high-resource authority. I therefore look forward to the publication of the Green Paper in a few days' time. I hope that it will contain a paragraph that recognises that the treatment of high-resource authorities and the equalisation of the process that is applied to them have gone too far.

I hope that my hon. Friend will say something about the incredible situation in the borough of Hove, which many hon. Members have mentioned. I am anxious to learn why Hove is unable to levy any rates at all.

The only good news I have is the example set by my borough councillors. They have not only reduced expenditure on services by the maximum amount that the community can support—a reduction of 14 per cent. in real terms since 1978 — but they have reduced manpower, by 2,346 non-manual and manual posts in the past eight years. That reduction has been achieved despite an increase of 107 posts resulting from central Government policies. I hope that my hon. Friend will take account of those figures, if nothing else.

Mr. Dicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a disgrace that, despite the achievements by Hillingdon borough council, during the past three years the grant has fallen from £21·2 million to zero? That is not only a disgrace but an insult to Hillingdon ratepayers. It is an affront to my constituents.

Mr. Shersby: I agree that it places honest, hard-working borough councillors and the officers who serve them in the greatest difficulties in discharging their obligations to the people they represent.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister give me the guarantees for which I have asked on the reduction in the LRB contribution? That is very important to my borough. What is the likely decision next year? Will my hon. Friend say something about the excellent report by the Select Committee on Public Accounts, of which I have the honour to be a member, which has made 21 recommendations to the House for urgent action? Any hon. Member who has not read the report of the PAC, published in November, should do so. It makes the point that, whatever changes Parliament may approve as a result of the Green Paper that we are to see at the end of the month, the system that operates is in such a bad state that urgent action is needed now, in advance of any decisions that may be taken as a result of the Green Paper.

We all know that new taxes such as residence tax will need much discussion and consultation. Therefore, we are unlikely to see legislation enacted in this Parliament. The PAC makes the point that legislation should be enacted as quickly as possible. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give some assurances that the Department of the Environment will endeavour to bring forward legislative proposals before the end of this Parliament.

9.55 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The only issue that the Conservative party was campaigning on before 1979 was that high-spending authorities should be curbed and their spending reduced from the profligate amounts being spent on unnecessary items in local government. Tonight, the House is being asked to award those overspenders, particularly in the inner cities, with additional grants, in some cases to the ludicrous extent of the example of Hove, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) has been referring, and to other cities such as Exeter and Bournemouth.

The settlement is illogical. We are rewarding overspenders and giving extra money to authorities that do not need it. This is brought about by the methodology of the calculation of the grant-related expenditure assessment being used throughout the country. In spite of the many Bills and orders that we have been asked to pass since 1979, a deaf ear has been turned to our pleas that that methodology should be altered.

The principal problem in that methodology is the equation made between high rate income authorities— those with high-rated property — and GREA, which wrongly shows that we have low needs. As a result, over the past seven or eight years, the system has taken away money from low-spending, efficient authorities in the shire counties.

My county of Hertfordshire is the second worst disadvantaged county by this method. It is second only to Bedfordshire, and I am delighted that you managed to find space in the busy programme for me to speak, Mr. Speaker. The basic factor that is wrong in the settlement is that it does not reflect the needs of the authority. The rateable value of a standard house in Hertfordshire is 29 per cent. above the shire county average, but we are to be disadvantaged by the settlement. Hertfordshire has the highest rate bills for a house of standard size and amenities of any of the shire counties—£464 in 1985-86, which is 41 per cent. above the average. That shows how wrong is the methodology.

Average male earnings in Hertfordshire are only 13 per cent. above the average. No recognition has been given by the Government to the problems of high rateable values. Rateable value is a poor measure of the ability to pay rates. This is recognised for London, and if the London discount system were extended to Hertfordshire, we would receive a substantial extra grant. Even if local earnings were used as a measure of the ability to pay, there would still be a significant increase in grant.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree with the proposition that although it is right to redistribute wealth away from the more prosperous counties to the less prosperous counties, if Hertfordshire gets only a 13 per cent. rate support grant compared with a national average of 46 per cent. it cannot be truly said that our incomes are four times the national average?

Mr. Wells: That is a useful intervention in that it exhibits the point that I was trying to make to the House, despite its lack of attention. Nobody in Hertfordshire wishes the inner cities to be disadvantaged. We want them to be given additional money. It ought to be given to them not, as so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, from the rates of my taxpayers, but from income tax paid by the whole nation.

The inner cities need to be imaginatively regenerated. However, money ought not to be given to the inner London authorities. They have shown themselves to be completely incapable of spending this money in a way that will regenerate their areas. They have received large sums of money but they have not made adequate or proper use of it to ensure that their areas are regenerated. Therefore, the money that is transferred from the shire counties will not result in the economic development that is so desperately needed in those areas. It is a political misjudgment, therefore, to transfer this money from the shire counties to inner London and to the other inner city

[Mr. Wells]

areas. May I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that Abraham Lincoln said that one cannot make the poor richer by making the rich poorer.

I am very grateful that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government accept the argument that high rateable values should not be the basis upon which such needs are assessed. However, this system will continue for the next few years until legislation is on the statute book. Had it been introduced in 1980 we should be able to benefit from it now. It will take three years to get legislation on to the statute book. In the meantime I want my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to give a copper-bottomed undertaking that he will introduce a system that will protect my ratepayers from the depredations of the methodology that is used in grant-related expenditure assessments.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for referring to the grant recycling exercise. He believes that £9 million will come back to Hertfordshire from this exercise, and we are grateful for that. However, even if the Conservative majority gets its way on the county council the rate increase precept will probably fall by no more than 2 per cent. My ratepayers will be faced with a rate demand of between 16 and 20 per cent. A 2 per cent. decrease is welcome, but it does not address the problem.

The Government have made a political misjudgment and I very much regret it. Despite our representations, which were made in good time, I am sad to say that my constituents will suffer further reductions in expenditure on education. That expenditure is vital for curricula development and for repairing the buildings in which the children are being educated. It is needed for the young people in my constituency. They are the future builders of this nation, but they are being disadvantaged by an ill-judged settlement. I have to inform my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with great reluctance, that I, too, will join those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who cannot support the Government over the rate support grant report.

10.4 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I wish to put a constituency point to the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government and I hope that he will answer it. I do not intend to go over the ground that has already been covered by other right hon. and hon. Members—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, this debate can continue for a little longer.

Mr. McKay: Only one voice on the Government Benches has been supportive of the Government. If the Government have alienated their supporters, they must have done something really wrong. Their action has shown not only political mismanagement, but political misjudgment. If the Government did not have their huge majority, they would not attempt such action at this time.

The Secretary of State should consider that the mining areas have been affected in a way that no other areas have been affected. Other costs, on top of the £12 million for the abolition of the metropolitan counties, will affect Barnsley council. Barnsley council will lose £1·2 million because of the way in which the rate support grant operates. In mining areas the rate is paid on production, not on plant. That comes on top of a loss of £316,000 because of the work to rule of the year before. The abolition of the metropolitan counties will cost £12 million, lack of rate support grant for mining areas will mean a loss of £1·2 million, and on top of that will come a loss of £316,000.

I know that the Minister could say that that amount will be equalised the following year, but that is not good enough. The loss occurs this year. Barnsley council faces a rate increase of 29·2 oer cent., which is unbelievable. We do not wish to challenge such a rate because there is 20 per cent. unemployment in the area and we do not wish to cause any more. We ask the Minister to meet the council and to consider its problem favourably. We ask him to state that the equalisation will be not next year, which is too late, but this year. If he would bring forward the payment for that year, he would ease the burden on Barnsley council.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Bedfordshire has been mentioned several times during the debate, so I am glad to have the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the county. Bedfordshire has been treated badly by this rate support settlement. I shall deal with some of the points that worry the Department of the Environment about the way in which Bedfordshire spends its money.

In the early 1980s Bedfordshire spent above its expenditure target, but so did other counties. That overexpenditure has been steadily reduced by Bedfordshire county council. This year, it is not spending above target.

The growth of spending has been mentioned many times during the debate. An audit profile compiled by the Audit Commission on comparisons of expenditure, taking 1981-82 as the base year and the RPI as 100 that year, shows that Bedfordshire's increase in spending has been below the rate of inflation since that year. Bedfordshire had the highest county precept in England in 1980. However, that has now changed. The range of county precepts is now from 139p to 210p. Bedfordshire is at 161·1p, with something like 10 county councils levying a higher county precept than Bedfordshire.

In terms of the general worries of the Department of the Environment, the increases in rates in Bedfordshire have been 2 per cent., 0 per cent. and 7·3 per cent. during the past three years.

There has been criticism about specific items on which Bedfordshire has spent money. Bedfordshire has a higher than average number of pupils now going through the secondary education system. We have a three-tier education system, which is expensive. However, that system was agreed by a Conservative Government in 1970. When criticisms are made of what Bedfordshire spends on education, it must be accepted that a three-tier system brings with it more spending, especially in terms of debt charges for new schools, on heating and lighting. The sparsity factor is also important. The size and design of schools in the three-tier system were agreed with the Department of Education and Science.

Most importantly, housing development in Bedfordshire went on at a tremendous pace the late 1960s and early 1970s. That was agreed by central Government. It has not only been housing for our own people, but, as

I interupted several times today to say, for a fair share of the London overspill. We have helped an inner city and we are continuing to do so.

On education spending, all that I would say is that at a time when the curriculum is being improved and extended, and when expensive resources are going into schools under the technical and vocational education initiative, which bear continuing revenue costs, we cannot expect Bedfordshire now to change its three-tier education system and go through a tremendous upheaval. It is asking the county to do too much. There may be criticisms of Bedfordshire's education spending, and I agree that there may be room for improvement, but the general trend has been in the right direction.

The second item is highway maintenance. The Department of the Environment gets excited and says that Bedfordshire spends too much on highway maintenance. Is it any wonder, given our geographical position? We have the west to east routes and many roads leading to the east coast ports. We are short of bypasses. Above all, cars and trucks from local industry are generating more vehicles on the roads. My goodness, the Government are glad that we employ the people we do in the car and truck industry in Bedfordshire. The Government should be pleased that Vauxhall, a local company, has signed a two-year wage agreement, which is proof positive of management and unions working together. If the Government want more people to be employed in Bedfordshire and want our local economy to grow, they should not hand us a rate support grant settlement the likes of which we are now debating.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made seven changes in the method of constructing individual local authority GREAs for 1986-87. Six of those changes have a detrimental effect on Bedforshire's GRE. As a consequence, Bedfordshire's GRE will increase by only 3·4 per cent. in 1986-87, which is less than one half of the national average. Even the shire county average is about 70 per cent. higher, while the next lowest county increase is more than 26 per cent. greater than Bedfordshire's. The changes which affect Bedfordshire most unfavourably are those relating to education pre-1981 debt charges and the sparsity factor. Our spending on education, much of which is unavoidable, is a result of central Government policy to allow the population of Bedfordshire to increase quickly.

A close consideration of Bedfordshire's spending and rates policies during the past few years shows a significant movement towards financial prudence and realism as to what business and domestic ratepayers can reasonably be expected to pay. That is due to the strong and sensible Conservative influence at county hall in Bedford. I say "influence" because not since 1981 have Conservatives had an overall majority. Indeed, in 1982, the Opposition parties plunged Bedfordshire into the arena of big spending and financial recklessness by forcing through a supplementary rate, which was subsequently cancelled by the Government.

I have listed the areas where Conservative influence at county hall is helping the ratepayer, helping the Government and helping businesses. But this rate support grant settlement does not help Bedfordshire. Therefore, I cannot possibly support the Government.

Rate Support Grant (England)

10.13 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I have great sympathy with the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel), because his county has come off worst of all the shire counties. The second worst is the Isle of Wight. Under this settlement, expenditure will fall short of maintaining a standstill by £1·4 billion, or nearly 6 per cent. We are told that targets and holdback have been abolished and have been replaced by negative marginal grant rates at any level of expenditure. Clawback, which reconciles the amounts of block grant claimed with the total available, remains a big unknown. Negative marginal grant rate for nearly all authorities tends to depress expenditure in the reasonable authorities, but will probably be ignored in the less reasonable ones. Selective ratecapping becomes institutionalised, if that tendency is fulfilled.

Yet more unsettling are the GREA methodology changes which have been made with a panoply of safety nets and capital gains. In other words, complexity is heaped on complexity. Only 10 councils of 372 in England will have a multiplier of one. The remaining 362 have multipliers to recoup part of their gains or losses from methodology changes. Is that the fair, certain and intelligible system proposed by the former Secretary of State? It is not.

What about grant for Burnham restructuring in 1986-87? Should we believe the August announcement of the Secretary of State for Education and Science that October 1985 was the last date for an agreement, if any grant was to be forthcoming? Or, is the Secretary of State for the Environment still keeping the door open? In any case, what figure are we to assume?

New legislation continues to add expenditure burdens to local government at the same time as its resources are diminishing by Government action. My county was one of the worst losers a year ago from the abolition of TSG to revenue. On top of that, next year it will be the second worst loser among the shire counties from GREA methodology changes. That is at a time when we are suffering from the unknown future of Westland, our largest employer, when Plessey is threatened with a takeover by GEC—it employs 1,350—and when Fairey Marine, one of the other large manufacturers, is for sale. Heaven help the future of employment on the Isle of Wight. I pray every night that it will not be as bad as I fear it will be.

The prospects for local government are for either a 20 or 25 per cent. precept increase, or for further service reductions, just when my constituents are looking to local government to do something about our desperate plight on the unemployment front. If the island were more prosperous, it might be able to weather these annual hammer blows, but—I hate to say this—it is a deprived, offshore poor relation. Both Conservative and Liberal county council administrations have spent the past 12 years begging the Government to recognise that, and to improve the position. I have led two or three such delegations to various Secretaries of State.

The Transport Act 1985 is almost wholly irrelevant on the island, but going through its statutory motions will add cost to existing council burdens, both administratively and in the provision of uncommercial service which is at present provided on a cross-subsidisation basis. I make no bones of the fact that we charge people more in the summer to keep our services going in the winter.

The Isle of Wight county council's heavy GREA loss on concessionary fares is especially inopportune at present. Council officers are reaching the stage of punch-drunkenness at the daunting task of meeting statutory obligations with shrinking and wholly inadequate grant resources. It may be better if the county council volunteered to be rate-capped as that seems to be the only way of attracting Government attention at present.

10.18 pm

Mr. Nell Thorne (Ilford, South): I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister two questions. First, I understood my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to say that the balances of the GLC would be distributed on the basis of population. I am not clear whether that applies both to the revenue and to the capital balances. I trust that it applies to both. If so, I assume that it is the Department's intention to ensure that debts which are attributable to boroughs will be so attributed. About £266 million can then be attributable to boroughs, £134 million to Thamesmead, and only £120 million will be non-attributable. That will be the sum total of what will be distributed between the London boroughs, and will be well covered by the assets of that authority on its demise.

Secondly, will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that he is prepared to use section 91 of the Local Government Act 1985 to prevent the GLC from leaving the cupboard bare on its demise on 31 March 1986?

10.20 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): While we in Shropshire very much welcome the abolition of targets, which we have for some time been led to believe would happen, the problems of grant-related expenditure allocation are still hitting us as much as they have in previous years. We were led to believe that a change in our favour was imminent.

Shropshire has been treated reasonably favourably in terms of growth in GREA. In 1986-87, the Shropshire GREA will be £158,744,000, which represents an increase of 7·6 per cent. over the 1985-86 figure, and compares with 5·8 per cent. for the other shire counties. On the whole, we in Shropshire have been favoured more than we expected, but we are still not happy with the basis of the GREA.

The reason, in part, for Shropshire's advantage over some of the constituencies of my hon. Friends who have spoken is the educational sparsity in the county and the education debt that the county carries. In addition, Shropshire's population grew by 1·1 per cent. in 1986-87, compared with 0·5 per cent. in the other shire counties. While my initial reaction was to feel that Shropshire was being favoured by the Department of the Environment, the fact that we have the Telford development corporation in the county, and the growth of population that that brings, makes it incumbent upon Ministers to ensure that the existing services in our rural areas do not suffer as a result of the Government's effective policy.

A grant-related expenditure assessment based on settlement levels of expenditure means that the gap

between Shropshire's GREA and spending continues to grow. This year that will be about £20·4 million, which will leave Shropshire 12·8 per cent. below our grant-related expenditure and the second highest amongst the shire counties.

The Department of the Environment settlement notification shows that at the Government's preferred level of expenditure Shropshire's spending attracts £71·954 million on an expenditure of £138 million. In comparison with the Government's forecast for Shropshire, that means that we were treated favourably. We were up by 4·1 per cent., when the other shire counties were down by 3·1 per cent. That shows that in percentage and rate poundage terms the Shropshire increase was among the highest for the shire counties.

The effect on Shropshire is that the marginal rate is minus 39·49 per cent., which means a loss of grant for ratepayers of £39·49 for every £100 being spent, bringing Shropshire to the level of spending assessed by the Department of the Environment.

My right hon. Friend's remarks on the transfer of resources to London have enabled me to decide on my course of action in the Lobby tonight. I accept my right hon. Friend's comments on the need to address inner city decay. Those comments will be well met by many of my hon. Friends who may not be in the same Lobby but who share his aspirations for an improvement in the problems that exist in the inner cities. However, to say that he could not pass by on the other side of the street does not mean that that is justification for removing resources from the shire counties to deal with the problems in the cities, particularly in London.

Shire counties are not all rolling hedgerows and Mercedes-Benz estate cars. There are as many problems to be found in some town areas in the shire counties as can be found in the inner city areas. The reallocation of £400 million will be welcome and will be more substantial than the sum available last year. Perhaps the surplus from overspend and penalties will take some of the sting out of the arguments that we have heard today, but the sharing of the block grant, on the Department of the Environment's own figures, remains. The shire counties are down from 46·4 to 43·7 per cent., whereas London is up from 15·2 to 17·5 per cent. For the areas that have exercised financial self-restraint and control in the difficult years, that is more than it is possible to take. More action is needed for inner city regeneration, but that will not be acceptable at the cost of shire county degeneration.

10·25 pm

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): It is not my intention to make a speech. I wish merely to ask a question to avoid interrupting my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, who is to reply on behalf of the Government. Can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say whether, if he were the treasurer of Norfolk county council, he could advise his council to fix a lower rate in anticipation of the £5·5 million which I understand it is expected, if all goes well, will be received by Norfolk as a result of clawback on rate capping?

10.26 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Although I represent part of a county in which there is one of the lower spending authorities, I feel that the other side of the coin should be put to the House. My attack on the Government is based on the fact that they are giving too much money to local government. I am irritated by the Government talking constantly about high spenders and low spenders. In fact, all local authorities are high spenders. I substantiate what I am saying by drawing the attention of the House to the fact that when I became involved in local government in 1959 there were only 2 million local government officers in the United Kingdom. There are now 3 million. What are they doing? They are doing nothing more than that which was done by the 2 million, and they are doing it less well than it was being done in 1959. I am appalled that we have not been able in six years to place greater restraint on local government.

Every viable business that has not been able to expand has had to reduce its labour force considerably in recent years. Many businesses have had to do so by more than 50 per cent. However, in six years the best that we have achieved is a reduction of 4·3 per cent. in local government manpower. The Government have been soft and weak in not controlling local government and local government manpower. They should have exercised more efficient control, and I wish that they would get on with the job quickly.

10.28 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I do not think that local government needs any lecturing about alleged profligacy or overspending by a farmer and a member of Lloyd's. However, that is the sort of speech that we have heard from the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). With the exception of the hon. Members for Norfolk, North and Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins), who were absent throughout the previous six hours of debate——

Mr. Ralph Howell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has made an untrue statement. I have not been absent from the Chamber for the whole of the debate.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Howell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must accept what the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) says.

Mr. Straw: With the exception of the hon. Members for Norfolk, North and Norfolk, South-West, who made two brief speeches at the end of the debate, this debate, like two previous debates on rate support grant, has been characterised by the deafening silence of Conservative Members in support of Government policy. In the debate on 23 January 1984, only one Conservative Member spoke in support of the Government's policy. That was the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). In the debate on 19 January 1985 no Members spoke in support of the Government. Today, of 18 Conservative Members who have spoken, only two are in support of the Government. The rest have spoken vitriolically and eloquently against what the Government are seeking to do.

When the new Secretary of State sat down on 18 December 1985, following his statement on this year's rate support grant settlement, he must finally have comprehended that his predecessor's unpopularity was nothing personal—it goes with the job. I do not wish to do the former Secretary of State any injustice. The story—and

[Mr. Straw]

I know not whether it be true—is that, when asked recently what he thought about the problems of the present Secretary of State, he said that the situation was all right when he left it.

On the Richter scale, used for measuring the size of the shock waves that every rate support grant settlement produces inside the Tory party, the previous Secretary of State's efforts rated only six or seven, while this first effort of the new Secretary of State most certainly rates nine. Never has a man come to the House so pleased with himself and gone away so forlorn as he did on 18 December. Scarcely a single Conservative Member on that occasion, representing the Tory heartland of the shires, had anything good to say about the settlement.

Some put it in a gentlemanly way, like the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison), who described the settlement as "a matter of great regret". The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) spoke of "arcane, arithmetical dexterity". The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) spoke of "gobbledegook and incomprehensibility". The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) spoke of

"the beginning of the pantomime season".

That master of subtlety, the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), simply described the settlement as "disgusting", while the man who will be the next Speaker but three, the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), accused the Secretary of State of

"deliberately fiddling the GREA formula"

and, for good measure, asked how the Secretary of State could acquit himself of the charge of "sheer political cowardice". To that charge, the Secretary of State could only reply:

"As for the first question which my hon. Friend asked, I intend to produce a Green Paper after Christmas."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 315.]

I hesitate to intrude upon the private grief of the Conservative party or in any way to add to its difficulties, but I say to hon. Members on the Government Benches, whether they are in that tiny, silent minority supporting the Government or in that much larger group of sullen opponents, that the problems faced by the shire counties were both predictable and predicted, and are a direct consequence of the monstrous system of financial control established by this Government who, as we said they would, are now producing gratuitous and random results of the kind so eloquently described by many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Some hon. Members, understandably seeking justice for their own shire areas, have claimed that they have suffered because resources have been shifted to inner urban areas. I represent a shire county. So does my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Therefore, we understand the problems. Our shire counties, too, have been hit by this settlement. Lancashire, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) spelt out, has suffered like the rest. The Association of County Councils predicts that the effect of this settlement will be a 19·6 per cent. increase in rates.

None of us, however, whatever area we represent, should allow the Secretary of State to divide and rule. I am glad that in this debate one hon. Member after another on the Government Benches, in criticising the Government, have accepted this point. Hon. Members have accepted the need for more resources to be devoted to the inner cities, but said that Peter should not be robbed to pay Paul.

In the past, as we have spelt out year by year, the inner urban areas have been hit most severely of all by successive rate support grant settlements. The Controller of the Audit Commission, Mr. John Banham, in a speech on 19 November, drew attention to the fact that, even with the much vaunted increase in the cash amount for urban aid, real resources devoted to the most deprived inner city areas have been cut by 20 per cent. under this Government. Therefore, there has been every justification for restoring the resources available to the inner cities.

Indeed, the Association of County Councils, in asking Conservative Members to vote against the settlement, in a letter to all Members of Parliament, generously said that many in local government would not dispute these priorities in favour of inner cities but support them. However, what the association disputes, and what we dispute, is that the money to help the inner cities should come from the shire areas. As the Association of County Councils, Conservative, alliance and Labour Members have said, the additional funds necessary for inner cities should in fairness be provided through the national tax system. As the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said, the suggestion that the shires have had to be hit in order to help the inner cities is an appalling red herring.

This time last year there were three successive debates on local government finance. The first was on the rate support grant settlement and the other two on rate-capping orders. In each of those debates my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland and I sought to explain to an incredulous House that if rate capping worked, it would have exactly the opposite effect to what the Government intended. The Secretary of State, for example, claimed last year—I ask Conservative Members to weigh with care what he said would happen against what has actually happened—that

"the more favourable targets which we have been able to give low-spending authorities for 1985-86 have been possible only through the savings which have been achieved in public expenditure terms by rate capping the highest spenders . . . Thus, low-spending authorities will benefit from rate capping."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 416-17]

That was the promise—that rate-capping the highest spenders would produce benefits for the lower spenders.

On the surface that seemed an obvious point. We all work on the basis that Ministers, even in the Department of the Environment, are rational people and are there to help their friends. Some of the Secretary of State's supporters, although sceptical about the claim, none the less thought that they should believe him. But the actual effect of rate capping is the opposite to what the Secretary of State said it would be.

Bringing down spending in rate-capped areas forces up the rates in non-rate-capped areas. That is bizarre. It is mad, but it is true. The system which last year the Secretary of State described as "byzantine in its complexity", and which this year he has made worse, is simply mad.

Let me explain the point further so that there is no dubiety. Nobody should say next year that they were duped this year as they said this year they were duped last year and last year that they were duped the year before.

The rate support grant cake is fixed in advance. Under the Government's system, whether target or penalty or the

new system of target and penalty in another guise called GREA and slope, the more an authority spends, the less it gets; the less an authority spends, the more it gets.

For example, as I shall spell out in a moment, ILEA is accused of being a high spender. It has no rate support grant. Gillingham is a low spender and it is getting more rate support grant than it needs to cover its total expenses, and it could, as the treasurer has said, declare a dividend and a rates holiday for all its electors.

Under rate capping and all the other controls ILEA gets no rate support grant. So badly has ILEA been treated that the Conservative leader of the Opposition on ILEA, Professor David Smith, last Saturday resigned in sadness from that position in the Conservative party, saying that the Government had failed to take a positive approach to the problems of housing, poverty and education. He went on to say that there had been an increase in alienation and confrontation and that all the Government could think about was rate capping. Being a professor, he understands how rate capping not only hits Labour authorities, such as ILEA, but many Conservative authorities represented by Conservative Members. Parenthetically, I would add that resignations become so commonplace in the Conservative party that the excellent news that Professor Smith had resigned from the Inner London education authority was announced only in the pages of *The Daily Telegraph*.

Under the byzantine, completely crazy system that has been established, an authority spending too much gets nothing whereas Gillingham, Bath and Hove have received so much grant that they are able to declare a dividend. The treasurer of Gillingham said that Gillingham gets the greatest benefit of all. It could levy no rate, increase spending by 20 per cent. and still balance its books on the basis of the Government's 3 per cent. inflation figure although it thought that that was a little unrealistic.

The more an authority spends, the less it gets; the less it spends, the more it gets. That is the rub. As rate capping and other methods act to push down the spending of the disgraceful high-spending authorities such as ILEA or other Labour authorities, they earn more grant. The more that the Secretary of State controls their spending, the more grant they get. That grant is taken from other previously low-spending authorities. I shall return to that later when I explain the disgraceful fraud that the Secretary of State has been trying to perpetrate on Opposition Members and on the House with the document called "Grant Recycling 1986-87".

There are added reasons for the effect of this year's settlement and why the Government are now reaping a whirlwind from their policies. The abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties takes place on 1 April— *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members will cheer less when they add up the balance sheet of the full cost of abolition. Drawing up that balance sheet will take some time. Meanwhile, the Secretary of State, faced with the prospect of district elections in London and the metropolitan areas because the Government could not abolish them this year, is desperate to prove that abolition will not add to the ratepayers' burden. That is another reason why resources have temporarily been shifted to the metropolitan areas and why the Secretary of State and his predecessor imposed draconian controls on the ability and facility of local authorities to spend their own capital resources. Today they set down that the London Residuary Body, the largest non-elected quango in Europe, will not not have any control over the spending of its capital receipts in order that the full cost of abolition can be obscured from the ratepayer.

When the present system of rate support grant was introduced in 1980, it had some features which, with a fair wind, might have benefited local government. The Public Accounts Committee, in a report referred to by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), was right to say, in paragraph 54, that the

"basic structure of the new RSG system was well designed to achieve its originally intended purpose of a more comprehensible, stable and equitable system, based on a more objective measurement of spending need."

The Public Accounts Committee says that the system as now operated is "seriously defective" and that

"it is clearly absurd that counter productive incentives can exist in the grant system and that these must undermine respect for the present system."

That is the third successive independent report that has damned the Government's creation. The previous two included one from the Audit Commission. I hope tonight we will not hear any further distortions by the Minister about what the Audit Commission said about the possibility of improving efficiency in local government. The controller was so outraged by the distortion of the commission's figures of £1 billion savings claimed by the Minister that he has written to the Secretary of State protesting, in the words of the *Municipal Journal*

"at the Minister's use of Commission figures out of context."

It is within the knowledge of the House that the Secretary of State and the Minister are intelligent, sensitive and sensible men. I am generous to a fault. They know that they are having to do the impossible. They daily trade in nonsense and end up pleasing no one, except the hon. Members for Norfolk, North and for Norfolk, South-West. Instead of returning the system to the path of relative stability which it enjoyed when we were in office and——

Sir Paul Hawkins: Did I hear aright? Did the hon. Gentleman mention me as approving the Government's settlement?

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Straw: I withdraw. I abjectly apologise for the fact that I may have been mistaken in believing that a long-standing Conservative Member of Parliament may have been supporting his Government. It is a mistake that I shall seek not to make again. When Conservative Members intend in future to speak in support of the Government, will they serve Opposition Members with written notice and ensure that there are ambulances waiting outside so that any of us who have a heart attack from surprise can be cared for across the way?

The Secretary of State and the Minister are intelligent, sensitive and sensible men. They know that they are having to do the impossible. They daily trade in nonsense and end up pleasing no one. Instead of returning to the path of relative stability which the settlement enjoyed when we were in office and when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was in office, what do they do? They promise us even more complexities — another Green Paper and further efforts to redeem the Prime Minister's pledge, now 12 years old, to abolish the domestic rate.

If what I read in the newspapers is true, I can hardly believe our good fortune. Here is proof at last that the Almighty is on our side. If the present mess were not bad

[Mr. Straw]

enough, what are we promised? We are promised a poll tax to replace part only of the domestic rate which would make half the population worse off.

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
If it were done quickly".

But, lacking the confidence of their own proposals, the newspapers now tell us that those great reforms will not be introduced until at least 1990.

With crucial district council elections in May, the Opposition cannot thank the Secretary of State enough for the gratuitous and additional benefits that he is bringing to the Labour party. We, at least, want to keep him warm. It is no wonder that the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham described the poll tax as unappetising.

Two years ago, almost to the day, there was a celebrated exchange during the 1984 rate support grant debate between the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) and the Minister who was about to reply. Twice the right hon. Gentleman intervened. He was dissatisfied with the first answer and he struck again on behalf of his outraged and low-spending Conservative-controlled Cambridgeshire:

"Whatever constraints there may be from 1985-86 and thereafter, will the Minister be fairer to the low-spending authorities than his statement suggests?"

The Minister replied,

"I can give a categorical answer to that question—yes."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1984; Vol. 52, c. 736.]

Last year, the present Secretary of State claimed, to the incredulity of his friends, that the commitment given by his hon. Friend during the debate a year ago had been fulfilled. It had not. It has not, as the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East spelt out earlier this afternoon, he claimed that the undertakings given two years ago had been breached.

Low-spending councils were hit last year, and Conservative councillors paid dearly for that duplicity in the shire county elections in May. If Ministers broke that undertaking last year, they have broken it twice this year. They can, in short, no longer be trusted. If hon. members had any vestige of trust in Ministers when they came in to listen to the debate, I hope that their trust has been wholly shattered by the stunt — that is all that it can be described as — put up by the Secretary of State — to spring like a rabbit out of a hat a document entitled "Grant Recycling" published by the Secretary of State late this evening to try to prove to his hon. Friends how much they would benefit from the abolition of target and penalty.

The point that the Secretary of State sought to make was complicated. It was especially complicated because he suggested that all that Conservative Members had to do was to flick through the document, find their authorities and see how much they might get back through increases in rate support grant, in addition to what was notified on 18 December. They are then expected to troop into the Lobby to vote for the Government's proposals—or, at the very least, not to vote against them.

Even were the document accurate, its message for most Conservative shires and shire districts is meagre. A figure of £5 million has been mentioned, but against the budgets of Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire of £230 million, that is nothing but a drop in the ocean. It should not be refused, but, but as the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said, it is not likely to make any signifcant difference to the size of probable rate rises.

How much will the districts represented by hon. Members who have spoken today benefit from the Secretary of State's largesse? Castle Point in Essex will benefit by £93,000; Mid-Devon, which includes the constituency of the hon. Member for Tiverton, will have the wonderful sum of £42,000; East Cambridgeshire will receive £63,000; Eastleigh £117,000—on a budget of almost £4 million—Chichester £107,000—again on a budget of almost £4 million. Milton Keynes, which has been run ragged by the Government's policies, will benefit to the tune of £196,000, Devizes by £203,000 and Great Yarmouth by £93,000.

The document contains even more wonderful news for the Tory marginals of Stevenage, Welwyn and Hatfield and Crawley. They will receive absolutely nothing from the Secretary of State's largesse. Neither will some of the safer Tory areas such as Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Bath, Reigate and Chesham and Amersham. Perhaps the Secretary of State decided that the Chiltern district council would receive nothing because it had already given up on the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham. But the Secretary of State may believe that other Conservative souls are closer to being saved.

I shall explain to Conservative Members why the document is not worth the paper on which it is printed. First, the Secretary of State pretended that it contained amazing new information about the operation of the rate support grant system. When he announced his intention to abolish targets and penalties, he said that the effect would be that the previous amount that had been held back by the Treasury—which had gone into the Treasury coffers—would in future be available for redistribution among all the shire and metropolitan authorities in England. However, the Secretary of State did not spell out this afternoon how the system would work. At least with the penalty system, because penalty was taken away from an authority and went straight to the Treasury, it was possible to predict the effect of increases in spending without having to take into account the relative spending levels of every other authority in the land. Because this is a closed system, in which the total pool is set, what one authority receives depends critically not only on the absolute level of spending of another authority, but on the relative level of spending of one authority against another. To add to that complexity, it also depends on whether the authority is a high-resource authority, such as Hillingdon, or a low-resource authority.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Does it not depend on whether my hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies, says whether local authorities can take into account in setting their budgets the figures contained in that document? For my local authority, that means £2·3 million. If my hon. Friend says that, I probably will not vote against the Government.

Mr. Straw: If that is all that it takes to square the hon. Gentleman, he should not bother to turn up in the Lobby. Local authorities can take into account whatever they choose. The question is whether this document is worth taking into account. I shall explain why it is not.

How much one authority gets depends on what the others do and its resource basis. Where does the information on which the Minister bases these calculations come from? Is it based on an across-the-board assumption about increases in local authority spending? If so, why was

the information given to the House at 7.30 pm today when it has been available in the Department of the Environment for weeks? The Welsh Office had the courtesy to issue exactly the same type of information to Welsh Members of Parliament some weeks ago. Why was it suddenly sprung on us? Was the Secretary of State trying to stunt with the press? Is it true that, although it took two and a half hours for the document to appear in the Library after the Secretary of State's announcement that it would be made available to hon. Members, members of the press were told about it a good deal earlier? Perhaps the Minister will deal with that.

If the information is based on an across-the-board increase, does the Minister agree that local authorities have estimated that £400 million could be available for grant recycling only if budgets rise by 9 per cent. on average? I see the Secretary of State smiling like a Cheshire cat. Is that what the Secretary of State assumes? If not, what is the assumption? I should be happy to give way to him. It is crucial information. It is crucial to how Conservative Members vote tonight. If the information is not based on such crude assumptions, on what assumptions is it based? Local authorities have not made any budget decisions yet, so they and their treasurers are in no position to make any of the calculations in the document. Where do the assumptions come from?

The Government have set a terrible mantrap for the Conservative party by the system of rate capping and financial controls. I said earlier that, if rate capping works, overspending is reduced and lower spenders are hit. The same result arises here. The claims being made about the benefits of grant recycling will be met only if metropolitan authorities overspend more than shire authorities. I see that the Minister agrees with that statement. The possibility of their doing that is very limited. Metropolitan authorities are Labour-controlled and many key metropolitan authorities are now rate capped and their expenditure is controlled.

One of the major factors in the increase of local government spending above Government norms is the likely cost of the settlement of the teachers' pay dispute which will hit Conservative-controlled shire counties disproportionately hard. The metropolitan districts and the London boroughs have elections; the shire counties do not. It is a fact that, when there are elections, other things being equal, rate rises tend to be lower. There is no warrant whatever for Conservative Members putting any faith in this document. It is a bare-faced attempt by Ministers, at the last minute, in their desperation to try to head off a revolt, to try to bribe Conservative-controlled councils with some of their own money.

We oppose the settlement because it still starves hard-pressed authorities of millions of pounds, because it undermines the ability of local communities to help themselves and because it is an affront to democracy. Conservatives should oppose the settlement because of the damage that it is doing to their areas as well. All should join us in the Lobby tonight.

10.58 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is a privilege not often given to the Government spokesman to double support for the Government by the very act of rising to his feet. I thought for a moment that my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) and for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) would spoil my record but one of them said that we had not gone far enough and the other was anxious not to be swept into joining my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and me on this matter, so it is left to us to persuade the House. That is a task which I know is difficult.

We had many powerful speeches from my hon. and right hon. Friends. It has been a long debate and perhaps we have had two or three separate debates. First of all we had the transitory interventions from the Labour party, four or five of whose members have looked in from time to time. They shed crocodile tears for the difficulties of the counties, but those counties would be in far greater difficulties if they listened to the local Labour politicians. There would be no low spenders for any of us if the Labour party locally had its way, as I well know from my own shire county of Avon. From time to time they told us how disgracefully small the transfer to the cities was and so on. The Labour party, and its eloquent spokesman the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who wound up for the Opposition, would have done better if they had left the case in the hands of my right hon. and hon. Friends who believe in it.

The second debate was much more straightforward. It was from my hon. and right hon. Friends arguing with certainty for increased grants in all their areas, in all the areas for which they claim record low spending. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) called that the revolt of the bourgeoisie. That had my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on his feet to protest at the definition. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), who was temporarily out of the House at that moment, may also have been on his feet.

There was also a third debate and this was largely a concert of dogs who did not bark in the night. On this occasion my right hon. and hon. Friends did not have the benefit of a brief from the Council for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, for example, welcoming the transfer of resources to the inner cities. We did not hear from many of the city Members who benefited from that. One or two Members on the Opposition side said "more", and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West provided us with a helpful remark by saying that it was a good settlement for London. I was grateful to him for that. It almost broke a record: it was almost a speech in favour of the settlement. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made an important point for people in constituencies like his about the London Residuary Body levy. Other hon. Members with constituencies in a similar position to his can compare the situation. The budget of something like £60 million would mean probably less than 2·5 million for Uxbridge for the levy of the London Residuary Body. I hope that will be useful to him.

There was also another debate to which we will return next week and it was led most vigorously, as on other occasions, by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and, I think, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), and certainly my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge, referred quite rightly to the Public Accounts Committee report. They were all seeking fundamental reforms to the whole system. These are not reforms that can be carried through in the context of a rate support grant settlement,

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

but we shall return to them. When hon. Members see the proposals brought forward by my right hon. Friend, no one will want to accuse him of political cowardice.

I was asked to reply to some particular points and I shall do that before coming to the central debate, in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and other eloquent speakers from the Government side of the House participated. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) asked about the use of section 80 of the Local Government Act 1985. He paid us the compliment of saying that this was a complicated matter, and he will not mind if I read from the brief. This section gives the power to the Secretary of State to specify amounts of grant which shall be deemed to have been payable to the new joint authorities and other successor authorities to the GLC and metropolitan county councils. This would be for the purpose of setting safety nets and caps on grant changes as a result of abolition. In the event, my right hon. Friend has dealt with the limitation of grant changes as a result of abolition in a different way, and has determined his base positions for 1986-87 in the same way as for all other nets and caps in the settlements. In so doing he is relying on section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land (No. 2) Act 1980. He has not therefore had to rely on section 80 of the 1985 Act, which he regards as a discretionary power. I hope that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the Minister of State for allowing me to intervene, because this is an important point for a large number of authorities. His reply does not answer the question at all. Birmingham city council and other councils have asked the question, which remains valid: how can the Secretary of State make a judgment about this matter, and how can authorities decide whether that judgment is fair when the Secretary of State continues to refuse to publish the figures for this financial year on which the judgment is based?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman may have misunderstood me. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not used the discretionary power to make the judgment in that way. Perhaps we could continue this fascinating debate on some other occasion, because I believe that hon. Members are not necessarily here to listen to this point.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) asked about section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold)—has had meetings with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about this matter and it remains under consideration.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) made a point about the loss of rate revenue. I am afraid that I cannot meet him on that point, but I well understand the problem. The rateable resources will come back in the subsequent year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) made a point about the distribution of balances, which is very important to outer London boroughs as well. The revenue balances are being distributed on the basis of population.

Let me turn to the powerful speeches of my right hon. and hon. Friends. *[Interruption.]* I make no apology for comparing those speeches in that way with the speeches of other hon. Members. The burden of their complaint has been much the same. Even to list them all would waste precious time. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) was especially enjoyable. The speech by right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point was particularly impressive, as always, and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton is never to be ignored. I understand the frustration represented in the speeches by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, faced as they are with what their local authority officers tell them are inevitably huge rate increases. As is universally the case in such matters, there is another side to this case. It is known to some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, although not all, because they are sometimes on the other side of the argument.

Three crucial variables affect the rating outcome of a local authority — how much grant in total central Government give, how central Government distribute it and how much local authorities choose to spend. A major plank of the Government's policy has been to cut the rate support grant percentage. There is not a big cut this year, but there is a cut. For at least 40 years — it may be nearly 60 years — wherever there has been an RSG percentage cut, higher resource areas lose more in cash than lower resource areas. It is a redistributive system, as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) rightly said.

We discussed these matters at the time of the autumn statement. We voted on them. They had the support of all but a handful. In some sense, there is greater consistency in the position of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham because he did not vote for the level of provision that we put forward, nor for the RSG percentage that went with it. Conservative Members have endorsed the autumn statement. There were few votes against it. Even the Association of County Councils in its letter said that it is not

"specifically asking Parliament to restore the block grant and AEG to previous levels".

I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends of exactly what they voted for in the autumn statement. Paragraph 2.34 shows how we proposed to increase provision—what we thought local authorities would be likely to spend. Paragraph 2.35 says that the grant stays the same in cash. I am a classicist. I do not think that one has to be a statistician to know that that shows that there is a percentage cut in RSG. It is not as big as in previous years and it is not as big as when the good Dr. Witteveen, of whom my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is so fond, spoke to the Labour Government. We all voted for that cut. I certainly voted for it. I shall not embarrass any of my colleagues by mentioning all those who voted for it. As in every year, the percentage cut is distributed unequally by the resource equalisation system, in favour of poor areas and away from richer areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham understood this very well. I think it is fair to say that he always argued before in favour of this percentage cut as putting the burden on local authorities. The structure of his speech was right—he has understood the situation.

We come now to how that figure of nearly £12 billion is distributed. First and foremost, we changed the system of distribution in favour of low spenders by abolishing targets—something on which we were congratulated by the PAC—and replaced them with stronger pressures in

the block grant system itself. This gave every low spender a major gain. It was done in response to arguments for it from right hon. and hon. Friends.

We also decided, as we had been asked to by many right hon. and hon. Friends, church leaders and others, to make some provision for what hon. Members on both sides of the House saw as the increasing needs of the inner cities. That has been welcomed today by many hon. Members, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. As the ACC is honest enough to say:

"Many in local government would not dispute the Government's priorities but would support them."

Mr. Straw: Read on.

Mr. Waldegrave: I know very well what comes next. As there was no additional money, and my right hon. and hon. Friends had already voted for the autumn statement, with one or two exceptions, where was the money to come from? Was it to come from the air? This is the inevitable working of the system that has been entrusted to my Department by my right hon. and hon. Friends. It left a situation in which the distributional shifts in the amount of money had been changed. Let us be clear to what we are objecting, and to what we are not objecting. Elements in the redistribution of the system had been moved in favour of the low spenders. The effect of the RSG cut that is central to our policy, and for which the Government have a defensible case in terms of the accountability of local authorities, meant that even for the low spenders, there was a cut in the grant at a likely spending level.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Does my hon. Friend agree that he is giving to the shire counties with the one hand, but taking away more with the other, and doing it all in aid of the Treasury—because the Treasury wants cuts in the Budget — not recognising that if people have to pay more on their rates, they will not get any advantage from such cuts?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is wrong to try to shuffle off responsibility from my Department on to the Treasury or any other Department. This is a free-standing policy. We believe in the cuts in the RSG percentage because we believe that the entanglement of central with local government is the cause of so many of the woes of local government. We want to put responsibility more firmly on its shoulders and restore accountability. It is one of our central policies, and is the right policy.

The third crucial variable is spending. Actual spending is doubly crucial to rates in low-spending areas this year. We guessed the likely outcome for them in terms of rates by two measures—what would the low spenders do, and what would the Labour and Liberal high spenders do? As we all know, that is crucial to—*[Interruption.]* Liberals may laugh at the idea of Liberal councils being high-spending, but I point out the example of Wiltshire's budgets.

We had set the councils a real term standstill target in 1985-86, as has been said by several speakers. This year as well, we had to look at what would be the likely outcome against the background of what we had been asking them to do. At no point had we said to the low spenders that they were off the leash and would be allowed to have general expenditure gains, and they could ignore the attempts that our party, across the country, is making to hold back spending. That was never our policy. We told them that we were trying to develop a system under which, if they held their expenditure steady in real terms, the situation would not be easy, but it would be tolerable for them and their ratepayers. That is against a 3·5 per cent. increase which, more realistically, may be a 4 or 5 per cent. increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh said that we had assumed a standstill budget, meaning 3 per cent., 4 per cent. or 5 per cent. That is exactly right. That was the signal that we were asking should be sent to even the low spenders. We do not wish there to be a general increase, in real terms, in spending.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are popping in at the end of the debate and trying to make speeches. There is no reason why they could not have made speeches earlier, so I am going to make my speech. Virtually every county that has been to see me or my right hon. and hon. Friends specified its likely spending plans well in advance of that sort of standstill. I have to repeat again and again to my right hon. and hon. Friends that we are being shown projected budgets that, with one or two honourable exceptions, show spending increases of 8, 10 or 12 per cent. We gave no pledge to the high spenders, to the low spenders, to this House or to anybody else that we would validate spending increases in real terms of 5 per cent. or more. That was never a part of our plans. How could we possibly have given such a signal without throwing overboard our central economic policy, to which all of my right hon. and hon. Friends are devoted? We should have been excoriated for it. Several of my right hon. and hon. Friends have said that they should have been allowed or encouraged to spend up to the grant-related expenditure assessment.

Mr. James Prior (Waveney): My hon. Friend has been saying for the last quarter of an hour that because Conservative Members have supported the Government's general economic policy they have got to support this motion. Is that not really an invitation to Conservative Members to vote against the Government more often?

Mr. Waldegrave: I was saying something that was a little more pointed. I was not commenting upon the general support for the Government's economic policy but upon the fact that the figures that made this result inevitable had been put before the House and had been voted on by the House. It is no good saying to Department of the Environment Ministers or to Ministers in any other Department, "We give you the weapons but we do not like the outcome."

The spending of the high spenders is crucial, too. Authorities that overspend on our system this year all contribute to a pool. All of this goes back to local government. I do not disagree with the hon. member for Blackburn about how this pool of money works. He was right when he said that the low spenders will receive the greatest benefit if we take the amazing gamble that those who have been low spenders since 1976, and before, will continue to be relatively low spenders and that Labour authorities and, in some cases, Liberal authorities which have been high spenders, even under the Labour Government, who could not persuade them to reduce their spending, will continue to be relatively high spenders.

May I point out to my hon. Friends the Members for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) and for Norfolk, South-West

[Mr. Waldegrave]

that it would not be imprudent for treasurers to look at local authority spending — I suspect that they have always done this; in fact, I know that in many cases they have always done it—and to take the further figures that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State placed in the Library and say, "This is likely to be the outcome." The decision must be for them, but it would not be an imprudent decision to take.

Mr. Straw: Before the Minister gets off this point and since he has not yet mentioned the figures circulated by the Secretary of State at 7.30 pm, will he spell out on what assumptions the calculations were made? Why were the figures not made available to hon. Members before the debate in the same manner as his Welsh colleagues made similar figures available to Welsh hon. Members?

Mr. Waldegrave: The assumption in the figures is redistribution if there is a pool of about £400 million——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: That is the assumption. As the hon. Member says, there is nothing new about that. The hon. Gentleman can take any level that he likes. The assumption is the redistribution of a pool of £400 million.

We recognise that the settlement is tough and that it does not give the green light to expansion of expenditure —even to low-spending authorities. Nationally, we are not yet in a position to do that. We judged in December and we judge now that although the settlement is tough, it is tolerable, especially when the close ending and the new London Residuary Body budget are taken into account.

I beg my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends, who must be tempted to fight the settlement in the interests of their constituents——

Mr. Carttiss: It is not a temptation, it is our duty.

Mr. Waldegrave: To respect our constituents is indeed the duty of all of us. My right hon. and hon. Friends must not fall for the siren songs from the Opposition and get into an unholy alliance with those who do not believe in low spending and who bear our party and the shire councillors nothing but ill will. They seek to validate every high rate increase by blaming it, with the help of my right hon. and hon. Friends, on the Government. I beg my hon. Friends to think carefully, because the outcome will not be, as it never is, as bad as the predictions. I beg my right hon. and hon. Friends, whose misgivings I understand well, to think carefully before joining that unholy rabble in the Lobby tonight.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 230.

Division No. 41] **[11.28 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Grant, Sir Anthony
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*

Silkin, Rt Hon J.	Tinn, James
Skeet, Sir Trevor	Torney, Tom
Skinner, Dennis	Wainwright, R.
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*	Wallace, James
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*	Wareing, Robert
Snape, Peter	Weetch, Ken
Soley, Clive	Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Spearing, Nigel	Welsh, Michael
Speed, Keith	White, James
Steel, Rt Hon David	Wiggin, Jerry
Stott, Roger	Wigley, Dafydd
Straw, Jack	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Tapsell, Sir Peter	Winnick, David
Temple-Morris, Peter	Woodall, Alec
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*	
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*	Mr. Frank Haynes and
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*	Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 140), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 2)

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 2) 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 587), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3)

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 138), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

11.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 100), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to leave the Chamber quietly.

Mr. Edwards: This is the sixth main Welsh rate support grant report that I have put to the House. It is a settlement which marks an important stage in the Government's strategy for local government finance in Wales—a strategy which aims to bring local authority spending into line with Government plans and to provide councils with the certainty that they require in order to manage their affairs efficiently and effectively. The fact is that this settlement is a very good one for Wales; but that it is good is largely due to the fact that authorities as a whole in Wales have virtually succeeded in 1985-86 in bringing their spending into line with the resources that were made available. Expenditure is now back at broadly the same level in real terms as in 1979-80, the level which we inherited from our predecessors. Since 1979 the total increase in rates has been kept to seven percentage points below the change in the RPI, and this has brought considerable advantages for ratepayers in Wales.

To achieve this, local authorities have had to reduce their overspending against the Government's targets from around £50 million in 1981-82 to £4·6 million in 1985-86.

Only five authorities out of 45 in Wales have budgeted to overspend this year. On the strength of this performance, and in the expectation that local authorities in Wales will continue to exercise restraint in setting their budgets for 1986-87, I have decided to dispense with expenditure targets. This does not signal any relaxation of the Government's spending strategy. On the contrary, the Government remain determined that local authority spending in Wales should not exceed the level allowed for in the settlement.

I have acknowledged that local authorities will face difficult decisions, but they know that if they succeed it is not the Government's intention to ask for a further reduction in the level of their spending. They will therefore be in a position to plan ahead, secure in the knowledge that they can expect the degree of stability in expenditure which they have asked me to provide. They should also remember that success in constraining current expenditure has enabled me to allocate more resources to capital expenditure in the past, and that the capital allocations that I announced on 3 December for 1986-87 are higher than those for the current year. I hope that we can build on this and continue to release resources for capital expenditure because of good performance on current account spending.

I turn now to the 1986-87 settlement. I announced the main details in my statement on 18 December, and hon. Members have since had the opportunity to examine both my statement and the rate support grant report. I do not, therefore, propose to repeat what I said then but simply to refer to the major features.

Total relevant expenditure is increased from local authorities' budgeted expenditure in 1985-86 by about

£75·3 million to £1,597·1 million, an increase of 4·9 per cent. Current expenditure is £51 million or 3·8 per cent., higher than the comparable 1985-86 budgeted figure. Aggregate Exchequer grant is £54 million, or 5·3 per cent., higher than the sum in the Welsh rate support grant supplementary report 1985-86, and represents 66·8 per cent. of relevant expenditure compared with an effective percentage of 66·6 per cent. for the current financial year.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn) *Rose——*

Mr. Edwards: Perhaps I might finish this point. The proportion of spending met by grant has, therefore, been maintained. Block grant is £44·3 million, or 5·5 per cent., higher than in the supplementary report for 1985-86.

Mr. Best: I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. I welcome the 5·3 per cent. increase in aggregate Exchequer grant. Can my right hon. Friend say, therefore, why it is that the Association of District Councils, in its memorandum, which he will have seen, sent to Welsh Members states:

"The total of Aggregate Exchequer grant has been held at the same cash level as in 1985-86. This is a real reduction in total grant of at least 4·5 per cent. taking the Government's current view of inflation"?

Has the association left something out? Can my right hon. Friend enlighten the House?

Mr. Edwards: The figures that I have been quoting are percentages. The percentage grant has not been reduced. The proportion of spending met by grant has not just been maintained, but has been marginally increased in Wales, because that produces a comparable rating consequence of the same poundage effect in England, and because Welsh local authorities have come close to meeting the Government's targets. I have just spelt out to my hon. Friend the actual percentage increases on relevant expenditure and on current expenditure, and he knows the expected inflation rates over the period. He can therefore see that the information which, as I understood it he quoted from the district authorities misinterprets the position.

Hon. Members will note that total expenditure—I think this is the point that my hon. Friend was pressing—aggregate Exchequer grant and block grant have all been increased in excess of the forecast rate of inflation projected by any of the main forecasters. To any fair-minded appraisal, this represents a realistic and balanced settlement package.

Some local authorities have criticised the fact that the increase in provision for current expenditure—that is, spending on wages, salaries and other running expenses—is below the expected level of inflation. Others argue that the settlement does not fully take into account the levels of pay increases already agreed within local government and the expected levels of future pay awards. I have to say this in response to that kind of argument. No organisation, whether in the public or the private sector, should seek simply to pass on the costs of higher pay rises to its consumers, or, in the case of local government, to the taxpayer and the ratepayer. Local authorities must concentrate on achieving more moderate pay awards. Where awards exceed inflation, they should seek to absorb the excess costs by greater efficiency. It is not the intention of central Government that such awards should be paid for at the taxpayer's expense.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): If the right hon. Gentleman is trying to argue that case when he makes allowance for wage awards that are well below the rate of inflation he is arguing for depressing the standard of living of thousands of people in the Principality.

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman is arguing that those wage settlements above the rate of inflation should be passed on to the ratepayers, he is asking that the standard of living of ratepayers should be depressed. If he is producing an argument that we should be concerning ourselves because wage settlements are running below the grant settlements that I have announced for the general rate of inflation, I wish that that was the situation, but that is a wholly hypothetical situation with which he confronts the House and I do not think that we need pursue it much further.

I am of course aware of the special circumstances surrounding the teachers' pay dispute. I deeply regret that this dispute has gone on for so long, but the blame for that must rest with the unions, which have refused to negotiate. The Government have a responsibility to balance the interests not only of pupils and teachers, but of taxpayers and ratepayers. The Government have made it clear that we are prepared to make available for this purpose up to £1·25 billion additional resources over a period of four years — equivalent to about £75 million in Wales. Already part of that total—£40 million—is being made available in 1986-87 to implement the new midday supervision arrangement in England and Wales. The remainder continues to be available for a new salary structure if the conditions for its release are met. This additional provision would, of course, be reflected in GRE and block grant for 1986-87 and future years. That is a reasonable offer and councils should allow for it in setting their rates. Throughout this dispute the Government have done what they can to secure an outcome which is fair to all.

I refer now to the mechanisms for distributing the resources allowed for in the settlement and for maintaining downward pressure on spending. Expenditure targets for individual local authorities have been replaced by a tough block grant system. This will provide a fairer way of encouraging councils to constrain expenditure. The precise mechanisms have been developed in close consultation with the local authority associations and in particular take account of proposals put forward by the Welsh counties committee. Under those arrangements, for most authorities, for any given increase in expenditure there will be a reduction in grant resulting in a significantly higher proportion of costs being borne by the ratepayer. But, perhaps more importantly, the new system also offers positive financial rewards to ratepayers in those authorities where spending is held down.

If authorities in general spend in line with the settlement and draw on their reserves to the same extent as in the current year, rate rises need not, on average, exceed 3 to 4 per cent. For those authorities which budget to spend below the level of increase allowed for in the settlement, there will be very significant rating benefits. The level of rate increases is vital not only to domestic ratepayers but to business and commerce. Commercial and industrial ratepayers contribute approximately 40 per cent. of rate income and there is evidence that high rates reduce the profitability of firms, threatening existing jobs and deter growth. Councils should recognise that and rate in line with the settlement—a settlement which allows revenue

[Mr. Edwards]

spending to grow in aggregate by broadly 5 per cent. or, as I have already stressed, by rather more than the likely rate of inflation.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The right hon. Gentleman has again been misleading the people of Wales as well as the Chamber by saying that we can expect rates to be held at the present level or even reduced. Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that in the county of Gwynedd a rate increase of 20p out of the 23p that it has announced was needed just to maintain the services at the current level? He has just announced that that level is satisfactory because it is in line with the targets that were announced by the Welsh Office in 1985. If it is acceptable to have that level of services this year, why does he expect Gwynedd either to reduce the service next year or have such a massive increase in rates?

Mr. Edwards: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have been talking about the average percentage increase across Welsh local authorities as a whole. Clearly that varies from one county and district to another. I made that clear in a previous statement to the House. I take the opportunity of apologising to the hon. Gentleman, because in the press handout there was an error that affected the forecast rate increase on certain assumptions in one of his districts. Having said that, it is also clear that if the settlement in Gwynedd is in line with the assumptions that I have spelt out there need not be a large increase for ratepayers. Indeed, it could be below the general level for Wales. Gwynedd has done well out of the settlement.

I move on to say what happens to grant if authorities do not spend in line with the settlement. If authorities can hold their spending broadly in line with the settlement, the amount of grant claimed will equal the amount of grant available. However, if aggregate spending exceeds the level of expenditure provision there could well be an underclaim of grant. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) tabled a question about that, and I have answered it. I have already told the House that the amount of any such underclaim will be retained in Wales for the benefit of local authorities. I shall await the 1986-87 budget returns before deciding the method of distribution. In setting their budgets, individual councils will therefore be most unwise to assume that they will necessarily benefit from the distribution of any resources unclaimed as a result of overspending. We will take the decisions when we have the budget returns.

Against that background, I am surprised and extremely concerned by press reports which suggest that some authorities are planning what appear to be wholly unreasonable increases in expenditure and rates in 1986-87. Apparently some councils are contemplating expenditure increases of almost double the likely rise in costs in the economy as a whole. In some Welsh counties there is talk of rate increases approaching 20 to 30 per cent. — between five and seven times the rate of inflation. One authority, Dyfed, is, I understand, considering rate increases of 30p in the pound—almost 20 per cent. If it goes ahead with such a proposal, I believe that many ratepayers in Dyfed will think it disgraceful. If that authority budgeted in line with the forecast rate of inflation its rates could, in fact, actually fall. Media reports have suggested other examples of proposals for increases in expenditure and rates which, if the reports are correct, I can only regard as totally irresponsible. These councils are well aware that such action would result in unacceptable overspending, which would certainly jeopardise future stability and the opportunity that the settlement provides for progress in later years. Local authorities have a duty to act responsibly in setting their budgets and in controlling their expenditure. I urge them to think again if they are considering the sort of figures that I read about in some newspapers.

If local authorities act irresponsibly in 1986-87, they will inevitably create major difficulties for the future. If they want more capital expenditure, and they all say that they do, and if they want the ceiling of expenditure to rise in line with inflation, which is the result that they have asked us to produce, they should not throw away the opportunity that the settlement gives them. There is no need for overall expenditure in Wales to exceed the amount allowed for in the settlement. As in any organisation, there are real opportunities in local government, given the will for greater efficiency and better use of resources.

In its report published in 1985, the Audit Commission identified considerable scope for efficiency savings within local government. Over £1 billion of potential savings have been identified for England and Wales. While no separate estimates have been made for Wales, there can be no doubt that opportunities for savings exist, and those resources should be made available for other use, including the development of priority services.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Secretary of State might recall that when he made his initial statement to the House I took up with him the issue of the Audit Commission's sample in Wales. Will he review that matter and ensure that separate figures are produced for Wales so that we can see the so-called savings in Wales and ensure that the costs of Welsh local government are reflected in them?

Mr. Edwards: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, I do not run, and cannot dictate to, the Audit Commission, but in due course it hopes to be able to produce such figures. I agree that it would be helpful to have them. The Audit Commission has made it clear in presentations that I have attended that it thinks there is plenty of scope for savings in Wales, as in England. The general statements that it makes are as valid there as elsewhere. Members of the Audit Commission, Mr. Banham and others, have come to Wales to spell out to Welsh local authorities ways in which they could make savings. They have identified a number of such areas.

Already good examples have been set by some authorities in Wales, and there is every reason why ratepayers should expect all authorities to seek efficiency savings on their behalf. I have seen correspondence from the treasurer of Clwyd county council in the past few days. I would have rather more sympathy if it were not one of the counties which has increased rather than decreased the number of employees, as many other councils and even more districts have done. *[Interruption.]* I want efficiency in local government and the best possible return—that is in the interests of employment in the area—and the best use of resources. I cannot think of a way more guaranteed to create unemployment than for local authorities to waste their money and have excessive rate burdens for local industry.

Ratepayers should demand evidence from their councils that there is a continuing programme of efficiency reviews and action to implement them. They should seek evidence that those reviews have produced savings and that the resources thus released have been put to good use. In every local authority area it would be of great benefit to everyone if a series of questions on those issues were repeatedly asked.

In education, for example, the real educational benefits for children, which arise as a consequence of rationalisation and taking surplus places out of use, are accompanied by substantial revenue savings which can be redeployed to advantage elsewhere. One example of that is my area of Dyfed, where Her Majesty's inspectors have revealed that in the primary sector there are 11,000 surplus places. If some of those were redeployed, there would be more resources for other parts of the education service.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): May we take it from the hon. Gentleman's use of the word "rationalisation" that he is now giving official blessing to a policy to close village schools in rural Wales?

Mr. Edwards: Liberal Members are trotting around Powys saying that there should be no closure of rural schools. The decision on which schools should close must be taken by the local education authorities. I say to the hon. and learned Gentleman, especially coming from an area with the highest level of spending in England and Wales relative to GRE, which has a low rate burden and which has a very good settlement compared with any other local authority, that I hope I never hear him complain about inadequate education provision in schools in other areas when he is not prepared to contemplate any change in the education structure in his area despite there being a substantial reduction in the numbers being educated. That is the sort of double standard that we have come to expect from the Liberal party. His comments do not deserve to be taken seriously.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Does my right hon. Friend agree that surplus places mean not only bad finance but bad education? How can we justify one teacher teaching four age groups in one classroom? How can that be good education?

Mr. Edwards: What is absolutely and undoubtedly clear is that if there is a substantial reduction in school numbers in one area, but we do not alter school provision, in other areas the standard of education will not be as good as it might otherwise be. As the Government have maintained provision substantially unaltered—there has even been an increase in some areas—during our period in office, there can be no complaints from those who have refused to accept rationalisation.

Some authorities have been very slow to grasp that opportunity, and they should be invited to explain why. There are many other examples of where savings can be achieved, including improved maintenance of buildings, efficient use of energy, better management of vehicle fleets and better use of resources generally. I hope that during this debate hon. Members will encourage their councils to take the necessary action to achieve savings. We all have a responsibility to identify and eradicate waste and extravagance.

I repeat what I said at the start. The settlement for 1986-87 is a very good one for Wales. Anyone who listened to the earlier debate will recognise that fact. Welsh local authorities have a much easier task than their English counterparts. That is the reward for sensible behaviour. Welsh local authorities have now been given an opportunity to set local government finance on a secure base. If councils choose to ignore that opportunity and unnecessarily increase their expenditure and add to the burden of rates, they will be guilty of abdicating that responsibility. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will join ratepayers in discouraging such behaviour.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): That speech lasted 25 minutes.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman complains, so I shall never give way to him if he seeks to intervene in a speech that I am making.

I commend the settlement to the House.

12.3 am

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State is very testy tonight. I hope to make a shorter speech than his. He has delivered his sixth local government budget, and again he has waved a big stick. It is bitter medicine for both the professional and elected local government leaders in Wales.

Last month, John Morgan of the *Western Mail*, wrote:

"Welsh Secretary Nicholas Edwards will today open the final chapter in his campaign to bring local government expenditure down to 1979 levels."

That report exposes the unpleasant objectives of Ministers for Wales and local government. It is a matter of pride to the right hon. Gentleman that he has dragged expenditure down to 1979 levels in real terms, but we regard it as a failure by the Government to comprehend the huge demand made on local government services by hundreds of thousands of Welsh citizens.

We say that the Government are blind and deaf to the real needs of our truly beleaguered communities. It can also be argued that the policy that the Secretary of State has outlined today is unworkable. There has been a cut in grant in real terms. The latest calculation by the House of Commons research staff is that the overall cut in real terms between 1978-79 and 1986-87 is as high as 12·4 per cent. The right hon. Gentleman has robbed our local government system and taken away its independence.

In six years of office, the Government have presided over Welsh district councils increasing their budgeted spending by only 46 per cent. During the same period, the retail prices index rose by 74 per cent. Beside the widespread bitterness at this proposed settlement, there are two strong and justifiable criticisms. The first is that even local treasurers say that the settlement is too complex with many quirky consequences, and the second is that the settlement does not take account of pay awards well in excess of inflation.

I shall quote Mr. Morgan of the *Western Mail* again, this time from 20 January, when he wrote:

"With the growing feeling that the Welsh councils have been 'taken for a ride' has come a veiled threat from the Welsh authorities that they will not knuckle down indefinitely without positive action from the Welsh Office to offer even greater incentives for doing so . . . the question that is being asked behind closed doors is why should the Welsh cut back while the English continue to spend?"

Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said today will make Welsh local authorities change the view that Mr. Morgan so accurately chronicles.

[Mr. Barry Jones]

There is another criticism, which is encapsulated in an answer given to me on Monday 20 January. The Secretary of State replied:

"On 12 December 1985 there were 181,496 unemployed claimants in Wales. The corresponding figure in December 1979 was an estimated 78,476 and the increase between the two dates is 103,020 or 131·3 per cent."

The right hon. Gentleman forgets too easily that mass unemployment puts huge pressure on the services provided by our councils, and the Government are not responding effectively to the social and economic emergency that is creating throughout Wales. The right hon. Gentleman has today ignored the crucial problems that bother local authority leaders of all parties in Wales when it comes to facing the problems that he is setting.

I should like to make a plea on behalf of my own county of Clwyd. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to receive a deputation from Clwyd urgently to try to head off a financial crisis. So serious is the matter that chief officers have met hon. Members who represent the county. I have confidence in the county's chief executive and the vice chairman, Mr. Elwyn Conway, a responsible county council leader who has left me in no doubt about the problems that the county faces. Clwyd does not want a rate rise of more than 10 per cent. Will the right hon. Gentleman respond sympathetically and urgently?

I shall quote from a letter that the county treasurer has sent to hon. Members, and I know that a letter was sent to the right hon. Gentleman. The treasurer writes:

"Clwyd will receive in 1986-87 a much worse grant settlement than in previous years and the basis of the Welsh settlement has been altered to Clwyd's specific disadvantage, and the legal and technical changes introduced by the Welsh Office will produce a situation where there is now every likelihood of a larger increase in the County precept. The problem for Clwyd is caused by technical changes in the Rate Support Grant allocation where the Government is assuming that Welsh County Councils will be spending about 5% more next year than in the current year and for this they have provided an average increase throughout Wales in block Grant of the order of 5%. This will represent"—

this is the crunch for Clwyd—

"a Clwyd increase of only 1·8% and will mean the loss of Grant amounting to at least £2 million."

That is not the end of the tale. The county is trying to cope. There is widespread parental unease about the cuts in schooling provision. Many parents are sick with worry. I will detail in brief the cuts in the education service. They are not peculiar to Clwyd. There is reduced provision for nursery education, 47 teachers and 39 nursery assistants; a reduction in the education technology budget; deletion of secondary teachers required to maintain curriculum level; increased prices for school meals; delete the net cost of 60 teachers seconded for training; a cut in further education colleges; a reduction in ancillary staff; and a reduction in the number of primary teachers. That totals £1,130,000.

When we on the Opposition Benches hear public schoolboys telling us that, it is rather hard to take, because we know that more grants than ever before are being given to support private education in Wales. In reply to the charge that local authorities in Wales do not save as much as they should from falling school rolls and surplus places, it must be pointed out that in many cases, especially perhaps in rural areas, the local school is more than a school. The prospect of closing it, if not unthinkable, carries all sorts of social and community difficulties. The plan by the Secretary of State might be an economist's dream, but it is not what the community wants. The trouble with this rate support grant settlement is that it is not what our communities need and it is not what they deserve.

I have a brief point to make about Gwynedd and Clwyd and the police force. We all want to see the restoration of the policeman on the beat. Rural and community policing is declining, and elderly people are increasingly afraid of break-ins, muggings and harassment. The right hon. Gentleman knows and might even agree with that. I am seeking support from the right hon. Gentleman for the joint approach of the Clwyd and Gwynedd county councils to the Home Secretary. The chairmen of both councils believe strongly that rate borne increases in the police authority budget at a time when other local government services are being severely restricted and reduced, starkly illustrate the inadequacy of the resources made available to the two counties in the rate support grant.

Mr. Best: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that provision is made in the settlement for a 7·5 per cent. increase in police pay? How does he square that with the gloom and doom that he has been spreading about this settlement?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman has shot the Government's case apart. One of the fundamental defects is that within the settlement there is insufficient provision for the 7·5 per cent. police pay rise. In his intervention the hon. Gentleman is arguing against his right hon. Friend.

Powys county council received an increase of just 1·8 per cent. I am informed by the council that in real terms that represents a cut in grant of more than 4 per cent., or £2 million. The council tells me that this underfunding is made more injurious because Powys is sparsely populated and highly dependent upon rate support grant.

Powys says that there will be a precept increase of up to 25 per cent. The Secretary of State must have it wrong. Several counties with potentially astronomically high increases in April have been mentioned and the right hon. Gentleman must bear the burden of the blame. There could be a cut of £600,000 to the education authority in Powys.

In Mid-Glamorgan, because of the penal nature of this settlement, the education department will be forced to cut £750,000 next year. The social services department is being forced to cut £150,000. It is said that the likely rate precept increase will be at least 10 per cent.—probably more. I have been told by Mid-Glamorgan that the education cuts will mean more teaching heads in schools and a further reduction in the number of teaching staff.

Mid-Glamorgan exemplifies the terrible problems of coalfield and valley communities. I plead with the Secretary of State to be more generous, because the socio-economic problems are growing by the month. The environmental health chiefs are monitoring the health of pupils returning to school after the Christmas shutdown. Cases of dysentery are being reported. New figures show that last year there were 572 cases in Wales compared with 48 in 1982. In a recent article in the *Western Mail*, Mr. Roger Dobson wrote:

"Dr. Elizabeth Roberts, medical officer in Mid-Glamorgan, believes that social conditions must be a factor"

in the return of dysentery cases. We have not seen so many cases since before world war 2. I urge the Secretary of State to look carefully at the predicament of Mid-Glamorgan county council.

I remind the Secretary of State of what the district councils have been saying about the settlement, which he discribed tonight as being better than usual. The *Municipal Journal* states:

"'Disappointing' is the verdict of Cllr Tyssul Lewis, chairman of the ADC's Welsh Committee, on the annual rate support grant settlement . . .

'The Welsh Secretary described the settlement as a challenging one—it certainly is', he said.

Cllr Lewis said that despite the abolition of targets the RSG system is 'just as complicated and involves as much Government interference'.

He added: 'The settlement means that either services will have to be cut drastically or many district ratepayers will face rate increases of over 10 per cent. next year'."

I shall give just one instance of a district council problem. Afan has been unjustly penalised because of the change in the grant mechanism. If Afan increases expenditure by the rate of inflation, it will face a rate increase of more than 11 per cent. I am informed that, because of the anomaly, tenants may face council house rent increases of more than the Government's suggested 65p.

There is a question mark over nursery education in Wales. Class sizes are bound to increase. Joint financing schemes between the health authorities and county councils may fall apart. We all want local authorities to cope with child abuse. We therefore need more, not fewer, social workers. There is fear in the counties that services for the elderly are at risk. The recent public expenditure White Paper gives us no respite. The cuts continue apace.

The Secretary of State has attempted to sell his settlement as one better than usual. That is not good enough. The settlement's complexity has been denounced by local authorities. It is a mean settlement because it in no way copes with the challenge of pay increases above the rate of inflation. I want the Secretary of State to convene an urgent meeting with local authorities to discuss a less complex and more generous approach. The settlement is not acceptable because council rates will rocket. We shall oppose it.

12.20 am

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) did not make much more of a fist of picking holes in the settlement this time than he did on 18 December. It is generally regarded as acceptable throughout Wales.

We have a problem in Clywd, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a cursory reference, and on which the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside dilated at some length. When my right hon. Friend announced the rate support grant settlement to the House on 18 December, it was generally received as a fair one, unlike the reception accorded to the English settlement. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside was hard put to it, then as now, to find any solid criticism. Such vague complaints as he had to make did not relate specifically to his county of Clwyd. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and I had no reason to make any particular point about the treatment of Clwyd. Indeed my right hon. Friend told me:

"If . . . Clwyd can limit the year-to-year growth in its spending to 5 per cent., I expect that it will have a similar increase in rates."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 333.]

The county treasurer, Mr. Greening, when he saw the actual figures, saw at once that something was wrong—so wrong that he thought that it must be a misprint. The Christmas holidays were upon us and it was too late to warn hon. Members or to get an answer from the Welsh Office until after the holiday. The matter is hugely complicated, and I am not sure whether even the chief executive understands it.

What seems to have happened is that the block grant has been calculated on the 1985-86 budget figures instead of, as hitherto, on the 1986-87 notional figures, which were the figures used last July by the Welsh Office in the exemplifications that it gave to the county councils of the sort of level of grant that they could expect for any given level of increase in expenditure. Moreover, as far as I can make out, these were the figures that my right hon. Friend was using when he told me on 18 December that Clwyd's precept would not need to rise by more than 5 per cent.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend will tell me that the county council freely chose that method of calculation, and it is true that it did. However, it did so on legal advice from the Welsh Office, legal advice that would have been well founded for England but which for Wales has had greatly distorting consequences. Because of the altered base of this purely technical change, Clwyd will get a mere 1·8 per cent. increase in grant compared with a Welsh average of 5·3 per cent. and 11·8 per cent. for some counties such as Dyfed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My hon. Friend has given an accurate technical account of the basis of the figures, and I am glad that he has acknowledged that he was aware of the technical change, which was discussed in detail with the Local Authorities Association. However, my statement about the rate consequences in Clwyd was not based on outdated figures—I believe that that statement was true and is true.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I accept what my right hon. Friend has said. It is not part of my case that Clwyd is guiltless in this matter. However, the altered basis means a loss of no less than £2·2 million, compared with what the county had quite reasonably budgeted for. In those circumstances, there is not a hope in hell of keeping the rate increase to 5 per cent.—it is unlikely that the council will be able to keep it to 15 per cent.

I am not going to argue that Clwyd has been invariably prudent in the management of its finances. I do not share all the criticisms made by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn. In particular, I think that the expenditure on Bodelwyddan castle is, on balance, justified. However, many economies, particularly at shire hall, should have been made, but have not been—not always, or even usually, because of any failure by officers to prepare economies but because, with a hung council, there is no disciplined party with the electoral courage to carry through measures that raise a storm.

However, on the present issue I believe that all Clwyd Members are more or less at one. The county has an unemployment level that is as bad as any in Wales. It desperately needs infrastructure developments, training schemes and expanded education. To push the county into a position where it has to make sharp increases in rates, thus running the risk either of driving more jobs away or of facing rate capping, leading to a cut in essential services, is completely unacceptable.

The reply sent by Mr. Morgan of the Welsh Office on 14 January to the county treasurer, blandly admitting that

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

Clwyd had lost £2·2 million and that this was "unfortunate", cannot possibly be the Welsh Office's last word on the matter. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will tell me that later in the year there may be some unused grant that can be reallocated to Clwyd, but that will be far too late. Unless we know now more or less how much it will be—and by the nature of things we cannot—it will be pretty well useless if the object of the exercise is, as I understand it to be, to get councils to budget more carefully.

My right hon. Friend rightly made much of the need for certainty. What has happened in Clwyd's case has had exactly the opposite effect.

12.25 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Writing in this morning's edition of the *Western Mail* John Morgan said this:

"One minute the Welsh Office signals local authorities to spend more and the next minute it slams down the shutters and imposes a moratorium."

That is a correct assessment of the situation. It appears that the Secretary of State for Wales has become so involved in the astonishing complexity of his own formulae that he has lost sight of what is really happening in the counties and districts of Wales.

In general terms, the effect of the 1986-87 settlement can be summarised very simply. The block grant fails to take into account the real level of expenditure that is necessary even to maintain existing services. As a result, even in what the Secretary of State dubs fortunate counties like Powys—later I shall take issue with him on that point—the authorities face a virtually impossible and unbridgeable shortfall. It is part of the pattern of declining Government support.

In real terms, there has been an overall cut in grant of 12·4 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1986-87. The settlement for 1986-87 fails to take into account adequately the settlements to local authority workers—settlements reached by these local authorities on the basis of the best advice and of their knowledge and assessment of the situation—and it wholly fails to take adequately into account the effects of the eventual settlement of the teachers' strike.

The result is that the Welsh counties are facing cuts in services. I said earlier that the Secretary of State dubbed Powys a fortunate county, which apparently receives a great deal of money from the Government. Let us consider the effects upon schools in that so-called fortunate county, which happens to be the one in which my Montgomeryshire constituency is situated. I have to declare an interest. I have three children in Powys county schools. Indeed, I believe that I have more children in state schools in Wales than have the whole of the Conservative Benches added together. We know what is going on in Powys schools.

I must remind the House that I am referring to an apolitical county council. It has no political axes to grind. It is trying to make an honest endeavour to meet the needs of the population. Tomorrow the education committee for the county of Powys will have some extremely difficult decisions to make. There is no doubt, as the county treasurer would tell the right hon. Gentleman if he were listening, and as county councillors would tell him if he were listening, that the Government's policy means that now they have to choose whether to abolish nursery education in Powys. What a disgraceful indictment that would be of this Secretary of State and this Government. He referred to county councils abdicating their responsibilities. The sooner he abdicates his responsibility the sooner their might be some possibility of services at least being maintained in the Welsh counties.

Powys county council education committee has to decide, too, whether to close down village schools. Tonight we have heard the Secretary of State use the word rationalisation in the context of education. Having heard that, we know that the Government set no store by the place of village schools as part of the community. The Government do not understand villages that are threatened by the closures of their schools, such as Llanerfyl, Llandinam and Bausley—only three of many threatened in my constituency. The closure of an effective and popular school will severely damage community life.

The Minister will no doubt fall back on the long discredited Gittins report, which concluded that small village schools were not good for children's education. The parents in my constituency do not doubt that village schools work, not only for the village, but for the children. They provide an excellent education.

Powys county council education committee will have to decide whether money should be made available for textbooks in high schools. The Government refuse to believe the truth of that assertion. Yet I have told the Minister before that in one high school in my constituency the head teacher allows his heads of departments 80p per child per year for the purchase of materials and equipment. In the high school that one of my daughters attends that figure of 80p is increased to the sum of £1. For example, the head of the French department has £1 per child per year to spend on resources and materials. That is the reality of what is happening in the so-called lucky county in Wales, and the reality of what the Government are doing to local government in Wales.

The schools are even dirtier than they were before. In Powys the council has had to cut down on the amount of cleaning carried out, because of the Government's policy. The council cannot afford to employ enough cleaners to clean the schools to their former standard.

The parent-teacher associations whose traditional role has been to provide extras for the schools—the things that turn a successful school into a successful community school—are now being forced to agonise about whether they should buy the books, the money for which the taxpayer has already paid the Government—but which the Government are not returning to the local authority.

In addition, all other county council services are affected. If the right hon. Gentleman cares to drive over the rural roads of Powys he may find them bumpier than he would have believed possible. If he believes that the lessons of the Beckford inquiry should be learnt, he will discover that social services departments in Wales do not have the money to put them into effect.

If the Secretary of State believes that consumer protection and trading standards departments should exercise their delegated powers to bring to book those who cheat the public, he will discover that in many Welsh counties they cannot afford to consider most prosecutions. If he believes that the county smallholdings policy which Powys has successfully operated for so many decades is worth anything, he should give more money to that county

so that the policy can be perpetuated and enhanced. If he continues as he has been doing, counties with smallholdings will be forced to sell them off, which will toll the death knell for more young farming prospects.

The Government are dismantling the rural infrastructure. We can draw only one small crumb of comfort from the appalling statement that we heard from the Secretary of State tonight. The people of rural Wales have rumbled him, and he will learn his lesson in due course.

12.34 am

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): May I follow the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). To make my points about the current predicament of Clwyd county council, I must refer to the background to the settlement. At the time of last year's settlement, Clwyd county council was given a provisional expenditure figure for 1986-87 of £161·3 million. In July last year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his provisional statement that if Clwyd's spending could be contained to its 1985-86 budget level plus 5 per cent. —or £164·6 million—grant entitlement would be £94·6 million. Then in December last year, in the final statement on the rate support grant, the spending figure was adjusted to £163·7 million, which was a reduction of £900,000, giving rise to a grant of £91·9 million, which was a massive reduction of £2·7 million.

In July, Clwyd understood that it would not be penalised if its spending was contained to its 1985-86 budget level plus 5 per cent., but now its grant has increased by only 1·8 per cent., whereas the average for all the counties of Wales is 5·3 per cent. and Dyfed is receiving 11·2 per cent.

I, too, wish to quote from the letter to the county treasurer, Mr. Ralph Greening, from Mr. Morgan of the Welsh Office. On 14 January he wrote:

"We have adopted the practice of issuing in July provisional figures for the RSG settlement to assist local authorities."

How can provisional figures possibly assist local authorities when they are so way out? No one expects provisional figures to be confirmed exactly, but Clwyd county council is entitled to expect something near to the provisional figure.

To recap, may I say that Clwyd was initially led to expect a lower grant than it was given in the provisional statement in July. It was encouraged to expect a higher grant in that statement, on the basis of which it budgeted, only for the grant to be lowered once again in December. The county council is now in a serious financial crisis, admittedly aggravated by its own inability to control its spending. I repeat my hon. Friend's quote from Mr. Morgan's letter. He said:

"Because we"—

the Welsh Office—

"also had in 1986-87 the uncertainties caused by the introduction of a new GRP schedule"—

that is a grant-related poundage schedule—

"to replace targets the figures were inevitably more likely to change than usual, and I agree that it is unfortunate that this year Clwyd's figures changed to the extent that they did."

It is not just unfortunate, it is disastrous. The GRP schedule has had a devastating effect on Clwyd, with a loss of £2·2 million in grant.

I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would explain to the House, not in the technical jargon beloved of the Treasury, but in layman's language so that I and the House can understand it, the grant-related poundage schedule. If we do not understand it—I admit I do not —how can we explain it to our county councillors, let alone to the ordinary man in the street?

Dr. Marek: For years the hon. Gentleman has argued that Clwyd county council could make massive savings in its administrative costs and that there is much waste. Is he now arguing that this cut in grant for 1986-87 is disastrous for the council, and that it cannot make savings in administration or anything else? If so, it is a different argument from the ones that he put previously.

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman has jumped the gun. I was about to make some points—as I always do—about Clwyd county council's spending. I adhere to the position that I have consistently expounded, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman remembers it so well. The GRP schedule, when added to the fact that the county council has allowed its spending to get completely out of control, has had a disastrous effect. I shall expound on that in more detail in a minute.

My understanding of the consequences of the GRP schedule, as opposed to how it works, which I do not begin to understand, and which I do not believe most county councillors understand—unfortunately I was not present at the meeting with the chief executive of Clwyd last Friday because I was attending a debate here, but I believe he made it clear that he was not sure whether he understood it, for which I do not blame him—is that they hit authorities whose spending is out of control. That is why Clwyd is so hard hit. If, like the districts within Clwyd, Clwyd were a reasonable spender, it would be in a much more favourable and a much happier position. Nevertheless, that does not explain why the July provisional figure was so way out. It cannot assist a local authority to be encouraged to budget on the basis of a considerably higher grant than it receives. That causes chaos for it.

Clwyd's position is of course severely aggravated by the fact that it has allowed its spending to get so out of control. Last year's settlement for Clwyd was widely regarded by hon. Members of all parties, if not publicly, certainly privately, as generous. Indeed, the county treasurer, Mr. Greening, conceded as much. At that time the county council had a real opportunity to bring its spending under control, but it ducked the issue. It has only itself to blame for the consequences.

The irony is that many of those Clwyd county councillors who strongly criticise supposed central Government interference in their affairs, as soon as they face critical financial problems largely of their own making, are only to happy to try to pass the buck back to central Government. The message must go out strongly from this debate, from the Front Bench, that Clwyd must now, without further delay, put its house in order.

I was glad to see in the minutes of the policy finance and resources committee meeting on 21 November that Clwyd is coming round to my view on the need to bring in management consultants. According to the minutes, it discussed

"possible benefits of using independent organisation management consultants in a detailed review of council services"—

I hope council staffing will also be included—

"with a view to reducing overall expenditure levels . . .It was agreed the matter be investigated further."

I hope that the matter will be investigated further, quickly and thoroughly, and that action will be taken on the basis of that investigation.

[Mr. Raffan]

I also hope that the full education committee will reverse the irresponsible decision taken last week by a narrow majority of the education (development and general purposes) sub-committee not to put out to consultation the director of education's "Review of primary schools' accommodation." How can such action be justified when there are 16,000 surplus places in Clwyd, when the teachers' unions agree that there must be action to deal with the situation and when it is widely agreed that the surplus places are bad, not just for finance, but for education? One teacher, however good—and the teachers in our small rural schools are second to none—cannot properly teach four age groups in one classroom. Not putting the review out to consultation cannot be justified when an estimated £640,000 could be saved on a recurring basis if the report was implemented.

Finally, with the county already paying £8 million a year in interest and repayment of capital, capital spending must be strictly limited to statutory obligations.

Even before the loss of grant, it was generally estimated that Clwyd faced a 17p rate rise due largely to the council's failure to bring its spending under control. That rise would be devastating for local industry and jobs, let alone an intolerable burden on domestic ratepayers. It is no use the chief executive of Clwyd county council expressing in a letter to me, as he recently did, his anxiety about the council's high unemployment figures, when the council's own spending policies are ensuring that unemployment not only remains high but increases.

12.45 am

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): It is with great trepidation that I intervene in a Freudian dispute. Perhaps I had better leave it to the hon. Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) to fight out between themselves what is the true position in Clwyd. I am sure that the fight will be developed considerably in north Wales over the next few months.

The Secretary of State for Wales told us that we have reached an important stage in his financial strategy for Wales. I agree that it is an important stage in the continuing reflection of the Government's hypocritical policies that in Wales have created private wealth and public squalor.

In the limited time that is available I shall take up the Government's repeated claim that they are spending more money on local government, the Health Service and education than in previous years. Welsh Office Ministers reiterate the claim, and recently the Secretary of State told a Welsh Joint Education Committee deputation that there were 12 per cent. fewer schoolchildren and that education expenditure in real terms was as high in 1984 as it was in 1979. He said that he could not understand why there were so many complaints of deterioration in education provision. It is not true that expenditure in real terms is at the same level now as in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is higher.

Mr. Rogers: We do not accept the calculation of the Welsh Office of expenditure in real terms. The fiddlers of the figures on the Government Benches are constantly changing the basis on which grants are calculated. If anyone with any sense examines the figures he will realise that what is being claimed by the Government is manifestly not true. My colleagues and I believe that the deflator that is used in the calculations is especially inappropriate for education as it does not take into account factors such as the Clegg award for teachers' salaries in 1980, for example.

The comparisons that are made by the Welsh Office between expenditure in 1979 and 1984 do not cover the full education budget. They exclude the school meals service, mandatory awards, net contributions to other authorities, debt charges, urban programme expenditure and career services. The Secretary of State is continually changing the basis of the calculations and telling us that expenditure has increased.

A more accurate estimate of what has been expended in real terms shows that in Mid-Glamorgan there was a reduction in expenditure of £10 million from 1979 to 1984. That view is shared by Mr. Tettenborn, who is the financial adviser to the Welsh Counties Committee. He stated recently that between 1979 and 1980 the local authorities in Wales have reduced their expenditure on the education service by 3 per cent. in real terms, a reduction of about £20 million.

The fundamental flaw in the Government's so called generous settlement is the ludicrous allowance for inflation. Current expenditure is up by 3·8 per cent. over the level of spend in the 1985-86 budgets for Welsh authorities. Yet pay settlements, which are more important than price inflation, although that is well above 3·8 per cent., are well above the inflation rate. Manual workers settled their 1985 claim and the cost has worked out at about 9·5 per cent. for Mid-Glamorgan. Teachers were offered 6·9 per cent. for 1985 and the cost would be 7·5 per cent. in 1986-87. They are looking for much increased salaries next year. The administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff are seeking a 12 per cent. increase next year. It is clear that the unions will not get all that they want, but none will settle for 3·8 per cent., which is well below the inflation rate.

The Government will respond by saying that staff levels should be reduced. That will mean that in local government and the Health Service we shall see services reduced. That will happen because both sectors are labour, or people-intensive.

The limitation on time does not allow us to examine the complexities of the formula that the Secretary of State is using to arrive at the settlement.

A good many arguments have been put forward for the rural parts of Wales. I accept the very real needs of areas like Powys, particularly in relation to the closure of village schools, with the huge problems of transport that these people face, especially with the new Transport Bill—there may well be severe difficulties, compounding what is already a very difficult situation. This is something that has not been taken into account, incidentally, in this settlement.

Coming to the most populated part of Wales, however, the area that I and some of my hon. Friends on the Opposition side represent, the south Wales valleys area, Mid-Glamorgan has one of the worst employment rates in Great Britain. The Rhondda, Merthyr, Cynon and Rhymney valleys are district council areas which, on national figures and estimates, score highest on usually accepted indicators for social deprivation. We are certainly not proud of this, but it demonstrates that this is an area of great need.

In one sense, it means—and I wish that the Secretary of State would really take this on board, coming from the area that he does—that the education budget in a county such as Mid-Glamorgan is part of the county council's provision for the social services, with high expenditure on free meals, education maintenance allowances and necessitous clothing grants. The social welfare expenditure component in the education budget has increased sharply over the past five years because of the industrial policies of this Government.

One other factor, and we are all proud of this development — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) may find it very amusing to consider the difficulties that we suffer in the South Wales valleys. Maybe if we can get back into power we can direct some industry to where the people live and where they need it. Meanwhile, we have to live with the difficulties that we have. In this, we would expect some help from the Secretary of State for Wales. We do not want him crawling back to the Cabinet, making excuses from Wales; we want him to get back there and fight. But he does not fight for Wales, and the best favour that he could do the Welsh people would be to resign tomorrow.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why have you, as the Deputy Speaker, not called representatives of each party in the House on a matter that is of such vital importance to the people of Wales?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I quite understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but it is a very short debate, and I regret very much that I have been very limited in the number of Back Benchers whom I have been able to call.

Mr. Wigley: Mr Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to say that it is always a very difficult exercise, but it is within the discretion of the Chair and I try to be as fair as I can.

Mr. Wigley: This is not acceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the second time that the Chair has done this in the past few years. It was within the discretion of the Chair to call fewer Members on the Government side of the Chamber, in view of the length of time taken by the Secretary of State to open the debate. Hon. Members on the Opposition side have not had much time. It is totally unreasonable and unacceptable to my party that we should be gagged on the matter when a 23p rate was announced last Thursday in my county of Gwynedd, and not one Back Bencher from Gwynedd has been called. Now you are not giving an opportunity for any voice to be heard in this Chamber on this issue. It is just not good enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you please get Mr. Speaker here so that the matter can be resolved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. It is within the discretion of the Chair to decide, and there are ways and means, of course, if hon. Members are not satisfied with the jurisdiction of the Chair, but——

Mr. Wigley: Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. It is not a time for calling Mr. Speaker. Mr. Roy Hughes.

Mr. Wigley: I am sorry, but this is the only recourse that I have available. This is not acceptable. I ask you if you will now call Mr. Speaker into the Chamber at this moment, so that we can have his ruling on the matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The answer to the hon. Gentleman is no. We are going to proceed with the debate. Mr. Roy Hughes.

Mr. Wigley: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am not prepared to accept that as a ruling, when the Chair——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order——

Mr. Wigley: —when the Chair is gagging the voice of the Chamber for the second time in recent years on the same debate. It is not good enough. I have no confidence in anyone in the Chair who does this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Roy Hughes.

Mr. Wigley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking you to call Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already indicated that——

Mr. Wigley: I am sorry, I am asking you——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Then I am sorry, but I must warn the hon. Gentleman. He must resume his seat.

Mr. Wigley: I want an undertaking that you will get Mr. Speaker into the Chamber now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to leave the Chamber.

Mr. Wigley: I will remain on my feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until you get Mr. Speaker into the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but it is a difficult exercise. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of the Chair gagging an hon. Member. I have to carry out the orders of the House and the proceedings of the House. In my discretion, I decide who is called in the debate. I understand the hon. Gentleman's strong feelings, but I say to him that he has made his protest. It will certainly be taken note of. Indeed, I shall discuss it with Mr. Speaker, but I do not regard this as an occasion for calling Mr. Speaker. That would be unusual conduct and I ask the hon. Gentleman to bear in mind the consequences if he persists in defying the Chair. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I try to be helpful in this regard? It is not really the fault of the Chair but the fault of the Secretary of State who opened the debate. He knew that we had only 90 minutes yet he took 26 minutes to deliver his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret not being able to call more Back Benchers, but I am in the hands of the House, and I must ask the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) to resume his seat. He has made his protest. It will certainly be conveyed to Mr. Speaker. If he persists, he must face the consequences. I must name him.

Mr. Wigley: I am afraid that I do persist. This is the second time that this has happened. Those assurances were given two or three years ago when exactly the same thing happened, and now here it is happening again. It is within the control of the Chair and it is time that the Chair controlled what is happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I must name Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 25 (Order in debate),

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

That Mr. Dafydd Wigley be suspended from the service of the House.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Question agreed to.

Ordered.

That Mr. Dafydd Wigley be suspended from the service of the House.

The hon. Member withdrew accordingly.

12.56 am

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): It is an open secret among Members of Parliament that the rate support grant issue is rather complex. Therefore, it is interesting to me that senior people in local government are now also protesting about the complexity of settlements in this area.

Tonight we have had the long and usual dose of dogma from the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, the settlement being debated seems to show an unrealistic provision for local authority spending in Wales in 1986-87. The Secretary of State, on page 3 of the report, has said that he is determined to keep local authority spending within the level of expenditure provision set by the Government. He points out that the grant mechanisms adopted are aimed at discouraging higher levels of expenditure. Yet people in local government know only too well that greater resources are needed if important public services administered by them are to operate at an efficient level.

In appendix 1, page 14, total expenditure is set out at £1,420·9 million, which is a 5 per cent. increase over the existing 1985-86 local authority budgets. But within that, total current expenditure, at £1,368·1 million, is only 3·4 per cent. above the 1985-86 budgets. That is out of line with inflation trends affecting local government.

I remind the Secretary of State that assumptions on pay for 1985-86 were 3 per cent. The reality is that pay costs in 1985-86 are up by 7 per cent., with the teachers' dispute still to be settled.

Throughout local government in Wales there is concern about the expenditure provision for county services which are most likely to be affected by inflation, such as education, social services, police and the fire service. The feeling is that the expenditure provision leaves a gap of over £50 million—about 4·5 per cent. The discrepancy is likely to provide serious problems for our county councils in Wales. For example, the eventual settlement for teachers' pay is hardly likely to fit in with the rate support grant settlement. My contention is that additional resources should be made available to county councils to settle the teachers' dispute. So far there has been no sign that such resources will be forthcoming. The National Union of Teachers, the biggest union in the profession, believes that its members' pay should be determined by application of the Houghton principles used in 1974. The relative level of teachers' pay has declined, but we all know that the demand on teachers is greater than ever. The NUT is determined to fight for proper recognition of the job of teaching.

Where does that leave our county councils? What provision should they make for the pay award due on 1 April next? Teachers' pay increases are hardly likely to fit in with the guidelines in the rate support grant settlement. Will there be additional financial assistance? parents are naturally worried about the dispute, which affects the future of their children. My belief is that the nigger in the woodpile is the Secretary of State for Education and Science. He is supported by his junior Cabinet colleague, the Secretary of State for Wales. If there was the will, the dispute could be settled quickly. Meanwhile children suffer.

In discussing the rate support grant settlement there is concern about penalties. The position is made difficult because the system is not operating at a realistic level of expenditure. There is a gap of 4·5 per cent. below what our treasurers feel to be necessary. A strong argument can be put for an upward adjustment of the settlement. Treasurers and many local councils, with vast experience of their communities, are calling for a 7 per cent. increase. They believe that that would be more realistic.

Questions are asked about local authorities that underspend. The Welsh Office has suggested that the surplus revenue will be recycled to benefit councils which will then budget for a modest increase in expenditure. The Government are adopting a carrot and stick policy. What a way to treat dedicated people in local government who administer important public services. Such a system restricts freedom of action and curtails local authorities in providing the services they know to be necessary. The response we are getting is that Whitehall knows best. That was the attitude of the Secretary of State tonight.

Today throughout Wales there is a backlog of service inadequacies, particularly from the growing social need caused by rising unemployment. At Question Time we were reminded that unemployment in Wales is 17 per cent., and there is no hope of the figure coming down, especially when the Chancellor presides over a base lending rate of 12·5 per cent.—the highest figure of the century. People are calling for improved social services. The recent Brecon and Radnor by-election bears out that contention. The Chancellor has, nevertheless, repeatedly promised tax concessions. They have become a mirage in the desert. What is needed is a more realistic settlement to enable local authorities to maintain and, where possible, to improve local services. Such action would be of considerable benefit to the people of Wales.

1.5 am

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asked why expenditure in Wales should be cut, when England overspends. He seems to have failed to observe that because of the Welsh record the grant percentage has not been cut as much as in England, that the Welsh share of the grant has increased and that Welsh local authorities have received additional capital.

A central issue mentioned by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside and by my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) relates to the position of Clwyd. Clwyd, of course, is a relatively high spender, with a budget 2 per cent. above GRE for 1985-86. The matters which were well described by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West changed the position between July and the final settlement when we announced it in December.

Throughout the summer we consulted closely with the local authority associations and they should have kept Clwyd, one of their members, fully informed of those discussions, which were based on the need to cap the changes that would affect local authorities. As it happened, West Glamorgan benefited from those changes and Clwyd suffered from them. I do not accept that the position of Clwyd ratepayers has been severely damaged,

as has been suggested. If the increase in expenditure is kept in line with the settlement, the precept could be kept under 5 per cent.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn has repeatedly said, Clwyd had the opportunity to cut expenditure. It has not cut the numbers employed and it is now facing some difficulties as a result, but I believe that they are exaggerated.

The settlement for Wales as a whole is extremely good. Welsh local authorities know that as a result of good performance in the past they have a settlement that gives them a great deal.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 167.

Division No. 42] **[1.10 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John

Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Ciwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 100), which was laid before this House on 18th December, be approved.

Opencast Mining

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

1.19 am

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): First of all, may I place on record my gratitude to the Minister for responding so quickly to what is in essence an emergency debate. I apologise to the House on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), who is ill with influenza and unable to be here, I managed to bridge the gap and I shall speak on opencast mining and the 10-year draft plan of the National Coal Board for the greater Manchester area.

I have a special interest in this debate because I am the chairman of the miners' parliamentary group and a member of the national executive of the National Union of Mineworkers. I am also the energy Whip of my party. I want it clearly understood that I shall be speaking first about the adverse effects opencast mining has had on the lives of ordinary people in the greater Manchester area for something like 150 years. I shall also speak about whether opencast mining has a useful part to play in the energy requirements of our nation.

It is known that during the unfortunate period of strife and trauma that the mining industry recently endured, some people took the view that it would not have come about if the Government's energy policy had fully taken into account that we have in coal an indigenous fuel with a potential of some 300 years' supply. That could be used at the proper time for our energy requirements. It is a vital natural resource and should be safeguarded and used only when it is necessary to do so.

The Minister will know that opencast mining was an emergency undertaking that complemented deep coal mining after the second world war. From about 1946-47 it found its place within our global target of coal production in the nationalised industry run by the National Coal Board.

Opencast mining was never meant to be a substitute for deep coal mining. Unfortunately, it is now considered an asset, not in the sense that it is considered imperative that we get the coal, but in the sense that it is a cheap form of fuel that is quickly mined and, as we say, in the wagon, with the money in the bank in a few days or a few weeks. I am a former mining engineer and I know that eight to 10 years is required to sink a pit. Before it becomes economic and fruitful it needs a considerable amount of planning and deep coal mining is much more expensive than opencast mining.

I do not believe—nor, at times, do the Government—that we have a rational national energy policy that considers all types of fuels in the context of global requirements. Thousands of ordinary householders are suffering because of this great intrusion into their lives which is causing, in their opinion and that of my colleagues, wholesale havoc and devastation. Visual amenities, repairs to services, local infrastructure—roads, sewers, and so on—and rural areas have been affected. Partly rural areas have been spoiled, as we noted during the long public inquiry on behalf of a Member of the other place. It was conceded at the end of the inquiry that the environmentalists were half right and that the applicant was right also.

There is no doubt about the disturbance, noise, dirt and constant problems where opencast mining occurs in residential areas. I should like to make some suggestions which might mitigate some of the hardship suffered. Properties are sometimes affected by large schemes for as long as 15 years. That is an inordinate period during which householders have to put up with the problem. When they purchase their houses, they often do not dream that they will become the victim of such an environmental intrusion into their lives.

I shall give a classic example of one development which affects three sides of my constituency — the Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley townships. The project involves 11 years of excavation and five years reclamation. People at the end of the site, as are some of my constituents, expect to be adversely affected for 16 years, if the NCB's targeted time scale is met. That is unreasonable. Through no fault of their own, my constituents are the victims of this cruel series of events.

There is a 10-year plan which involves a strategy plan, based on identified sites and areas of search in the mining communities. The sites suggested in the draft mineral local plan for the greater Manchester area basically surround the perimeter of Wigan and adjoining authority areas and penetrate into greater Manchester. They do not include potential opencast sites that have already been identified. This means that the areas have been identified by the NCB opencast executive as "areas of current interest", which is not quite the same as "identified sites". Obviously, this causes extreme concern to the residents, and all the protection groups that have formed in that vast area of search. They are worried that, some 40 or 50 years afterwards, they could be landed with opencast mining for the next half century. I am being quite logical about this point, and I am not being speculative, because I know the area. Such a proposition would be a nightmare to ordinary people. There are examples in the area to show that this has happened before.

One of the problems is that the weak substrata could be in residental areas. Neither the Government nor the local authorities have ever commissioned a proper, in-depth, independent geological survey of the areas built on such substrata. This evening I was looking at the history of a pit in my constituency, dealing with what happened there 198 years ago. I shall not bore the House with the details of what happened. However, one third of the pit is within the site about which we are talking, which will produce about 2 million tonnes of opencast coal within the next 16 years.

The problem is that no one is responsible for seeing what could happen when an area that has been honeycombed for the past 200 years with 300 mineshafts within a radius of five miles is worked again. One of the problems is that no direct geological survey is made. It is possible that geological movements would be triggered off from the dozens of old mine workings.

I understand the problems. The Minister came to help out in haste, and some of the blame lies with the Department of the Environment, and is not his responsibility. It is fair, sensible, and should be obligatory, that all those who apply—whether it is the National Coal Board or any private applicant — for permission to mine an area, should present to the authority an independent geological survey of the area. It will then be up to the local authority, the councillors of which will be briefed on the data available, to make its judgment on

[Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe]

an application. That would be a more fair and honest method. A judgment could be made more rationally and soundly. The NCB, which is the main applicant for planning permission to mine such areas, will then be responsible for those areas.

The NCB always uses the phrase, "There is no evidence to suggest." On the other hand, there has been no positive planning identification by the National Coal Board that allows it to say, hand on heart, that old mineworkings in that area will not cause disturbance.

New arrangements were introduced in 1984. They are the subject of circular 3/84 from the Department of the Environment. It places opencast mining fairly and squarely within the planning system and all that flows from that. Compensation should be paid to those communities from whose area coal is removed. Financial recompense should be made to the communities that have borne the brunt of mining operations. I have already described the adverse effects of opencast coalmining, which are fully acknowledged in paragraph 20 of the Government circular. It says that local planning authorities will need to consider how best high standards of management and operation of sites might be achieved through measures agreed with the industry. It states that the agreements provided for in section 52 of the Coal Industry Act 1971 are to be enforced by means of the planning conditions. It is, however, clear that the possibility of securing compensation cannot be dealt with in that way. Therefore I implore the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy to consult the Department of the Environment and to suggest that, where mining takes place, an amount should be calculated, as compensation to the local authorities and to the areas and communities concerned, as a percentage of the value of recovered coal. I believe that that would be an honest criterion. If opencast mining must be imposed on the population in this area, compensation should be paid to them.

The National Coal Board should agree in principle to accept its responsibility to help local communities. If such an agreement could be obtained, we would be on the first rung of the ladder towards the introduction of legislation to provide protection and some degree of recompense for the great environmental intrustions caused by opencast mining.

I stress again that the extent of underground mining activities in areas such as these has been so great that much of it is unrecorded, while other records no longer exist. An area that had been subject to subsidence but which appeared to have been stabilised was considered by the planning authorities to be suitable as building land. Residential and other types of property now stand upon that land. These are worn-out areas. We are referring to areas which for 250 years have been subject to the kind of activities that I have described. It is only right, when our national energy resources are being planned, that relief of some kind should be provided. Either monetary relief or better planning conditions should be introduced to safeguard the interests and the environment of these communities. I commend to the House and the various Departments my suggestions about trying to help and to grant some kind of sustenance, especially to those who, unfortunately, have to suffer that type of ordeal.

I mentioned long periods of perhaps 15 or 20 years, but an average is about five to 10 years. Nevertheless, there are exceptional circumstances and I hope that the Minister will consider my arguments carefully.

1.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I join the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) in saying how sad we are that the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) is unwell. I hope that he makes a speedy recovery to full health.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Leigh on his ingenuity and skill in securing this debate at short notice. He mentioned his various qualifications—chairman of the miners parliamentary group, member of the National Union of Mineworkers national executive and a Whip. He has had a distinguished career in the coal industry and has a breadth of experience and expertise that I respect.

The Government's energy policy has been clearly stated on many occasions. We recognise that this country is fortunate to have the four major options available—oil, nuclear energy, gas and coal. Our policy is to keep each of those options active and developing.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the question of opencast coal because that has a vital role to play in securing a healthy future for the coal industry. At one stage the hon. Gentleman sought to suggest that we should cut back on opencast coal in order that it may be replaced by more deep-mined production. However, that makes no sense from either an operational or a financial point of view. When I visited the opencast executive in Mansfield last year, I was impressed by its operations and by the people that I met. The opencast arm of the NCB has been operating effectively and profitably for many years. The NCB needs the coal that it produces. The private opencast sector also has an important contribution to make. I emphasise that the NCB's deep-mined and opencast operations are not competing with each other but are complementary. The quality of coal in some deep mines is such that they would simply have to close if there were no opencast coal to blend with it.

The chlorine content of coal increases with depth. Deep-mined coal often has too high a chlorine content for use in power stations. Chlorine can cause fouling and corrosion in boilers and kilns. Opencast low-chlorine coal is being used increasingly to blend with deep-mined high-chlorine coal to make it acceptable to the user, particularly in the power generation market.

A second reason why opencast mining is so vital in this country is that it is an important source of specialised coal. Almost half of the United Kingdom's production of anthracite is extracted by the opencast method. Demand is also just as high for prime coking coal. Although opencast coking coal reserves are limited, production is being expanded as far as possible, because opencast coking coal directly displaces foreign imports. All the qualities of opencast coal — cleanness, moisture and chlorine content, lack of dust — also make it very attractive to a sector that the NCB sees as a very important growth area—the industrial market.

Thirdly, we must not underestimate the significant cost advantages which opencast coal offers over deep-mined coal. In 1984-85, the average cost of production for opencast coal was £28·43 a tonne—considerably lower than the average cost of deep-mined coal.

I hope that I have demonstrated to the House just how much, and why, we need coal produced by opencasting. In 1983-84, the pre-strike year, opencasting produced just under 14·5 million tonnes, or about 13 per cent. of the National Coal Board's total output. This year's pattern will be similar. Because of its special characteristics and qualities, the greater part of opencast coal simply could not be replaced by deep-mined output.

The hon. Gentleman referred especially to developments in the Greater Manchester area, and the Lomax site, which includes the Bank House farm opencast site. I understand that the NCB is lodging an application for planning for the Bank House farm site. In the first instance, this is a matter for the local mineral planning authority, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the planning merits of the case. But the hon. Gentleman raised some specific points on procedure, including the lodging of independent geological surveys. It is for the applicant to decide what supportive evidence is required, but equally it is a matter for the local planning authorities to decide whether they wish to employ consultants to carry out independent geological assessments or surveys. But, of course, the hon. Gentleman is right to stress that one must have regard to the overall complications caused by previous mining in the operations in respect of which planning permission is sought.

On the issue of general recompense for the community, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman expects me to hold out any hope of movement in that direction, but I shall consider the points that he raised and draw them to the attention of my colleagues in the Department of the Environment.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned help to communities. Many grants are available to communities that have been hit by previous mining blight—deep-mined or opencast —in the form of derelict land grant and others. This debate comes at a time when, in the Upper Waiting Hall, we have an exhibition by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, which demonstrates the board's real concern for communities.

It is, of course, equally important to ensure that opencast coal is not produced at an unacceptable cost to the environment. The planning process is specifically designed to ensure that the coal produced from a specific site is extracted with the minimum environmental disruption. Often, when planning permission is granted for an opencast site, careful planning conditions are laid down to ensure that adequate screening and baffling are provided; and the number of trucks visiting the site may be controlled. But, unlike conventional deep mines, which may have lives of up to 100 years, an opencast site can be worked often in only a few years, reducing the periods of disruption.

Opencast sites are restored to a high stnadard by the NCB's opencast executive. This is a complex, thoroughgoing and often expensive process. The contours of the land are shaped by replacing soil and subsoils, and land intended for agriculture has water supplies, drinking troughs, fences and hedges replaced or even supplied for the first time. That is followed by the installation of permanent underdrainage. Often, the site is improved well beyond its original condition. If not required for agricultural use, the land can be contoured to the specifications of the local authority for a wide variety of leisure and recreational purposes.

In 1985, £14 million was spent by the NCB on site restoration after opencasting. That represents a significant proportion of total production costs at such sites, but is regarded by the opencast executive as an essential part of the process of coal extraction by opencast methods. It is almost impossible to tell, in many cases, that only a few years before a major extraction site was present. In this way, the country gets the best of both worlds: not only is a valuable resource extracted cheaply and efficiently over a short time span, but the land is restored or improved so that what might have been environmental costs become tangible environmental benefits.

There can be no doubt that deep-mined coal will continue to provide the main part of the National Coal Board's output. But, equally, opencast coal has a vital, complementary and continuing role to play in the future of the coal industry—

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Monday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 21 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday.

SWANSEA CITY COUNCIL (TAWE BARRAGE) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the provisions of paragraph (4) of Standing Ordee appr 243 (Joint committees on petitions) be applied to the Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the House of Lords as the Joint Committee on the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time employees there were in employment in 1979, 1983 and 1985, respectively.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): Estimates of full-time and part-time male employees in employment are not separately available for these dates. In June 1979 there were 18,768,000 male employees and full-time female employees in employment. The corresponding estimates for 1983 and 1985 are 16,626,000 and 16,490,000 respectively.

Mr. Leighton: Do the figures not show the full enormity of what has happened, the destruction of 2·5 million full-time jobs since 1979 and, in the past two years, the destruction of 750,000 full-time jobs? The only growth in recent times has been in a secondary labour market of an under class of female part-time labour with no employment protection, low pay, no holiday pay, no sick pay, and no pension rights. That is accompanied by a continued relentless destruction of full-time jobs.

Mr. Clark: That is exactly what the figures do not reveal. The hon. Gentleman is presumably drawing on the expert acquaintance of such matters that he has acquired in his distinguished service as Chairman of the Select Committee. He has chosen to use the arcane statisticians' definition of employees in employment instead of the more usual definition of the employed labour force. Had he chosen to use the employed labour force, which is the usual category by which the figures are judged, he would have seen that the number of jobs has increased by 709,000 since 1983, and that the total lost since 1979 has been just over 1 million.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that there were 1,800,000 in self employment in 1979? There are now 2,500,000. That is an encouraging increase, because if each unemployed person creates a good business, he can employ more people. That is a major area of employment growth.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is entirely right and doubtless it is for that reason that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) deliberately selected that category, which excludes the self employed from his total.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Minister stop the misleading practice, when preparing the figures of employment, of treating men's part-time jobs as the full equivalent of men's full-time jobs? Is there any reason why the House should continually be misled by that failure to distinguish?

Mr. Clark: A job is a job. I am surprised to find the hon. Gentleman, speaking as he does for the Liberal party, adhering to that rigorous Stakhanovite doctrine held by so many members of the Opposition that everybody should be fully working the entire time.

Mr. Yeo: Will my hon. Friend join me in rejecting the implications behind some supplementary questions that part-time work is in some way inferior to other forms of work? In practice, part-time work provides welcome and satisfying opportunities for employment. It makes an important contribution to the economy as a whole and is often very much welcomed by employers.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right. The majority of those who work part time do so from choice and not from pressure.

Mr. Evans: Do not the carefully selected figures that the Minister has presented to the House show clearly the employment disaster that has struck the United Kingdom as a result of the Government's economic policies? As the Minister is keen to boast about self-employment, will he provide the figures showing the growth in self-employed labour known as "lump labour" in the construction industry, which has been rapid over the past two years?

Mr. Clark: I understand that the hon. Gentleman has to make these ritual declarations once a month. Those who are self-employed, proud of their status and conscious of the expanding opportunities that they give others—many

of them are offering employment as their businesses grow and flourish — will resent the aspersions that the hon. Gentleman is casting upon them.

Tourism

4. **Mr. Bevan** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in Government policy towards tourism since the publication of the document "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): The Government are continuing to place a high priority on encouraging the development of tourism and on maximising the industry's potential for growth, job creation and enterprise. Since the transfer of responsibility for tourism policy to the Department of Employment in September, we have announced a substantial increase in the financial provision next year for the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board, bringing their total provision to £40 million.

Mr. Bevan: I am delighted to hear of the further progress that has been made following the report to which many of my colleagues and I contributed as members of the party tourism committee. Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to give details of precisely where the money will be distributed to benefit areas of high unemployment such as my own, greatly increasing tourism activity.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his initial remarks. Discussions are currently taking place with the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board to decide how we will split between them this money and section 4 tourist assistance. We intend to concentrate a substantial part of the money in areas where we can develop tourist attractions and where unemployment is higher.

Mr. Donald Stewart: In meeting the two aims that the Minister has enunciated, will he reject the findings and recommendation of the Select Committee that the United Kingdom tourist boards should be merged into one?

Mr. Trippier: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have received the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. Our considered response will be available in the near future.

Mr. Butterfill: What steps does my hon. Friend intend to take to alleviate the appalling delays that are being encountered by early-morning travellers at Heathrow, where passengers are treated almost like cattle?

Mr. Trippier: If they were cattle, we would probably be prosecuted. My hon. Friend has made a valid point and identified one of the 32 action points that are highlighted in the Young report apprised entitled, "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs: The Business of Tourism". I have recently had a meeting with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, and I am fully apprised of the importance of the matter to which my hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the House.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Valuable as tourist jobs are, they do not compensate for the loss of industrial jobs. What is the Minister doing to convince his right hon. and hon. Friends to save the steel industry in Scotland?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman is using an ingenious device to raise a matter which is not connected directly with the substantive question. The issue which he has raised is one of balance. The Department of Employment is concerned with all these matters. I suggested in my main reply that we have a sector that has enormous wealth-creation and employment-creation potential. Perhaps that has been overlooked in the past. We are now intent on developing that potential to the full.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General why he uses the number of people drawing unemployment benefit as a definition of the unemployment total.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): We have no administrative means of producing quickly, accurately and at reasonable cost each month the precise number of people without jobs who are actively seeking work, which would be my definition of unemployment. As the best monthly snapshot measure of that number, we can produce statistics based on records of people claiming benefits. In practice, these statistics usually prove to be broadly in balance with the figures produced by our less frequent survey estimates of the number of people unemployed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the number drawing benefit include many people, such as married women with children and people who take early retirement, who are not actively seeking work? Should not the published official statistics for the unemployment total reflect more accurately the number of people actually looking for work?

Mr. Clark: In considering the figures one has to bear in mind that at the time of the last survey about 940,000 people claiming benefit had not recently been seeking work, but about 870,000 people not drawing benefit say that they would take work if it were available. As a result, the figures produced each month and the results of the periodic detailed surveys are roughly equivalent. There is no cheap and easy way to be more precise than that.

Mr. James Hamilton: Does not the fact that many unemployed people are not drawing benefit prove, as we have said many times, that the figures are falsified and do not represent the true level of unemployment?

Mr. Clarke: I invite the hon. Gentleman to study what I have just said. From the number of claimants one must deduct the number who do not appear to be seeking work, perhaps for good reasons, but one must add the number not receiving benefit but seeking work. The result is about 3 million. It serves no useful purpose for the Opposition to load on top of the official figures all kinds of categories of people to produce the inflated figure of 4 million to which so many Opposition Members refer.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the labour force survey figures merely confuse the issue? Does he agree that the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) is much more serious, because many people not receiving unemployment benefit are classified as unemployed because benefit has been disallowed? Does he agree that we shall never have meaningful unemployment figures until a work test is instituted, as envisaged in the Beveridge report, on which the welfare state is based?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend rightly points to the confusion and attempts to clarify the position. The key point is that there are too many people out of work and seeking work. That is why the Government are actively pursuing steps to increase the number of new jobs created. It serves no useful purpose to inflate the unemployment total, as the Opposition do. It is important to bear in mind that all those claiming benefit should be available for work. That is the test of eligibility for benefit, and the Government are entitled to take steps, as we are doing, to ensure that benefit is paid only to people genuinely available for work.

Mr. Foot: Does the Minister admit that for several years the Opposition have been asking questions about the unemployment figures and the Minister has been saying that that is not fair and that we should ask about the number of people in employment, but now that we put down questions about employment he says that that is even more unfair?

Mr. Clarke: Questions about employment have just been answered very clearly by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. We welcome as many questions as possible about employment and the creation of new jobs, because our best estimates are that about 709,000 new jobs have been created since the last general election.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that out of the 3 million unemployed only 379,000 are registered at jobcentres? Does he further agree that the jobcentres are hampered in seeking to fill the vacancies for skilled labour that many employers have, especially in my constituency in the Thames valley? Will he carefully consider a further pilot scheme to require the unemployed in areas of low unemployment and clear skill shortage to register at jobcentres so that the jobcentres can actively seek to match the unemployed to the vacancies?

Mr. Clarke: Registration at jobcentres is now voluntary, and only just over 400,000 choose to register. As more jobs are now being notified to jobcentres, in a number of pilot areas we have launched proposals to get in touch, first, with the long-term unemployed to bring them to the jobcentres so that jobs, training, job club membership and so on can be offered to them. This has been very successful in a number of areas.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Postmaster General accept—*[Interruption.]* Does the Paymaster General accept that if there is any confusion about the figures being inflated, it is because the Government spend all their time deflating the figures by massaging them downwards? If the Government used the previous criteria for those who are registered as unemployed, unemployment figures would be about half a million more than they are now.

Does the Paymaster General accept that the December unemployment figures—his registration figures—are the highest ever recorded? Would he care to guess whether the January figures will be a further record of mass unemployment resulting from the Government's policies?

Mr. Clarke: I have been entirely clear about our figures. It is no good the hon. Member complaining about the inadequacy of the figures, when every time that we seek to improve them he accuses us of fiddling them. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman, as he consistently does, seeking to inflate those figures in bogus ways to produce the figure of 4 or 5 million, or whatever figure that he uses in his speech.

The December figures follow three successive months in which the total was falling. We shall wait to see what the underlying trend is. The trend during the past six months seems to be the best that we have had for a long time. With the economy growing at its present rate, I expect the outlook for 1986 to be very good.

Local Enterprise Agencies

6. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Paymaster General what steps he proposes to take to encourage large firms to second some of their executives to local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Trippier: Business in the Community is taking the lead in encouraging an increase in secondments to local enterprise agencies from large firms. Such secondments can qualify for tax relief. The Government fully support BIC's efforts in this area.

Mr. Colvin: I am sorry that the "Pastemaster General" is not answering this question. Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that without the help of big business "oak trees", the small business "acorns", which are catered for by enterprise agencies, would be unlikely to take root? Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to The British American Tobacco, Co., which is assisting the Solent enterprise agency to get off the ground? Without its aid the agency would probably not have prospered. Will he use his best endeavours to encourage other big businesses to help enterprise agencies in the same way?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is right. I join him in complimenting BAT on the way in which it has sponsored the Solent enterprise agency by providing a secondee. I pay a warm tribute to the growing number of large firms which are seeking to help small businesses, indirectly or directly, in this way.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that we have been setting up an enterprise agency in King's Lynn? Will he tell the House what he plans to do about seconding more civil servants to local enterprise agencies? Does he agree that a spell at the sharp end of the private sector would do their career development much good?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend has been giving us a month-by-month account of the progress of his enterprise agency. I am glad that he has drawn the attention of the House to the agency, which comes into operation this week.

We welcome the fact that civil servants can be seconded to enterprise agencies. When I became a Minister two and a half years ago, we did not have civil servants seconded to enterprise agencies or to BIC. There are now eight such civil servants, who are not confined to the Department of Employment. We even have a secondee from the Treasury, so it must be a good idea.

Average Earnings

7. **Mr. Maples** asked the Paymaster General what has been the underlying increase in average earnings over the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The underlying increase in average weekly earnings in the year to November 1985 was 7·5 per cent. This should not be confused with the average

increase of pay settlements, which will be lower as the figure for earnings includes overtime, bonuses and similar factors.

Mr. Maples: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in present circumstances, both figures are too high, and that although averages can conceal a great deal, it is vital that individual businesses do not grant pay awards which increase their real unit costs? In that respect, should we not learn the lesson of the United States, where recently millions of new jobs have been created when real average earnings have fallen?

Mr. Clark: I appreciate the expert knowledge which my hon. Friend, as the author of a booklet on the subject, brings to the matter, but it is inappropriate for a Minister to say that any wage increase is too high, as an abstract concept. It is not for the Government to intervene in bargaining between employers and employees. None the less, my hon. Friend is perfectly right to draw attention to unit costs and productivity, on which our competitiveness rests.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one reason why the increase was about 7·7 per cent. was that the Government gave the green light to those at the top end of the salary scale last year when they awarded a 19 per cent. increase to those earning top salaries? As a result, executives and other types managed to rope in another 17 per cent. during 1985. Is it any wonder that the average has increased to more than 7 per cent.? The trouble is that those at the bottom end have been hammered by the Government since 1979.

Mr. Clark: The Top Salaries Review body is completely independent, and the House would take a poor view of any Government interference in its deliberations. The hon. Gentleman's arithmetic is rather confused. The recipients of those awards were so few in number that they could not possibly affect the statistical average of the increase in earnings.

Mr. Baldry: Since pay in British manufacturing industry is increasing twice as fast as that in Japan and the United States, it can only mean that our manufactured goods will become consistently less competitive, which means that fewer are made, fewer are sold and there are fewer jobs. How do we stop this national lunacy of pricing ourselves out of work?

Mr. Clark: There is much truth in what my hon. Friend says, but I would not wish to be associated with any dirigiste intervention in the bargaining between employers and employees. Employers must see the sense of my hon. Friend's argument reflected in their order books.

Wages Councils

8. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Paymaster General how many workers are currently covered by wages councils; and what proportion are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: About 2·75 million workers are covered by wages councils. Of these, approximately 20 per cent. are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Powell: Is the Paymaster General aware that my union — the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers — has expressed much anxiety about the suggestion that the Government might amend or abolish the wages council for shop workers? Is he also aware that the Shops Bill, which is now in the other place and which deals with the introduction of Sunday trading, will remove controls over young people working in shops? They can no longer benefit from wages council protection. Will the Minister tell the House what proposals the Government have in mind?

Mr. Clarke: I am happy to repeat that it is the Government's firm intention to introduce a Bill this Session to reform the wages councils. We propose to reduce the powers of the wages councils so that they can specify only one basic rate and one overtime rate. We also propose to remove employees under the age of 21 from the scope of wages councils. Our motive for doing so is that we believe that, by setting young people's wages too high in relation to adult wages, and too high in relation to the value that they add to a business, we are making more youngsters unemployed than we need to. The reform will increase the potential for more youth employment.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the argument in favour of removing wages councils, at least for those aged under 21, has been won and established in the public mind, even if not in the mind of the Opposition? If wages councils destroy or deter the creation of new jobs, they are ineffective and we had better get rid of them anyway. On both counts, it would be much better to get rid of them.

Mr. Clarke: I trust that we have won the public argument. When we introduce the Bill we shall discover the extent to which we have won the parliamentary argument. I agree with my hon. Friend's arguments and conclusions. The wages councils have quite unintentionally reduced the number of jobs that are made available to young people in this country.

Ms. Clare Short: Can the Paymaster General explain why the Government intend to weaken the protection that is afforded to 3 million workers, including ½ million young workers, who are paid very low wages? According to the "New Earnings Survey," since 1979 the top 20 per cent. of workers have increased their pay above the average, but the bottom 20 per cent. had pay increases that were lower than the rate of inflation. They have, therefore, suffered a net drop in income. This proposal will ensure that they are paid even less.

Mr. Clarke: My first priority is the interests of the 3 million or so people who are unemployed, in particular the young unemployed who are included in that total. If the wages councils continue to stipulate extremely complex pay arrangements in very important trades, and continue to set for young employees pay rates that are too high in relation to pay rates for experienced adults, the effect will be to reduce the number of jobs that are made available to young people in this country. The wages councils are therefore out of date in those respects and it is high time that we reformed them.

Northern Region (Job Clubs)

9. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Paymaster General whether his Department will establish more job clubs in the northern region.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Manpower Services Commission at present runs 30 job clubs, four of which

are located in the MSC's northern region. Initial results are very encouraging, and about two thirds of the people who have joined job clubs have found jobs. Provided that evaluation confirms this, I have asked the commission to make plans for a rapid expansion to establish a national network of 200 job clubs by the end of this year. These plans will certainly include proposals to open a number of additional job clubs in the MSC's northern region.

Mr. Fallon: I am very grateful for that most heartening answer. Is my hon. Friend aware that this experiment is proving to be very successful? Does he agree that personal, in-depth counselling is of far more assistance to the long-term unemployed than any amount of artificial indignation that may be expressed by the Opposition?

Mr. Clark: Yes. It has been one of the most successful of the Government's initiatives. The number of people who find jobs after having been on one of these courses in the northern areas is, on average, about three quarters of those who attend such courses. In March 1985 I visited the first experimental job club in Durham, and I was so impressed by what I saw that the Department put in train this considerable expansion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will not the recent rate support grant settlement under which the Government are imposing a 35 per cent. rate increase upon Cumbrians wipe out at a stroke all the benefits of the enterprise incentives that have been introduced by the Government during the last few years? Are they not creating unemployment on the one hand and introducing on the other a number of palliative measures, such as job clubs and enterprise allowances? — *[Interruption.]* That is absolutely in order, if the Minister would only listen and stop protesting. He will have an opportunity to answer the question. Is it not true that the enterprise allowances and the other so-called incentives will be wiped out by the rate support grant settlement?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman has probably been having a nap and has confused the subject and the day upon which his question should be put. Whatever extraneous circumstances may prevail, experience shows that those who go through the job clubs are better suited to place themselves in the employment market than those who do not.

Mr. Dickens: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the widespread introduction of job clubs. Is it not a fact that those who join job clubs to learn new skills and interviewing techniques are the kind of people for whom employers are looking?

Mr. Clark: Yes. They are more likely to be the people for whom employers are looking when they emerge from job club courses than they were when they went on to those courses. It is an established, regrettable truth that those who have been out of work for a very long time lose self-confidence. They lose familiarity with the labour market. They also lose the ability to project their personality and their skills. It is to help them to recover their self-confidence that job clubs have been instituted.

Mr. Evans: Is it not time that the Minister admitted that what the long-term unemployed want, many of whom are over 50 and have been unemployed for three, four or five years, are jobs, real live jobs? As long as this Government are in office, it is obvious that they will not get jobs. Will the Minister confirm what my hon. Friend suggested earlier, that the December figures for unemployment are the highest ever recorded?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman paints in far too pessimistic a colour. The Government are engaged on a much broader initiative of contacting long-term unemployed people. That initiative embraces many different types of action, of which job clubs are only one part. There is the job-start scheme with its £20 grant and the personal contact initiative. Many such initiatives are being favourably received and successfully implemented.

Youth Training Scheme

10. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Paymaster General what is the total funding for the youth training scheme in England in the current financial year.

Mr. Trippier: We have made available £710 million for the youth training scheme in England in 1985-86. Including Scotland and Wales, total funding is £834 million.

Mr. Spencer: Is my hon. Friend aware of the Leicestershire employment and education project on Constitution hill in my constituency? That is a YTS project and provides basic training for disadvantaged young people from the inner area. It has a high success rate and has contributed to a reduction in unemployment in my constituency of some 6·2 per cent. since September 1984.

Mr. Trippier: I am pleased to learn that there has been such a significant fall in the level of unemployment in my hon. and learned Friend's constituency, and I am grateful to him for paying such a warm compliment to the Leicestershire employment and education project. As he suggests, there is now ample evidence, not only in his constituency but throughout the country, that the YTS is effective in providing for a real need.

Mr. Caborn: Is the Minister aware that in the inner cities there are major problems with YTS, particularly in the voluntary sector? Many people in the inner cities are worried about the new arrangements for funding and about their ability to provide the type of training that has hitherto been provided. Many people, particularly in the caring services, will not go into any type of training, and they will be a major problem, particularly for the inner cities. Will the Minister give consideration to representations from organisations such as NACRO and others?

Mr. Trippier: I will certainly give serious consideration to the point made by the hon. Gentleman and draw his remarks to the attention of the Manpower Services Commission. The number of premium places under the new scheme is designed to meet the needs of young people with particular training needs for whom employer-based places will not suffice. I told the hon. Gentleman that at a meeting that I had with him, but if he wishes to come back and explore the ground further, I shall be happy to do so.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend knows that I am an enthusiastic supporter of the YTS. Will he accept that one of the ingredients in the demoralisation of school teachers is the feeling that a great deal of the work that they would otherwise do is being taken over by the training scheme? Will he give me an assurance that he will look carefully

at closer liaison between schools and school teachers and people doing a similar job under a different budget with a different title in the youth training scheme?

Mr. Trippier: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks in the second part of his question, but I am not sure that I agree with the first part. This is Industry Year, and it gives us a golden opportunity to improve links between industry and education, which perhaps should have been improved 30 years ago. As a result of the initiatives taken by the Department of Trade and Industry and followed by the Department in which I am a Minister I hope that the situation will improve. I do not accept that YTS courses are in any way displacing the work that should be carried out by the teaching profession.

Mr. Foot: Is it the case that part of the burden of the youth training scheme is being transferred to local authorities? Will the hon. Gentleman tell us exactly what the figure is? Does he realise that that is most unfair, because the heaviest burden falls on some of the local authorities that have the highest unemployment? Will he look at the whole of this proposition to make sure that the full burden of the funding is carried by central Government?

Mr. Trippier: The right hon. Gentleman is somewhat misled. The change of emphasis in YTS is to place more of a responsibility on employers rather than on local authorities. The principal reason for doing that is that they have a vested interest in the trainees who come out at the other end of the scheme. While I am on my feet, I can hardly miss the opportunity to refer to the fact that the right hon. Gentleman's constituency has seen a fairly dramatic fall in the level of unemployment over the last 12 months —8 per cent.

Dr. Mawhinney: Can my hon. Friend confirm that that part of the funding that goes to the young people is a training allowance and not a wage? Can he tell the House what he is doing to help the young people themselves understand that in the face of misleading propaganda, some of it coming from the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. It is, of course, an allowance and is not meant to be a wage. We are trying to increase awareness of that fact wherever we can, through publications and the production of videos. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me an opportunity to say from this Box that that is correct.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister recognise the excellent contribution made to the youth training scheme by voluntary bodies? Is he aware that the rules and the way that they are applied, particularly to the number of premium places mentioned earlier, are likely to mean that there will be no B1 schemes run by small voluntary bodies, and that those in Yorkshire with which that I am acquainted are already talking of closing? Will the Minister consider again the whole question of how the rules apply to smaller voluntary bodies which have been able to provide a variety of schemes, which the larger ones cannot provide?

Mr. Trippier: I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I shall consider the matter again. I cannot believe that there will be no premium places available in any part of his constituency with any voluntary training association that has been set up. It is important for me to stress that some £40 million was spent last year on unfilled places. As guardians of the taxpayers' money, we cannot consider that as responsible expenditure.

Health and Safety

12. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General how many fatal accidents and serious injuries were reported by the Health and Safety Executive for the last year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for the year ended 1978.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1984, 432 fatal injuries to employees were reported; 499 were reported in 1978 under the legislation then in force, which did not cover all sectors of employment. In 1984, 12,246 major injuries to employees were reported. Comparable figures for 1978 are not available. I should point out that the 1984 figures are provisional.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General accept that the great improvement in safety in industry is due largely to the inspectors in the health and safety operations since the Health and Safety Executive was set up? In those industries not covered by the Health and Safety Executive accidents and injuries have increased. Does the Paymaster General accept, therefore, that a reduction of 200 in the number of safety inspectors as a result of cuts in the Civil Service can only lead to an increase in accidents and deaths in industry?

Mr. Clarke: Our better record is a result of ever-improving consciousness of the need to achieve good practice by employers and employees and of the good work of the inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive? The number of inspectors is down at the moment because of wastage and a large number of retirements. Recruitment of inspectors is taking place in all relevant areas.

Labour Statistics

13. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed; and how many have been unemployed for at least one and two years respectively, at the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,276,900, of whom 1,351,900—41 per cent. of the total—had been unemployed for over one year, and 823,100 for over two years.

Mr. Dormand: Is not the most damning condemnation of the Government's policies the number of long-term unemployed? The figures that the Minister has just read out are disgraceful. As we have constantly been told about the success of the Government's economic policies, will he say when they are likely to bring down the number of unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: New policies are producing a rapid rate of creation of new jobs. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that our first priority among the unemployed must be to tackle the problem of the long-term unemployed. That is why we are trying out in pilot areas the schemes that I described a few moments ago. We are approaching each of the long-term unemployed in those areas, we are offering them individual advice, referring them to jobs, to training and to job clubs, and providing a new allowance

to supplement the pay of those who have to take a low-paid job as their first job. The combination of the present growth in the economy and the growth in new jobs, plus those special measures for the long-term unemployed, should bring great hope to many of them.

Mr. Alexander: When my right hon. and learned Friend announces the monthly unemployment figures, will he consider announcing at the same time equivalent figures for our partners in the EEC? As our figures are usually better than those of other EEC countries, why do we leave it to the Opposition to put the worst possible slant on what we are doing?

Mr. Clarke: We try to make useful comparisons of that type, but people always take more notice of the unemployment figures than of many relevant comparisons that could be made with overseas. Since the last election here, the creation of new jobs in the United Kingdom has far exceeded the rate at which they have been created in the rest of the EC put together. We should be more aware of that achievement.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Butterfill: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the pleasure that will exist in many parts of the House over they fact that, for the first time in seven years, a Prime Minister of Israel is visiting a British Prime Minister? Will she use this opportunity to discuss with him ways in which our two democratic countries can improve their co-operation to combat the scourge of international terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are very much looking forward to the visit of Prime Minister Peres. Terrorism will of course be one of the subjects that we shall discuss, but my hon. Friend would not expect me to go into details. I stress that we attach great importance to this meeting.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first associate myself closely with the Prime Minister's latter remarks?

Will the right hon. Lady give an assurance that she will do everything in her power to prevent a rise in interest rates, in view of the additional burden that that would impose on British industries doing their best to compete?

The Prime Minister: Obviously the Government do not like increases in interest rates, but they are bound to take action to ensure that keeping down inflation remains our top priority. Markets this week have been unsettled by the fall in the oil price, but the Bank of England has maintained its dealing rates.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not the case that the Prime Minister must be the only person left who believes that she can fight inflation by pushing up interest rates and by imposing on industry the nutcracker of high domestic interest rates and a high exchange rate? What has the Prime Minister got against British industry?

The Prime Minister: British industry has had an extremely good year, with record profits, record investment and excellent exports.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister keeps making misleading claims. Investment in manufacturing industry in Britain is 18 per cent. lower than it was six years ago. Although manufactured exports have increased by 13 per cent. during the past six years, manufactured imports have increased by 45 per cent. I ask the Prime Minister again, what has she got against British industry?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman ran away from many industrial problems, such as restrictive practices and the behaviour of trade unions during the winter of discontent. Yesterday's figures show that industrial production in the third quarter was 2 per cent. up on the second quarter and that manufacturing output was 1 per cent. up. Gross domestic product is at an all-time record.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Does my right hon. Friend think that it is right or sensible that men and women running small businesses should have to pay about 16 per cent. to borrow money when there are over 3 million unemployed and enormous unused resources? Will she bear this in mind as the clamour rises for even higher interest rates?

The Prime Minister: It is hardly clamour for higher interest rates. As my hon. Friend has occasion to know, the interest rates are to a considerable extent partly due to the commercial judgment of the banks in the City, and he knows that we cannot disregard that.

Mr. Steel: Since the Prime Minister recognises the unacceptability of the domestic rating system and is so strongly pledged personally to abolish it, why is it that in the meantime she loads extra expenditure on to the broken-down system, and particularly on to the ratepayers in the counties?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will have been in for, or will have read, a considerable part of the debate yesterday. He knows full well that the rate support grant settlement for next year involves a modest shift in grant from the shire areas to London and other metropolitan areas, which, unfortunately, does cause discomfort to the shire counties. He knows also that I am no advocate of the present system, and that is why we shall be putting forward proposals, I hope by the end of the month, in a Green Paper to change it.

Q2. **Mr. Forsyth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forsyth: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today to pay tribute to the skills and courage shown by the master and crew of Britannia in rescuing our citizens from the fighting in South Yemen?

The Prime Minister: I gladly do so. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will be making a statement after questions, but I am sure that the whole House would like to congratulate the officers and the men of Britannia and of HMS Jupiter and HMS Newcastle and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Brambleleaf, and the crisis unit at the Foreign Office, which did such excellent work in identifying the people who needed to be taken off from Aden.

Q3. **Mr. Madden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Madden: Can the Prime Minister say when she will honour her promise to give Government money to Bradford City football club to help rebuild its ground at Valley parade?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I made a promise to do that. As the hon. Member will be aware, we are at present considering whether we should give money to Bradford football club. In the exceptional circumstances — *[Interruption.]* I hear various things coming from hon. Members in a sedentary position. We made a contribution to the disaster fund, and quite rightly. We are considering the question raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Peter Blaker: Has my right hon. Friend had her attention drawn to the article in the magazine *Jane's Defence Weekly*, stating that Soviet trained agents have been infiltrating the ranks of the Greenham Common women and that they have been trained to carry out acts of sabotage in time of tension and war? Does my right hon. Friend have any information to contradict that report?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend is aware, we do not comment on specific reports, but we are very much aware of the dangers that special forces in the country would present at times of crisis or in wartime. That was precisely why we had Exercise Brave Defender last September, in order to see how we should properly protect sensitive installations.

Mr. Evans: Has the Prime Minister had the opportunity to read today's London *Standard*, which carries a front page story stating that the Government are planning new curbs on unions and further anti-trade union legislation? Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to deny that outrageous story, which will cause anger and dismay among trade union members who have just carried out highly successful ballots to maintain trade union political funds?

The Prime Minister: I saw the article and anticipated the question. May I make it quite clear that this Government have done more than any other to ensure that union bosses are accountable to their members. There are further steps that can be taken. We have not yet reached any decisions and, before doing so, will be consulting further.

Sir Anthony Grant: To revert to the question raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker), does my right hon. Friend not think that it would be extraordinarily incompetent of the Soviet Union if it did not seek to infiltrate Greenham Common? Can she confirm that top priority will be given to the security, not only of Greenham Common, but of the Molesworth base in Cambridgeshire?

The Prime Minister: I know of my hon. Friend's particular interest in that base. Brave Defender was carried out to see how we could ensure the defence of all-important installations, including that one.

Q4. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: What would the right hon. Lady say today to those unemployed young people from my constituency who visited her last year and who are still unemployed, to the 10,000 unemployed in my constituency and to the tens of thousands who will lose jobs throughout the country as a result of the massive rises in rates and interest rates that are in the pipeline?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman refers to the group that he brought to see me a year ago. I had several employers there to see the group. I made inquiries before I came to the House today and I was told that all but four of the group have been offered either training or employment.

Q5. **Mr. Fox** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fox: Will my right hon. Friend assure us that once the law to allow Sunday trading comes into operation she will give some support to flexible licensing hours, and thus bring the country into line with Scotland and the Palace of Westminster?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Shops Bill has yet to come to the House and proceed through its stages. I am aware that a number of people would like to consider flexible licensing hours, and if my hon. Friend wishes we shall give consideration to that in due course. However, one should not do anything to suggest that flexible licensing hours are equal to or in any way the same as those of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the right hon. Lady intend to ignore the vast correspondence that she has received protesting against the Shops Bill? Will she at least refrain from putting a three-line Whip on what is a matter of conscience?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the right hon. Gentleman comes from a part of the country where there is no limitation on Sunday trading. However, he wishes to stop us south of the border from having the same privilege. As he knows, we do not discuss Whipping matters in the House.

Q6. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Prime Minister aware of the serious unrest among members of the Royal College of Nursing following the appointment of district managers from outside the service, and of the effect that that is having on the morale of nurses? Will the Prime Minister prevail upon her colleague the Secretary of State for Social Services, with a view to him examining this serious problem so that he can appoint nurse-managers from within the service, to whom nurses would be responsible and by whom they would be managed, to ensure proper patient care?

The Prime Minister: I visited a hospital on Friday, and I did not find what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting. Most people in the National Health Service realise that it is important to get good management. Managers are

sometimes nurses or doctors, but it is important that the right person to be a manager is chosen, whether that person has previously been an administrator, a nurse or a doctor.

Q7. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. McCurley: Will my right hon. Friend consider using her personal influence to urge the Scottish striking teachers to negotiate an end to this damaging strike, which is hurting pupils and lowering the profession in the esteem of the public?

The Prime Minister: I agree very much with my hon. Friend. We deplore the further industrial action because of the harm that it is doing to pupils and the great distress that is is causing the parents. I join her in hoping that the strike will soon end, and that we shall be able to come to some agreement on terms and conditions of service also and that we will be able to get a better system of appraisal so that we can pay better teachers more.

Mr. Loyden: Can the Prime Minister say what benefits will accrue to the northern regions of this country, and to Scotland and Northern Ireland, arising out of the agreement that she signed yesterday with the French President, particularly regarding the regeneration of industry and jobs?

The Prime Minister: That would depend upon how many of the orders for equipment and materials went to Scotland, but about 50,000 man-years' work will be involved in that project and I hope that that will spread very well over the country.

Q8. **Mr. George Gardiner** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gardiner: After giving such a commendable impetus to plans for a tunnel under the English Channel, may I ask my right hon. Friend to instil the same sense of urgency into the Department of Transport regarding a far more modest project for a tunnel under the River Thames at Dartford — thereby removing the most atrocious bottleneck on the M25 — especially since private risk capital is available for this venture too?

The Prime Minister: I very much take note of what my hon. Friend says. I have occasion to know that area very well. I particularly note that he believes that private sector capital would be available for such a project.

Yemen

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the action being taken to secure the safety of British subjects and others in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

On 13 January fighting broke out in Aden. The ferocity of the fighting presented grave risks to the safety of British subjects. In those circumstances, and with the full agreement of Her Majesty the Queen, the royal yacht Britannia, which was just leaving the Red sea, was ordered to remain off Aden, and Her Majesty's ships Newcastle and Jupiter, with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Brambleleaf, were ordered to Aden at full steam in case they were needed for an evacuation.

The situation in the country continued to deteriorate and the level of fighting approached that of a civil war. After close consultation with the Russians and French, both in Aden and in capitals, it was agreed that evacuation was necessary and that, as far as possible, our efforts should be co-ordinated. On 17 January, Soviet merchant vessels lifted off from Aden about 1,000 people, mostly their own nationals. On the same day, the royal yacht took off 450 people, 38 of them British—44 nationalities altogether. Eighty-one French nationals were then transferred to a French ship, and the rest of the evacuees were taken on Britannia to Djibouti. The royal yacht then returned to the area and on 19 January lifted off a further 209 people from an area 35 miles from the capital. Eighteen of these were British. These have since arrived in Djibouti, after transferring to HMS Jupiter. I am now very pleased to be able to add that Britannia has this morning picked up a further 15 British nationals from Little Aden. Britannia is maintaining close contact with the vessels of the other nations involved, and remains offshore nearby to take on board further parties of British and other foreign nationals as soon as conditions permit.

So far, no British subjects have been hurt. However, a number of British subjects still remain in south Yemen and we are continuing to work out with other Governments the best ways of evacuating these widely scattered communities.

On the evening of 17 January, when the embassy and residence had been rendered unihabitable, the ambassador, Mr. Arthur Marshall, decided that he should withdraw all members of the embassy. At the end of the evacuation, he accompanied those on board to Djibouti but then returned on Britannia to the area, where he will remain with a member of his staff while the evacuation continues. Another member of his staff is on board HMS Newcastle.

The success of the evacuation so far would not have been possible without the help given by a number of Governments, and in particular the Governments of Djibouti, the USSR and France. This has been a remarkable demonstration of what can be achieved through close international co-operation, and I take this opportunity to thank them warmly for their assistance.

I should like to express my gratitude to all the staff of the Ministry of Defence and of the Diplomatic Service, at home and abroad, who have been involved in this operation. I should particularly like to thank our honorary consul in Djibouti, Mr. Christopher Reddington. I know too that the whole House will join me in praising the calmness and efficiency of our ambassador in Aden, his staff, and their families throughout this difficult period.

Their example has been matched by the fortitude of the British evacuees, who helped to organise the evacuation of hundreds of other nationals and who set an example of disciplined behaviour throughout.

This is the first time that the royal yacht has been involved in a operation of this sort. It has received magnificent support from HM ships Newcastle and Jupiter, and Royal Fleet Auxiliary Brambleleaf, with its Merchant Navy crew. I should like to pay tribute to Rear-Admiral John Garnier and all the officers and crew involved for the courage and professionalism that they have shown in carrying out the operation in conditions of danger and difficulty. We can all be proud of them.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): [illegible] and the British people as a whole can be proud of this magnificent rescue. We rejoice that no British subjects have been injured or killed in spite of the ferocity of the fighting, and we join wholeheartedly with the Foreign Secretary in thanking and paying tribute to those of our people—the military, Admiral Garnier, the diplomatic staff, Mr. Marshall and those with him — who played and are playing such a wonderful part to ensure a successful outcome.

The Foreign Secretary must be aware that the rescue amounts to probably the highest point of British-Soviet co-operation in a practical sphere since the end of the second world war. We hope that the spirit of good will will act as a precedent and will spill over into other fields of our bilateral relationships with the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union has learnt the cost, as have other peoples, including ourselves, the Israelis and the Americans, of unilateral intervention in a middle east country.

I ask the Foreign Secretary to report to the House in specific respects. Was the matter of the rescue raised in his discussions yesterday with Mr. Ryzhov, the Soviet Deputy Minister? On the best estimates available to him, how many Britons remain in South Yemen? Can he say how long it is expected that the royal yacht Britannia will remain close by and available for action? What is the Foreign Office reading of the position regarding who is in charge in South Yemen? Is it the Foreign Office view that the difference between the factions there is essentially on ideological lines, or is it more based on personal and tribal factors?

Finally, are there any anxieties about the troubles in South Yemen spilling over into neighbouring territories, and possibly posing a threat to security in the region as a whole?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the kind way in which he has joined me in paying tribute to all those involved in the operation, and add my word of thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for his support throughout.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the degree of co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on this occasion. One cannot presume from that high degree of co-operation that everything else will be handled in the same spirit, but I hope that it will not be the last occasion for improving relationships in this way. I was able to raise the matter with Mr. Ryzhov last

night, to thank him for the co-operation that had taken place, and to express the hope that it would continue in practical terms on the spot. It is worth reminding the House of what Admiral Garnier said this morning when he paid tribute to the fine atmosphere of international co-operation. He said that

"the French, the Soviets and us are talking regularly, pooling our information, and everyone here is dedicated to the hope that we can get the remaining people off."

The hon. Gentleman asked precisely the questions which one would want to ask. It is not possible to be sure about the number of British subjects still left in the PDRY, but our inquiries suggest that the figure is likely to be about 40. Her Majesty has expressed her willingness for Britannia to remain for as long as there is a need for it to do so.

It is not possible for me to offer any clear view on the outcome, because the situation is still very confusing, but it appears that the conflict arises from differences of a tribal kind rather than a political or ideological kind. So far, the problems have not spilt over into other neighbouring countries. If they did, it would naturally be a cause for concern. We are keepng in close touch with all those countries in the neighbourhood.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is refreshing to find the whole House able to unite in congratulating all those involved in this splendid operation? Does he agree that it has proved the utility of the royal yacht not only as a hospital ship on this occasion but as a facility which is extremely useful for us to have? It has proved itself in many other ways not only from an ideological point of view but as a fitting facility for the head of a great Commonwealth country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend's first comments and with his tribute to the value of the royal yacht, with its particular suitability for an occasion of this kind and its value in a much wider representational capacity.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I congratulate all those concerned, particularly the Soviet and French Governments. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that this shows the value of being able to deploy the Royal Navy east of Suez? In view of the announcement of the 7 per cent. real terms cut in the defence budget, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman use his influence to ensure that the Royal Navy surface ships are not cut back and that their present minimal numbers are fully maintained?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can well understand the right hon. Gentleman's interest in this aspect. It illustrates the value of having this kind of capability available in so far as it is compatible with the continuing and difficult task of judging the pattern of priorities on defence expenditure more generally.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend take note of early-day motions 322 and 323 which refer to Britannia? Will he send a signal to the admiral conveying the sentiments expressed in those early-day motions and pay a warm and generous tribute to the skipper and crew of the Diamond Princess, a British registered cargo ship which is reported to have saved some 600 people in the past 24 hours?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly be willing to pay tribute to any vessels or individuals for the part that they have played, once that is established. I certainly join in the sentiments to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention in early-day motions 322 and 323. They pay a deserved tribute to those concerned in this rescue. I shall see that that tribute and my hon. Friend's sentiments are conveyed to the rear admiral and those with him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I, too, associate myself with the splendid work that has been undertaken. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the faction fighting in Yemen is a sharp warning to the Cabinet not to allow their disagreements to get out of hand?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman can always be relied upon to make an inaccurate observation on almost any occasion.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the whole nation looks with great pride and gratitude on the achievements of the Royal Navy during the past few days? It notes once again the usefulness of the royal yacht, with its supporting small ships. It should be grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary for the way in which he masterminded the whole business.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am even more than usually grateful to my hon. Friend for the generosity of his tribute. The actions and decisions of those on the spot deserve particular thanks on this occasion.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that, as the rescue appears to have been a huge success, some of us are a bit curious about why the Prime Minister has not taken full advantage of it? Have arrangements been made to get her out there on the deck of Britannia with the television cameras? Perhaps the right hon. Lady could be seen shaking hands with the Soviets — perhaps a member of the KGB or even one of those who associate with the same group that has figured prominently in *Jane's Defence Weekly*? What a wonderful picture would be painted!

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Only the hon. Gentleman would have used this occasion to illustrate his capacity to play the game of consequences in a profoundly inconsequential fashion.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Some of the preceding comments look a little odd beside the enormous relief felt by those who experienced the rescue in extremely dangerous circumstances. Was not great courage shown by those in the Diplomatic Service who assisted in getting the evacuees to the beaches and by those in the small boats who came from Britannia to take them off the beaches? Did not the BBC overseas service also play an important and necessary part in the rescue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for returning our discussion to the proper note of seriousness and thankfulness. He was right to pay tribute to all those concerned and to the BBC world service, which has played an important communication role on this and other occasions.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Britannia's versatility on this occasion is impressive and welcome to a wide section of our community, which wants Britannia to play

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

a wider role when the Queen does not require her? Does my right hon. and learned Friend have other roles in mind for HMS Britannia?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would not be for me to specify other roles. I certainly endorse my hon. Friend's comments. Britannia is particularly suitable for this type of role, because she is a non-combatant vessel designed to handle a large number of people and well equipped with the necessary boats.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): May I add my congratulations on the successful operation in evacuating so many people from this unhappy territory? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman's desk yet had a chance to analyse the likelihood of whether the Administration likely to take over in PDRY will continue to welcome the opening to the West that the previous Administration were adopting?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that it is too early to speculate on the nature of the Administration that may take over or on any difference in its direction. As I said, the dispute appears to arise more from personal and tribal conflicts of a traditional kind than from ideological variations.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating the state of Djibouti on the speedy help it has rendered not only to the royal yacht Britannia but to the other ships that came in to take off so many people? Will he congratulate those people in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who so speedily commandeered the royal yacht? Will he expand on the relationship with the Soviet Union in this case, because obviously the co-operation was unusual?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that my hon. Friend has exactly the right insight into the relationships between the Foreign Office and the royal yacht. I join with my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the Djibouti Government for their particularly helpful attitude in receiving and handling thousands of evacuees and assisting in their repatriation. We are particularly grateful to President Hassan Goulad Aptidon for his help. Contact on this matter has taken place sensibly and practically between the embassies on the spot and between Foreign Ministries at this end directed from Moscow and Paris. This is how one would have expected the operation to proceed. One hopes that it will afford an insight into the way in which matters will develop in other respects.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): We are all rightly proud of the courage and efficiency of those involved in the evacuation. Is not the Soviet Union likely to benefit from what has transpired because Mr. Ismail was allowed to return to Yemen as a conscious policy act on its part? Although there may be some short-term turbulence, perhaps even bloody turbulence, the Soviet Union's influence in that part of the world could be enhanced rather than diminished.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's speculation may well be right. However, it would take a relatively optimistic Soviet adviser to perceive any clearly cheerful conclusion from the circumstances in which hundreds of Soviet citizens have been evacuated.

Stanley Royd Hospital

3.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the Stanley Royd hospital inquiry report. I am this afternoon publishing the report of the committee of inquiry into the outbreak of food poisoning at Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield.

Stanley Royd is a large hospital in Wakefield for mentally ill and psychogeriatric patients. In a major outbreak of salmonella food poisoning which began on 26 August 1984, 355 patients and 106 members of staff were affected. Food poisoning caused, or contributed to, the deaths of 19 patients. At the time of the outbreak and subsequently, a number of allegations were made of errors in the control of infection, of poor standards of hygiene in the hospital kitchen and of other shortcomings.

I announced in September 1984 that I was setting up a public inquiry into the outbreak under the chairmanship of Mr. John Hugill QC. The other members of the inquiry were Professor Rosalinde Hurley and Mr. Patrick Salmon. The committee heard oral evidence between February and May 1985. It submitted its report to me last month. I am most grateful to the chairman and members of the committee for all their work on this complex inquiry.

The report gives a detailed account of the background to the outbreak and its course and of the actions taken by National Health Service staff.

The committee concludes that the cause of the outbreak was salmonella which was probably brought into the kitchen in contaminated chickens, and that cold roast beef was the most likely vehicle of infection. The infection was able to multiply because the beef was not properly refrigerated. The committee found that a number of unhygienic and unsatisfactory practices had grown up in the hospital kitchen.

The report pays tribute to the work of the junior doctors on duty during the early days of the outbreak and the care given by nursing staff on the wards. Those staff were working under very difficult conditions and their efforts were in the highest traditions of their professions.

The committee makes criticisms on a number of matters. In particular, it comments on the failure to ensure satisfactory management of the kitchen at the hospital. It criticises medical and nursing management and in particular the failure to seek, or accept offers of, help from outside specialists, both in the investigation of the outbreak and in the treatment of the patients affected by it. The regional health authority and some officers at regional and district level are criticised for failing fully to inform themselves first-hand of the situation once the outbreak had occurred.

Since the outbreak, Wakefield health authority has made a number of improvements in the kitchen and its management. I am now instructing it and the Yorkshire regional health authority to consider all the points raised by the report and to report to me urgently on the action they have taken and propose to take in response to them. That response must cover the position of those people whose conduct may have contributed to these tragic events, and the steps taken to ensure that such events do not recur.

The report identifies serious failures of supervision and management. General managers have now been appointed by the Yorkshire regional health authority and Wakefield

health authority. As in all authorities, these managers carry clear and personal responsibility for securing effective action.

A number of comments were made on the position at Stanley Royd prior to and during the inquiry. One of these concerned finance. On this the report says that it was not its

"view that the question of financial restraints or constraints above the level of the region were relevant to any of the issues which we had to consider and, in taking this view, we are supported by the evidence given by witnesses from the Yorkshire regional health authority".

Another suggestion was that Crown premises like hospitals should be subject to the general food legislation. However, the report states that in the case of Stanley Royd the evidence did not support the need for the abolition of Crown immunity. The report says:

"We find it impossible to recommend any change in the law on the vexed question of Crown immunity where the entirety of the evidence given to us by the professional environmental health officers was to the effect that the sanctions of the criminal law would not have been employed in respect of the kitchen at Stanley Royd, even if they had been available."

The Government will nevertheless continue the urgent review of Crown immunity for hospital kitchens, including the suggestion in the report that a "Crown notice" form of procedure should be initiated.

The majority of the report's formal recommendations are aimed at improving standards of hygiene in hospital kitchens and improving the investigation and control of any future outbreaks. The committee recognises that the departmental guidance on food hygiene in hospitals is basically sound and recommends that health authorities should be reminded of its terms. We had already done that before the report was received.

In addition, I am urgently reviewing departmental guidance to health authorities on the steps that they must take to ensure proper food hygiene in hospitals and to ensure that environmental health officers are encouraged to visit, and that proper regard is paid to their recommendations. In doing so, I shall take full account of the Stanley Royd committee's recommendations.

I am referring the recommendations about the arrangements for the control of infection and the handling of outbreaks to the hospital infection working group. This group was set up last summer to advise me on the revision of departmental guidance on control of infection and I am asking it to give me the highest priority on contingency plans for dealing with outbreaks of infection—plans that will ensure that specialist help is brought in as soon as it is needed.

There can be no doubt at all about the continuing need for proper provision of public health and community medicine advice within the management structure of the Health Service. The functions of the specialty of community medicine include not only the control of infectious diseases but the assessment of the needs of populations for health care, the planning and evaluation of health services and responsibility for prevention and health promotion.

I have therefore decided that it would be right to establish an inquiry into the future development of the public health function, including the control of communicable diseases, and the specialty of community medicine in England. The inquiry will be a broad and fundamental examination of the role of public health doctors, including how such a role could best be fulfilled. The inquiry will be chaired by the Government's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Donald Acheson, and I expect to receive its report before the end of the year. Details of membership will be finalised shortly. In the meantime, we shall take every step possible to prevent a recurrence of these tragic events.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that this tragedy represents the culmination of a damning catalogue of manifest negligence in this case, and brings to a head the scandal of appalling insanitary and even lethal conditions in so many hospital kitchens throughout the country?

On this specific episode, will he confirm that the magnitude of the outbreak—27 deaths in all and two nurses on the critical list—was due to four serious failings that should never have happened? Does he agree that when the duty doctor advised the use of barrier precautions there was, astonishingly, no barrier equipment available to the staff? There were no gowns, masks, gloves or shoes for the purpose.

Will the Secretary of State confirm also that when staff asked that the nearby Snapethorpe hospital—an old isolation hospital which had been closed during the cuts—should be used to isolate infected patients, especially the elderly and frail, management rejected the request, and, as a result, only three of the 32 wards escaped infection? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that in such a situation the normal instruction is that staff should return to work only after three consecutive negative tests? At Stanley Royd, however, because of staff shortages, which the reports fully recognise, the staff were told to return to work before they were over the illness and, in some cases, while they were still giving positive tests.

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that the health authority sought to minimise the situation at the time to the extent of restarting admissions halfway through the outbreak, although on the first night of readmissions three more patients died and admissions had to be stopped again? What specific action is the Secretary of State taking to prevent each of those four causes of disaster from recurring at Stanley Royd or elsewhere?

The Secretary of State said complacently that, since the outbreak, Wakefield health authority had made a number of improvements in the kitchens and in management. Is that not a wholly inadequate whitewash when previous salmonella outbreaks had occurred at Stanley Royd in 1974 and 1979, when a district medical officer had described the kitchens as "a culinary disaster area" seven years before the tragedy, when plans to upgrade the kitchens had been continuously postponed since 1978 and when help specifically offered to the hospital by the communicable diseases surveillance centre had been categorically turned down?

Is the Secretary of State further aware that this episode, while particularly tragic, is far from unique? There are now about 40 outbreaks of food poisoning in hospitals every year and hospitals are now the third highest source of food poisoning in the country. Is the Secretary of State aware that illness from bacterial food poisoning in hospitals has increased fourfold since 1981 to more than 1,000 cases per year and that deaths from that cause have risen over the same period to more than 50 per year?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the latest reports—a year ago—of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers revealed that 60 per cent. of hospital kitchens currently breach food hygiene regulations and

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

that 97 hospitals would be prosecuted were it not for Crown immunity? As the Department of Health and Social Security has the list, will the Secretary of State publish the names of the 97 hospitals, because the public are entitled to know? Will he accept that, where repeated surveys of hospital kitchens have found vermin infestation, open gutters, foul smelling grids, bird droppings and insecticide spraying during food preparation, the only effective way to protect patients, visitors and hospital workers is to abolish Crown immunity?

Is it not a medieval anachronism that a café with cockroaches is prosecuted but a hospital escapes, although frail, elderly patients are particularly vulnerable to lethal food poisoning? If 27 people can die in a hospital which the report claims would not be prosecuted, how many deaths are we risking in the 97 hospitals that would be prosecuted tomorrow if the Secretary of State fulfilled his responsibility to the nation by lifting the unjustified and unjustifiable immunity?

Mr. Fowler: There is absolutely no question of complacency on the Government's part. Neither is there any question, as anyone who has read the report would know, of any attempt to whitewash the seriousness of the outbreak. What the House should concern itself with—I recognise that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was seeking at least in part to do this—is to decide what action should be taken to prevent such tragedies from occurring again.

The causes of the outbreak are set out very succinctly on page 106 of the report. It states that the main problems were human errors compounded by failures of supervision and management. The report makes clear that all the rules and principles of good catering practice were known and the outbreak occurred because the rules were ignored. The failure to follow the rules arose partly through the failure of supervisory grades to supervise, and that failure stemmed from the failure of the management to manage and check. The hon. Gentleman will know, having read the report, that it sets out a number of illustrations and examples of where the management process had fallen down. At that stage, of course, general managers had not been appointed in the health authorities in question. That improvement has since taken place.

The hon. Gentleman asks what action will follow from the report. The people who are criticised in the report and the chairmen of the authorities have seen the report for the first time today. I shall be inviting the chairmen of the authorities to meet me this week and I shall discuss with them the action that must be taken. That talk will also cover individual responsibilities. As the hon. Gentleman will know, disciplinary action is a matter for the authority, and it would be wrong for me to comment on that as I have an appellate function in that respect.

The question of barrier nursing is dealt with in paragraph 76. The report sets out the grave difficulties that exist in a hospital of this kind and paragraph 76 ends by stating that:

"To speak of barrier nursing against such a background is absurd."

Further study of the report will provide an answer to the hon. Gentleman.

The report states quite clearly that finance was available both to improve the kitchens and to replace them by building new kitchens. That is now being done. It was a complete failure on management's part that that was not done before. I accept that that is the case. One of the reasons was that no one was ultimately responsible for the decision not being taken.

I accept the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West and I know the feelings of the Opposition and of many of my hon. Friends on the matter of Crown immunity. There is a serious issue to examine, but it is clearly fair to stress that the report repeats on three occasions that the existence of Crown immunity would have made no difference in the handling of this particular case. The reason for that is that it was not the physical conditions of the kitchen that were at fault but the procedures that were being used. For example, the pan wash was found to be blocked by cutlery. That has nothing to do with the physical conditions, but it has everything to do with the procedures being followed. We shall consider both Crown immunity and the new proposal in the report for Crown notice and we shall report to the House on our consideration of those matters.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating the staff of Stanley Royd hospital, which is in my constituency? I know the results of the work that the staff had to undertake, some times beyond their usual call of duty, in an attempt to combat the problem. The House ought to record its appreciation for the staff who worked under those conditions.

I hope that the Secretary of State will refer to another cause for concern—the delay in the presentation of the report. A number of people who live in the area and work in the hospital repeatedly asked me when the report would be published. There is genuine criticism about the length of time that the report took to be presented.

The Secretary of State referred to the regional health authority's role and I hope that he will take cognisance of that. Paragraph 180 refers to the kitchen and paragraph 190 refers to the under-staffing of the kitchen. Paragraphs 251 and 252 refer to the health authorities' attitudes to the need for a new kitchen or for reorganisation of the kitchen. Paragraph 252 states that the area health authority wished to take over the responsibility for providing a new kitchen but was not permitted to do so by the regional health authority.

Paragragh 288 states:

"We also find it quite incredible that, apart from expressing regret and sympathy about the outbreak, the Region did not discuss the problem, the causes, or the action being planned or taken, at any meeting thereafter. It was as if it had nothing to do with the RHA. If it had not, then the usefulness and relevance of this body would seem dubious."

In the light of that, will the Secretary of State consider whether it is not time for the regional health authorities to be abolished and for responsibility for running area health authorities to reside at local level?

Mr. Fowler: On the last point, I should not wish to go on record as supporting that, but I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the statements made in paragraph 288 of the report and the fact that the management, control and effective leadership that the public had a right to expect were not provided at that time. I believe that the solution is to consider the responsibilities of the regional health authority and to make it clear, as we did prior to the report, that we expect the regional health authority not to act in the way described in paragraph 288.

On the other points, I gladly repeat what I said in my statement. I believe that the public generally and the whole House wish to pay tribute to the nursing staff, junior doctors and other staff who worked extremely long and hard to ensure that the outbreak was contained.

As for delay, the report was received only last month. It has been printed and the Government clearly wanted to make an initial response, so I do not think that there has been any undue delay in bringing it before the House.

The finance for a new kitchen was available—there is no question about that — but the regional health authority did not process it as it should have been processed. The new kitchen should have been built long ago.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Despite what my right hon. Friend has correctly said about the availability of capital expenditure, does he agree that paragraph 190 states specifically that the cleaning schedule for the kitchen fell behind due to shortage of staff? Although the report makes it clear that there would not have been prosecution if Crown immunity had not applied, does he agree that that does not affect the principle of the matter? Will he therefore give a clear assurance that he will support the excellent Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)?

Mr. Fowler: I can certainly give a full assurance that the Government will continue urgently to review the whole issue of Crown immunity and the proposal for Crown notice put forward in the report. I believe that it would be wise for the House to pause and consider the proposal for Crown notice as well as the issue of Crown immunity. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and the Government are at one in wishing to have the causes of this type of outbreak contained. The Government are therefore considering the matter urgently and with determination to ensure that no future outbreak takes place. The other part of the report also deserves study as it makes it clear that lack of management and supervision contributed substantially to the outbreak. I accept that a shortage of catering staff is also noted, and that is one of the points that I shall wish to take up in my discussions with the chairmen.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Minister accept that, instead of pausing to consider Crown notice, the House should condemn one of the most disgracefully complacent ministerial statements ever to be made in this Chamber? The Secretary of State is directly responsible for the deaths of those people in Wakefield, and his suave easy-going manner will convince no one to the contrary. In the past six years there have been 211 outbreaks of food poisoning in hospitals, in which 3,969 people have been poisoned by salmonella bacteria and 279 people have died. The Secretary of State cannot dispute that because those are his own figures given in reply to questions from me. The Government are in the dock on this and they are to blame because they have refused to abolish Crown immunity and health authorities hide behind the fact that they cannot be prosecuted. Will the Secretary of State admit that he is responsible and that, regardless of what the report says, the only way to solve the problem is to abolish Crown immunity, prosecute negligent authorities and provide the funds needed to end this scandal once and for all.

Mr. Fowler: First, I regret very much the tone adopted by the right hon. Gentleman, which did not live up to the high standards that we expect of him. The Government are not refusing to abolish Crown immunity, but we believe that it is sensible to have regard to an independently commissioned report. In this case, the report states that the abolition of Crown immunity would not have tackled the fundamental cause. With great respect, the right hon. Gentleman should address his mind to those issues as well.

The Government and the House must consider why the outbreak occurred. The reasons are set out in the report. The main problems were human error compounded by failure of supervision and management. Whatever we do about Crown immunity, we must tackle that problem, otherwise the right hon. Gentleman's words will mean precisely nothing.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. Friend publish the list of more than 90 hospitals which would be liable to prosecution but for Crown immunity so that the public at large may have at least the protection of that warning as to the kind of institution they will be entering? As environmental health officers have been pressing for 14 years for this specific relief from Crown immunity, could the urgency with which the Government are reviewing this particular area be advanced to the extent of allowing us to know by 7 February where the Government stand?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot promise the latter. However, I do not intend that the review should be an extended one. I shall let the House know of the outcome as soon as I can. I shall provide as much information as we have available to the House and to the public.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does the Secretary of State agree that this devastating report is an absolute disgrace in 1986? I speak with some emotion, because the 19 deaths arising out of the salmonella outbreak at Wakefield included my brother-in-law. I visited the hospital in the early days of the outbreak. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) in paying tribute to the hardworking staff who worked, at considerable risk to themselves, to put an end to the unfortunate incident. However, it is no good looking back and having sympathy. Those unfortunate people are gone.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the report clearly shows that there was neglect in some quarters? The report suggests that if Crown immunity had not been operating, that may have made no difference. It would, however, have been an added safeguard. There is no reason why Crown immunity should not be lifted. There should be a statutory obligation by which local health inspectors are allowed into hospitals to carry out additional inspections. If not, why not? If there is nothing to cover up, there is nothing to fear.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the cause of one of the biggest problems, which should be abolished, is that of housing people in Victorian workhouses such as the Stanley Royd hospital. I plead with the Minister not to wait for further inquiries. There is sufficient evidence. He should abolish Crown immunity immediately and allow independent health inspectors into those hospitals so that they can make a further check on the disgraceful conditions that existed in that hospital.

Mr. Fowler: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the outbreak. I agree with him that the report tells a story of neglect at several levels. No one who has read the report could be satisfied or happy about the position. However, the hon. Gentleman will accept that it is wise for the Government to consider the report's proposals, even though the proposal on Crown immunity is contrary to what the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Environmental health officers have, and will continue to have, absolute and free access to hospitals. That is essential. It is equally important that the catering procedures and practices are such that, irrespective of the inspectorates, catering establishments and kitchens are run in a proper way. The hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a function of good supervision and good management, all of which broke down in this case.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is hysterical nonsense for the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) to suggest that the Government are in the dock, as though they had invented Crown immunity?

Would it not be a great success for the Government to realise that it is nonsense to hide behind Crown immunity, when they should be protecting people? The Government may not be hiding behind it in this case. But is it not proper justice in this modern age that people should be protected, whether it be from the Crown or from villains?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. We are discussing how that protection should be provided. Apart from the matter of Crown immunity or Crown notice we must tackle the cause of the problem, which, in this case, has been the failure of supervision and management.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): In his statement the Secretary of State congratulated the chairman. Will the Secretary of State identify to which chairman he was referring? He can read his statement to see that he has congratulated a chairman, but there are three chairmen involved—the chairman of the inquiry, the chairman of the health authority and the chairman of the regional health authority. The Secretary of State should identify the chairman who merits congratulations.

The statement uses the words "human error" and "prosecution". The words "lack of" occur about five times, but what is never mentioned in all the references to the lack of administration, of supervision and of everything else, is the lack of adequate finance to run a proper Health Service. I refer you to paragraph 266— [HON. MEMBERS: "You?"]

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member is being questioned because he is drawing me into this matter. He should address his remarks to the Minister.

Mr. Harrison: I thought that I saw the Minister mumbling and I am rather sensitive about such things. Paragraph 266 of the report states:

> "There can be no doubt but that neither the Wakefield Health Authority nor the Regional Health Authority have sufficient funds available to bring everything within their jurisdiction up to the best possible standard immediately."

The Secretary of State and his Department have had reports about inadequacies in the hospital. It was drawn to their attention that funds were required. What happened? The regional health authority and the Wakefield health authority received global sums, but it is like the chap who gambles with the three eggcups and must decide which one hides the money. Priorities have been discussed. The regional health authority chairman got a flap on and turned down the proposals not because of the facilities that were required. I have met four or five Ministers about this. Ministers tried to spread out the money in Wakefield, but it was completely inadequate and hospitals were closed. Snapethorpe could have treated patients with infectious diseases, but it was closed because funds were cut.

Mr. Speaker: I know that the right hon. Gentleman has a deep and personal interest in this matter, which is quite right, but I ask him to put his question.

Mr. Harrison: I thought that I had qualified my question by asking why the Secretary of State had not taken these matters into consideration, Mr. Speaker.

Snapethorpe was closed through lack of funds, and I am still fighting that battle.

Regarding human error, the Secretary of State is responsible. If there is a prosecution, the first person to be prosecuted should be the Secretary of State. The "lack of" which is mentioned five times in the report, should refer to lack of funds, funds that his Department has failed to allocate to Wakefield. Since you wish me to wind up, Mr. Speaker, I conclude by saying that the Department should conduct another reappraisal of the moneys that it has allocated to the Yorkshire region so that the problems can be dealt with.

Mr. Fowler: May I answer the right hon. Gentleman's first question, which he asked some time ago. In my statement, I said that the inquiry was chaired by Mr. John Hugill, and that the other members of the inquiry were Professor Rosalinde Hurley and Mr. Patrick Salmon. I said:

> "I am most grateful to the chairman and members of the committee for all their work on this complex inquiry."

I am not sure whether I could have made it much clearer, but I am grateful for the opportunity of repeating it.

As to lack of finance, I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to paragraph 284 of the report, which states clearly that the committee did not believe that financial restraints or constraints above regional level were relevant to any of the issues that it considered. As to the regional health authority and the delay in the building of the new hospital, I have made it clear that I deplore the delay. The report makes it clear that the delay has been caused by people failing to take decisions. We hope—this is our aim — that the position will be improved after the introduction of a general management process.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Members who have been standing, but I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that although Stanley Royd hospital is in Wakefield and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), it serves a much wider area and there is great concern about what happened 18 months ago? My constituents want more information about what happened. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement and the report, although I have not yet had an opportunity to read it. After we have digested the report, we shall want another debate on the Floor of the House so that we may ask the Secretary of State more questions. Before then will he undertake that

when he receives replies to the questions that he says he has asked, he will give that information to the House? If he does not, the report by itself will not be enough.

Whatever the problems with Crown immunity—they have arisen in previous Administrations and they affect the entire Government service—are not hospitals a special case? If this incident had occurred in a BUPA hospital, criminal proceedings could have been brought and Crown privilege would not have applied. Should we not change the system so that what is good enough for BUPA patients is good enough for Health Service patients?

Mr. Fowler: I agree that the case against Crown immunity is much stronger when it comes to hospitals than in almost any other area. For that reason, my right hon. Friend and I are reviewing the matter urgently. I also agree that this is a serious matter, and I do not wish to leave the House in any doubt about the Government's determination to tackle it. I and my right hon. Friend will do everything that we can to keep the House informed of all developments.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): This is one of the most depressing reports that I have ever read. I agree wholeheartedly with my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that we need a further debate on a 140-page report. Does the Secretary of State accept that I am disappointed that he did not refer to paragraphs 307, 308 and 309 under the heading, "The Press and Media"? Does he agree that it was disgraceful that a reporter and a photographer, one wearing and one carrying a white coat to disguise themselves, smuggled their way into the hospital, and that other reporters badgered patients and staff in an attempt to trivialise and dramatise the affair?

Paragraph 190 of the report states that the kitchen was understaffed. Does the Secretary of State accept that if the kitchen is understaffed before privatisation, it is likely that the position will become even worse if privatisation is forced on local health authorities? The paragraph states that there was 35 per cent. absence due to sickness and accidents. Is that not unacceptable in a hospital of that sort with so many patients?

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the future policy of contracting out. It has nothing to do with this case. I shall discuss with the health authority chairman staffing in the kitchen, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the basic problem was not staffing, but that laid-down and well-understood procedures were simply not followed. That was largely responsible for the outbreak.

I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about the press and the media. I hope that the newspapers concerned will study paragraphs 307, 308 and 309. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will find it objectionable that patients at that hospital should have been so approached. The report makes some criticisms, and the press should study them.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Secretary of State accept that the entire National Health Service community will attach much importance to what the Government do about this report? Therefore, it is doubly important that he takes the appropriate action now. I have not had the advantage of reading the report, but it seems from the right hon. Gentleman's statement that there was a management and supervisory malfunction. Does he accept that that will not be the case in the vast majority of the 40 to 50 outbreaks that we suffer each year, but that they will have been caused by a lack of resources? Far from giving guidance and reiterating his guidance, will he now insist that health authorities appoint hospital kitchen inspectors with authority to ensure that those supervisory functions are correct, and will he give the health authorities the resources to carry them out? May I also ask him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly, please.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Secretary of State said that the inquiry into the control of communicable diseases would be restricted to England. Can it not be extended to Scotland?

Mr. Fowler: The public health inquiry will be carried out by the Chief Medical Officer, but it will have lessons for Scotland, too. The report makes it clear that a lack of general finance did not cause this outbreak, and I know of no evidence on which the hon. Gentleman could base his argument. A management and supervision failure led to the problems that we are discussing.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Is it not interesting that the report should have been published the day after a televison programme exposed the danger and the filth in many hospital kitchens? Despite what the Secretary of State said today, is it not true that this terrifying disaster could be repeated at any time in any hospital? All the authorities represented on the programme last night said that the prime causes of the outbreak were a lack of funds and the continuation of Crown immunity. In those circumstances, will he give a categorical undertaking that the Government will introduce legislation this Session to abolish Crown immunity?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give the undertaking for which the hon. Gentleman asks. I have asked for an urgent report from the health authorities featured on yesterday's Granada programme, and I have made it clear to the health authority chairmen that whatever action is needed should be taken without delay. I shall talk to all the regional health authority chairmen next week at a meeting in Birmingham. The evidence in the programme is challenged by some district health authority chairmen, and I think that we should delay making a final decision on the matter until we consider more closely the points that were raised.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Stanley Royd incident has highlighted the real problem within the National Health Service? He is charged with the full responsibility of making sure that everything is put right. I warn the Secretary of State not to block any private Bill in this House proposing the abolition of Crown immunity.

Mr. Fowler: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. He has raised the general responsibility issue. I hope that in his turn he will support the introduction of general managers at regional, district and hospital level so that we may get better and more effective decision taking.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Despite the comments that the Secretary of State quite rightly made about the report highlighting general management problems at various levels, is he aware that the report also refers to the nurses in paragraph 292 and says:

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

"Furthermore, we heard how the nurse staffing position at Stanley Royd was one of the least favourable in the country and had been so for years."

When that statement is read in conjunction with the statement quoted by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and others about the lack of supervisory staff in the kitchens, do they not suggest to the Secretary of State that funding problems have a part to play in the explanation, despite his protestations this afternoon?

Mr. Fowler: No, I do not think that that is the case. When the hon. Gentleman looks at the report he will see, for example, that the district was underspending on its Stanley Royd nursing budget. As for the nurse-patient ratio, that has improved overall since 1979 in terms of both trained and untrained nurses.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): To help the House to get this hospital into perspective, will the Secretary of State confirm that it was built in 1818 when Napoleon was alive and that it was called the West Riding paupers lunatic asylum? Does he have some sympathy for the staff who are trying to provide services for patients in those circumstances? Will he confirm that when it was last calculated for hospitals of this type, the average spending was £40 per patient per day, but that at Stanley Royd it was only £25 per patient per day? Will he also confirm that in paragraph 274 the report says that the committee had already

"identified two areas in which additional expenditure was required, first in the level of nursing staff, and second in the catering facilities and staff."

The catering manager is also reported as having said that she understood from her predecessor that it was no good asking for extra equipment because no money was available.

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that after the previous salmonella outbreak in 1979 at Stanley Royd there were four years of bumbling incompetence, including, if he reads the report carefully, that of his own officials, not just the regional and district officials? Will he confirm that that continued for four years and that they argued not just about design and necessity but about availability of finance? Will he also confirm that the report contains no fewer than four pages of criticism by the environmental health officers of the standard of the kitchens? Will he further confirm that there are two pages in the report where the committee says that although it does not believe, on the strength of the evidence available to it, that Crown immunity should be abolished, it accepts that it leads to a difference of approach by the officers to inspections of hospital premises and other premises? Does not the Secretary of State agree with most sensible people that the source of this problem springs from that difference of attitude?

Mr. Fowler: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can claim the support of the inquiry's report on everything that he has said and then come to that conclusion. The inquiry's report suggests not that Crown immunity should be abolished, but that there should be a new system of Crown notice. This means that where there is Crown immunity a notice is served on the health authority by the environmental health officer. That is the proposal that is contained in this report. The hon. Gentleman's description of this hospital was right. It was built in the 19th century. But again the report of the inquiry makes it quite clear that it was not the inherent physical defects in the hospital that were responsible for the outbreak but other factors. The conclusions are set out on page 106 of the report. It says:

"All the rules and principles of good catering practice"

were known. The fact is that those rules were not followed. I hope that, whatever differences there are between the Opposition Front Bench and the Government, we can get more effective management into hospitals because it is in everybody's interest that these kinds of outbreaks should never occur.

Interest Rates

4.46 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the imminent further increase in interest rates."

Indeed, the money market rates have increased since Question Time began this afternoon.

The matter which I seek to raise is urgent because real interest rates are already at their highest level in our history, and up to three times higher than the rates in the economies of our major industrial competitors. A further escalation in interest rates will be disastrous for investment and employment, and a catastrophe for mortgage holders, who are already paying the highest real mortgage interest rates ever recorded in Great Britain.

My next point is that the Government are directly responsible for these matters and are answerable for them in the House of Commons. The Government's responsibility for the crisis is not in doubt. First, it is the Government who have made the British economy peculiarly dependent upon the price of oil—the direct trigger for the catastrophe that we now face. Secondly, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Mansion house speech and later, have both asserted that an artificially high control rate is necessary for monetary control and that they will hold interest rates at whatever level and will escalate interest rates to whatever level is necessary to hold the exchange at the artificial level that is necessary to protect their monetary policy. They have asserted that they will hold interest rates high, regardless of the other consequences for the real economy.

Therefore I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, two sentences in summary. The first is that the imminent additional increase in interest rates will be deeply to the detriment of the real economy and the householders of this country. The second is that the imminent increase in real interest rates is a matter which is directly within the responsibility of the Government. Indeed, it has been managed, manipulated and encouraged by the Government. In those circumstances, it is, in my view, essential for the House to debate this issue before the Government's folly does yet more damage to the real economy.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the imminent further increase in interest rates."

The right hon. Member and the whole House know that I am required to take into account the various factors that are set out in Standing Order No. 10. I have listened with great care to what the right hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Mr. Hattersley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand the many considerations that you have to take into account and what you have described as the many implications of this application. I do not argue with your judgment in any way. I merely say that it will be necessary for the House to examine those many implications when the interest rate goes up tomorrow or the day after.

Westland plc

4.49 pm

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with my undertaking to the House yesterday, I have looked at the speech made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry last Thursday, and in particular at the passage in that speech in col. 1167 of the *Official Report* which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) alleges to be a quotation from an official document.

The passage in question describes what happened at a meeting on 17 October last between the Secretary of State and Sir John Cuckney. The passage is couched in reported speech, and as such is in the appropriate form for a paraphrase of the minutes of the meeting on which it is doubtless based. Therefore, I rule that it is not a quotation.

Privilege

4.51 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek your guidance on a matter of privilege.

Late last year I was invited to give evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Sub-Committee, which is examining the relations between civil servants and Ministers following the Ponting case. I was sent a questionnaire, to which I responded at length, and in the course of my reply I drew attention to the document issued by every Prime Minister to all Ministers entitled "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", and I attached a photocopy of that document, sent to me by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) when he formed his Administration in April 1976. However, because that document is classified as confidential I laid claim to parliamentary privilege for it, both in respect of its status as evidence submitted to a Select Committee, and for myself as a member of the House, in submitting it.

This document lays down in great detail the rules which hon. Members of this House, who happen to be Ministers or Parliamentary Private Secretaries in any Administration, are required to obey, and yet the nature and extent of those rules are kept secret from other Members and from the public. Because one of the questions to which I was invited to respond related to the operation of the Official Secrets Act, this particular document was, and is, directly relevant, and constitutes an integral part of my submission. I am due to give evidence, in public, tomorrow afternoon.

Last night I received a letter from the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) who is Chairman of the main Committee, referring to my evidence and to the document, which he points out

"is classified as 'Confidential' and subject to the 30 year rule".

His letter continues:

"The Committee has not yet decided whether it would be appropriate or not to report and publish this in whole or in part. Consequently, if in the course of oral evidence you wish to refer to, or quote from the annex, the sub-committee propose to hear such evidence in private."

Thus, Mr. Speaker, if I refer to or quote from a document which is absolutely central to my evidence, the public hearing may be terminated, hon. Members of the House, who are not members of the Sub-Committee, but who are present, and the public may be excluded. Ministers, civil servants and others sometimes give evidence in secret for reasons of state or commercial confidentiality, but I do not know whether there are any precedents for Select Committees hearing evidence from private Members in secret.

However, I accept that it must be entirely a matter for the Sub-Committee whom it invites to give evidence, whom it hears, whether to hear them in public or private, and what it does with any evidence submitted. Similarly, it must be entirely a matter for me to decide whether I should agree to give evidence in secret on the question whether the present Official Secrets Act should be allowed to protect the type of rules imposed by successive Prime Ministers on other Ministers. If I agreed to do so, I might myself be in breach of the privileges of the House if I subsequently disclosed the nature of the evidence which I had given in secret session.

These are not questions that I can put to you, Mr. Speaker, but the questions which I submit concern the whole House, and you, Sir, relate solely to the status of the evidence submitted to Select Committees by Members, where that evidence is heard in private, when it may neither be alluded to nor published in the report of the Committee. The evidence I submitted was explicitly sought by the Sub-Committee, not volunteered by me.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on these questions. First, is evidence submitted by Members to Select Committees privileged? Secondly, are Members or others who submit such evidence to the House protected from prosecution under the Official Secrets Act? Thirdly, will you authorise me to place a copy of my evidence in the Library of the House, an act which requires your approval, and which would constitute publication? Fourthly, what is my position if I publish my own evidence in full, and claim privilege for it?

I appreciate that these are difficult questions on which I cannot expect a ruling today, but I would be grateful if you could give a ruling before my appearance at the Sub-Committee tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of the questions, because it has enabled me to look into the matter.

He has asked for guidance on a matter of privilege. It is not the function of the Chair to take up the time of the House by giving guidance to Members on matters of privilege or procedure, because hon. Members can obtain such advice outside the Chamber. That deals with the right hon. Gentleman's questions Nos. 1, 2 and 4. His third question was about my authorising him to place a copy of his evidence in the Library. I will look into the matter and let him know my findings.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have we not reached a tidy state of affairs? Over the past few days, documents have been leaked right, left and centre. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to whom you referred in your previous ruling, was paraphrasing from Cabinet documents. One thing led to another, yet here we have a Back Bencher who wants to submit evidence to a Select Committee that is dealing with open government, and he has been told he has to give his evidence in secret. The whole thing is a farce.

Mr. Speaker: What goes on in a Select Committee is not a matter for me, and the hon. Gentleman knows that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I regret that he was not in the Chamber at the time, but I have dealt with it and I have nothing to add.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I apologise for not being here. I was in a meeting of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, where indirectly it might be said that the matter that I am about to raise was being dealt with.

Select Committee on Defence

4.58 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The point of order I wish to raise concerns the membership of the Select Committee on Defence, which has been meeting since 4.30 this afternoon. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, one of the members of that Committee is the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). The hon. Gentleman sits on the Committee as a Member of this House, and he is also a parliamentary adviser to British Aerospace. Last weekend, because of his unique position, the hon. Gentleman was able to arrange for a joint statement to be made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the chairman of British Aerospace in order to, let us say, defuse what at that time was a rather embarrassing public row.

I want to raise the matter of the hon. Gentleman's membership of that Committee, in the context of the Committee's current investigations. "Erskine May" says on page 684:

> "In the nomination of Members to serve on select committees neither the House, nor, where the nomination is entrusted to the Committee of Selection, the Committee of Selection, is bound to consider whether Members are personally interested in the matter or bill referred to the committee, and no objection can be raised in this respect to the composition of the committee".

That means the Committee of Selection is not in a position to examine whether the hon. Gentleman's membership of British Aerospace would in any way influence his judgment as a member of that Committee. One would have thought that you, Mr. Speaker, would have alluded in your reply to the fact that the Select Committee cannot deal with the problem that arises, notwithstanding the fact that the hon. Member for Arundel still represents British Aerospace and is paid to do so.

On page 684 "Erskine May" goes on to say:

> "But it is not the practice for a member of a select committee to take part in any Enquiry while the affairs of any body in which he may be personally interested are under investigation"

I submit that the affairs of British Aerospace are, in part, under investigation. Basically, what "Erskine May" means is that it is not the practice for hon. Members to involve themselves in those inquiries, but the hon. Member for Arundel is today sitting upstairs in a Committee which is dealing with precisely these matters. You, Mr. Speaker, might consider making a statement, if not a ruling, that in the light of the precedent in "Erskine May" the hon. Member for Arundel might wish to consider his position, in so far as it is not the practice of the House for him to be involved in any investigation of that nature.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that I wrote to the Clerk of the Select Committee on Defence yesterday about the issue. I am surprised that the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) is in Committee upstairs. I have not had a reply to my letter.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are probably not aware that two or three years ago Sir Albert Costain was a member of a Select Committee that was investigating the building of a children's hospital in Glasgow, which had cost many millions of pounds and which within a few years started to fall down. The principal contractor for that hospital was Costains. Sir Albert honourably said that although he was not directly involved he would, to

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

maintain his own integrity, walk out of the investigation. He was a man of great honour and integrity. I hope that the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) will do the same as Sir Albert did.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can dispose of the matter now. That is a matter for the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall).

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) quoted "Erskine May". I say to him and to the other hon. Members who have raised the matter that the position from their point of view is clear. If they wish to make a complaint of this nature about the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), they should make it to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which, as hon. Members will see from Standing Order No. 107, is set up specifically to deal with matters of this kind.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I fully appreciate the difficulties where there is a ruling and a difference in practice. We have a difficult problem before us. The hon. Gentleman —I emphasise "hon. Gentleman" because I am in no way impugning the integrity of the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), for whom I have the greatest personal respect—acted as an intermediary in trying to resolve the peculiar problems that arose because of one letter from British Aerospace and a complete volte face in a further ambivalent letter that appeared last weekend. It seems utterly improper that the hon. Member should be sitting to adjudicate on a matter to which he was a party.

May I extend this a stage further and ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give us advice, though not now? It goes wider. I do not think that we can wait for a decision of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, when we remember that a further Committee of perhaps far greater importance is about to be established, namely, the Hybrid Committee which will deal with the Channel tunnel. What guidance can you give as to the possible composition of that Hybrid Committee when one bears in mind the controversy that there was over a Select Committee on Transport because some of its members had interests which were not declared?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not think you should be placed in the position of allowing double standards to operate here. This must seem strange to a person outside this building, because, when a Member of Parliament is named, a chief of police escorts him from the building within three minutes. On one occasion the Serjeant at Arms attempted to escort me from the Chamber. Given those examples, why is it impossible to ensure that the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), who is obviously breaking the rules, is told, not to leave the building, but to get off the Committee? Why can that not be done?

Mr. Speaker: We are only wasting time on the matter, because it can be done. I did not appoint the hon. Member for Arundel to the Select Committee. He was appointed by the House. I have no power to take him off that Committee. The House well knows that. It is a matter for the House. Under our procedures we set up Committees specifically to deal with issues of this kind. I have already said to the hon. Member for Workington that his right course is to draw the matter to the attention of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I say again that it is not a matter for me, because I did not appoint the hon. Gentleman to the Committee.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I feel that we are making ourselves somewhat ridiculous in the eyes of people who think that as a legislative assembly we should be able to deal with these things as they arise. I do not know how we can resolve this problem, but matters like this arise from time to time. May I suggest that this subject might be taken on board by the Speaker's Conference?

Mr. Speaker: That is as may be, but it is hypothetical at the moment. I say again that I am being put in an impossible position if the House expects me to adjudicate on a Member's conduct. I did not appoint the hon. Member for Arundel to the Committee. The House appointed him to the Committee, and the matter is in the hands of the House. The simple way to resolve this problem is through the usual channels.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): May I intervene, since charges are very easily thrown around in these circumstances? It has been asserted that my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) is breaking the rules. I should like to seek confirmation from you, Mr. Speaker, that he is not breaking the rules.

Mr. Speaker: That is true. The hon. Gentleman is not in any way breaking the rules. He was appointed by the House to the Select Committee, and the hon. Member for Workington has fairly pointed out in his quotation from "Erskine May" that the question of his remaining on the Committee and his activities on it are entirely a matter for him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it is not a matter simply of the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) breaking the rules or not. If you rule that he is not, obviously he is not. The point is taken. Is it not important that justice should be seen to be done? I am not saying that the hon. Gentleman has played a dishonourable role, but he negotiated the letter which the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry agreed to accept from the chief executive of British Aerospace. You have said that this is a matter for the Select Committee on Members' Interests. Clearly, the Committee will not be in a position to take action until the Select Committee which is looking into the Trade and Industry matter has completed its findings. What purpose would be served then?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take one more question from the hon. Member for Workington. In regard to what the Leader of the House has said, no doubt the hon. Member for Workington will have given notice to the hon. Member for Arundel that he intended to raise the matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, I wrote to the hon. Gentleman. May I make it clear that I am not accusing the hon. Member for Arundel of breaking the rules. I have not done that. What I have done is to draw attention to the fact that there is precedence for the practice, and it is a practice on which I thought you might wish to comment, Mr.

Speaker. If you were to draw the attention of the hon. Gentleman to the practice, he might feel that it was in his best interests not to proceed as he has done. There is a precedent which I should like to quote in regard to a Select Committee on National Expenditure, which met in 1943:

"**Major C. S. Taylor** asked the hon. Member for Kidderminster, as Chairman of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, whether he will give an assurance that when any investigations are carried out into the organisation or activities of any private or public company, firm or corporation, no member of the Select Committee who is directly interested in that concern or in any competitive business sits as a member of the committee or sub-committee that is charged with this task?

Sir John Wardlaw-Milne: Yes, Sir, to the limited extent to which the Question applies to the inquiries of the Select Committee, it is our practice"—

note, "practice"—

"that a Member would not so take part."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1943; Vol. 395, c. 1402.]

We are talking not about rules, but about practice. My appeal is that you, Mr. Speaker, may wish to guide the hon. Member for Arundel as to practice so that he can remove himself from the embarrassing position in which he has placed himself.

Mr. Speaker: It is not necessary for me to do that because the hon. Member for Workington has given notice to the hon. Member for Arundel that he intended to raise the matter. The hon. Member for Workington has said that the hon. Gentleman is not acting in any way outside the rules. It is my function to see that the rules are maintained. There is no way in which I can help the hon. Member for Workington. It is not for me to comment on matters of this kind. The Select Committee on Members' Interests was set up specifically to deal with matters of this kind, and I cannot do anything about it.

Protection of Minimum Retirement Age

5.10 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to secure a guaranteed minimum retirement age for men and women of sixty years, subject to certain conditions, and for connected purposes.

Most of us are aware of the existence of sex and racial discrimination. There are laws in existence to attempt to combat those types of discrimination but there are no laws to deal with discrimination against people because of age. There is growing evidence that this type of discrimination occurs mainly in employment. Compulsory retirement is the most obvious way that age is directly related to employment. It is important to realise that job discrimination in the employment market begins at a much earlier age than 65 or 60, in some cases at 35. This is why I stress that people should be able to work, if they wish, at least until the age of 60.

Age discrimination affects those who are trying to get jobs and those whose present jobs are at risk. The numbers in both groups have risen sharply since 1979. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that discrimination against people in employment or seeking employment on the basis of their age should be made illegal.

A year ago, at a factory in my constituency owned by the Japanese firm Hitachi, the management invited the workers aged 35 or more to take so-called voluntary redundancy. The management told them in no uncertain way that British workers were over the hill at 35. In a letter to all its employees the company said that older workers cause problems through sickness, slower reactions, poor eyesight and resistance to change. The company also invited these old-timers, in their late thirties, to leave the company to make way for younger people. It offered a tax-free payment of £1,800 to those taking up its invitation. The company also gave the workers the chance to nominate a 16-year-old school leaver to take their place. The letter to the workers, or "company members", as the Japanese like to put it, pointed to the continuing losses at the south Wales factory and maintained that one problem standing in the way of increased efficiency was the age profile of the workers. Eleven employees took up the offer.

Hitachi is not alone in being averse to older workers. According to the Trades Union Congress, in the private sector there has been a huge increase in voluntary early retirement as an alternative to redundancy. In many cases the voluntary nature of such arrangements is open to question and it is clear that many older members feel under pressure to make way for youngsters when they would prefer not to retire.

Age discrimination has been accelerated in recent years by the massive increase in unemployment since 1979. Job adverts frequently impose upper age limits. Long-term unemployment among older workers has increased since 1979 by 300 per cent. and those caught in the trap are likely to suffer the consequences for the rest of their lives. Surely age and experience are qualities which should not be tossed lightly aside. Indeed, on the basis of age limits now set by many employers, many Members of this House would no longer be at work.

It is not surprising that a number of countries have laws which preclude or limit the use of chronological age as an

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

automatic exclusion factor in retirement and employment practices. In Britain, the majority of those living exclusively on state benefits, including pensions, are not far removed from poverty. The problems of long-term unemployment concern the over-50s rather than school leavers and it is understandable that demands for the removal of discriminatory practices, based solely on chronological age, have become more insistent in Britain.

However, practices concerning recruitment, training and promotion use age enthusiastically despite its lack of objectivity. An advertisement which appeared in the press recently stated:

"It is unlikely that anyone outside 35 years of age will have the necessary experience or drive essential for the rapid achievement required."

If a person is over 35, he is beyond the pale. Imagine the same advertisement saying "It is unlikely that a woman or a black person will have the necessary experience or drive essential." No one could put such an advertisement in the papers. If he did, it would be illegal. Why is the first version allowed? If some employers can get away with it, others will try to do the same.

Young people are cheaper to employ and it can be argued that they can get lower rates in their first year because they are supposed to be training. There are also cases of indirect discrimination, applying the requirements or conditions apparently equally to both sexes, with the result that one sex is less able to comply.

One of the most recent cases of indirect discrimination is that of Belinda Price, who married early and left her job to bring up her young family. She later qualified as a mature student and then applied to join the Civil Service as an executive officer. She was refused entry to that level because the age limit was 28 and she was 32. An industrial tribunal found this service condition "indirectly discriminatory", because more women than men rear children during the traditional recruitment years. The Civil Service has since raised the age limit to 45 in this grade. The Civil Service has declared itself to be an equal opportunities employer, but it is again defending a rigid age limit of 32 years for those applying for entry to the fast stream administrative grades of the Foreign Office, despite the fact that only one woman in 140 is in the top three grades.

In his book "40-60: How We Waste the Middle-Aged", M. P. Fogarty says:

". . . at whatever age, chronological age turns out to be a poor predictor of performance in a wide range of activities. People at any age are individuals, differing within their overall capacities and in their profile of individual capacities. If one is looking for a woman or man who can put up a certain level of performance —whether high, average or low—on a certain task, one is likely over a very wide range of tasks to have to search all groups to find the right one."

In 1949, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights argued that the association of age with discriminatory practices results in

"detrimental distinctions which do not take account of the particular characteristics of individuals."

Over the years a number of countries have responded, but so far the United Kingdom has enacted no relevant legislation — although, on at least four occasions, attempts have been made to deal with this matter by private Members' Bills. There has been a recognition of age dicrimination or agism—the holding of a particular image of someone on the basis of formal age — in France, West Germany, Sweden and the United States which have legislated against it. In the United States the trend seems to be running against compulsory retirement. A law came into effect in New York State last year which does away with age discrimination at any age in the public sector. This year New York State expects to abolish it in private employment.

Age discrimination can have as serious personal and economic effects for an individual and society as racial and sex discrimination. For this reason, I argue, there is a need for legislation, and I hope that the House will support me.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Ms. Jo Richardson, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Richard Caborn, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Dr. John Marek, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. Roland Boyes and Mr. John McWilliam.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd accordingly presented a Bill to secure a guaranteed minimum retirement age for men and women of sixty years, subject to certain conditions, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 February and to be printed. [Bill 61.]

Orders of the Day

Atomic Energy Authority Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

5.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The objective of the Bill is to put the finances of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on to a trading fund basis, and for connected purposes. Hon. Members will recall that I said that legislation would come forward on these matters when I made a statement on the Government's decisions on the AEA review on 11 February 1985.

As is customary, I should like to start by explaining the background to the Bill. As hon. Members will know, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority was created by the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954 with a wide range of responsibilities for nuclear matters. It was initially almost entirely funded by the Government. Since then, the authority has undergone a number of significant changes. The Science and Technology Act 1965 gave it the power to carry out non-nuclear research and development as required by the Secretary of State. The Atomic Energy Authority Act 1971 hived off the radiochemical activities of the authority to what is now Amersham International, and the fuel manufacture, enrichment and reprocessing work to British Nuclear Fuels plc. Under the Atomic Energy Authority (Weapons Group) Act 1973, the weapons group of the authority was transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

The context in which the authority operates has also changed significantly. In 1954, the authority effectively was the nuclear industry. Since then, other centres of expertise have grown up with the design, construction and operation of the United Kingdom's nuclear power stations. In 1984, more than 18 per cent. of electricity supplied in the United Kingdom was nuclear. This contribution should reach as much as 25 per cent. by the end of the decade when reactors currently under construction, or being commissioned, are fully operational. These reactors have required a corresponding development of fuel fabrication and reprocessing facilities, where important export orders have also been obtained.

Nevertheless, the authority is still a very major force. It employs some 14,000 staff and has gross expenditure of about £400 million per annum. About half its income has recently come in the form of a grant-in-aid from the Department of Energy for nuclear research and development. The remainder comes mainly from contract work on nuclear research and development for other United Kingdom customers such as the electricity supply industry BNFL and from customers for non-nuclear research and development. A large part of the authority's work is therefore already under contract and is held in very high regard for its scientific and technical excellence.

It is against that background that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy set in hand last year a wide-ranging overall review of the role and activities of the authority, including whether its present relationship with the Department of Energy remained appropriate. The terms of reference were:

"to examine the main programmes of the authority, with reference to the character, funding and accountability for these programmes and their bearing on the role of the authority; to consider, in the light of the review and of other factors, whether changes were required in the role and accountability of the authority, and in its relationship with the Government; and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Energy."

My right hon. Friend published an extensive summary of the review's conclusions and recommendations on 3 October 1984, and I announced the Government's decisions to the House on 11 February last year.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Many employees in the industry are worried that the Secretary of State did not publish the review committee's report in full. Why did the Secretary of State not publish the full report? If representations are made to him during the Bill's passage through the House, will the Secretary of State publish the entire report?

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, as did I in reply to a question asked by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), that the conclusions and recommendations were the main part of the review, and it is not customary to publish a confidential internal piece of advice.

It might be helpful if I remind the House of the key points. The Government consider it prudent for the country to have a range of electricity supply options and continue to attach importance to the safe and economic development of nuclear power. The authority's role as a research and development organisation underpinning the nuclear industry, exploring how the technology might develop, and providing independent advice to Government therefore remains a key one.

The Government have endorsed the two guiding principles recommended by the review team. The first is that the authority should move to a fully commercial basis of operation as a further spur to efficiency; and, secondly, that defined customer-contractor relationships should be applied as far as possible to its work. The group concluded that privatisation of the authority either in whole or in part was not a realistic option at present. I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate what I said on 11 February last year, and which my noble Friend Lord Gray confirmed recently in another place—that the Government have no intention of privatising the authority.

The Government have decided that more of the authority's work should be funded by the nuclear industry, that the Department of Energy's funding of nuclear research and development should move closer to a customer-contractor basis and that the authority's operations should be placed on a trading fund basis from 1 April 1986 with powers to borrow.

As a trading fund, the authority's charges to all of its customers will include an element of profit, and clear financial objectives will aid the measurement of success. The authority will prepare a profit and loss account and be able to carry surpluses and deficits forward from one year to the next. It will thus have increased flexibility and greater discretion over the use of internally generated funds, which will help to finance an agreed capital investment programme. Remaining capital requirements will be financed through borrowing. I shall outline the new financial framework that we propose in a little more detail shortly, but first I should like to emphasise three points, concerning nuclear safety, the AEA's independence, and accountability.

[Mr. Goodlad]

I deal first with safety. In reaching decisions on the review's recommendations, the Government recognised the authority's crucial contribution to the development of civil nuclear power and high nuclear safety standards in Britain. Safety is paramount and the authority will continue to play a major role in the United Kingdom in nuclear safety research and development. The Government and the generating boards attach importance to the authority's independent capability in this area. The Department of Energy will therefore continue to fund a substantial programme of thermal reactor and general nuclear safety research by the authority. In 1986-87 this funding is expected to total more than £20 million.

The next matter of importance is independence. I should like to reassure hon. Members that, although other parts of the nuclear industry, particularly the generating boards and BNFL, will be placing more contracts with the authority in areas of research and development most relevant to them, that does not imply a reduction in the authority's independence. It is sometimes asserted that the authority will be dominated by the Central Electricity Generating Board. The House may therefore like to know that even when the transfers of funding that I announced on 11 February last year have been taken into account the proportion of the authority's total turnover accounted for by the CEGB is still expected to be less than 15 per cent. The authority will have a range of customers and will not be beholden to any particular interest group.

Underlying research is another area where the authority's continued independence is of key importance. Such research underpins all that the authority does, just as the authority underpins the nuclear industry. By consciously devoting resources to a broad and inter-disciplinary programme of underlying research during the past 30 years, the authority has been able to keep at the forefront of technological change. The research has been of enormous benefit to its customers over the years and is the seedcorn for the future.

Through a levy on other programme charges, the Department of Energy will still make a very significant contribution to the funding of the authority's underlying research programme, which will amount to more than £16 million in 1986-87. Other customers will also contribute but the content of the programme will remain firmly under the authority's control. The Government consider that these arrangements will enable the authority to continue a vigorous and independent programme, as it is essential that it should.

The third important matter to which I referred is accountability. I should like to repeat the assurance that I gave the House on 11 February last year. There will be no loss of accountability for expenditure on nuclear research and development as a result of the move to a trading fund. In fact the Department of Energy will, as well as remaining the authority's sponsor in Whitehall terms, become accountable to Parliament as the authority s customer in a way that it was not before. My Department will in future provide funding against programme letters setting out the Government's objectives in each area of research. We will be monitoring the work done and the money spent by the authority against the milestones and estimates in these programme letters, with the objective of ensuring that the taxpayer obtains value for money.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): My hon. Friend said that the Central Electricity Generating Board might exert undue influence as a result of the changes that he proposes. Can he give us any further guarantee of redress to make sure that if the CEGB exerts undue pressure the authority will be able to bring some heavy guns into its camp to resist such pressure, particularly perhaps from his Department?

Mr. Goodlad: I know that my hon. Friend takes a close interest in the affairs of the authority, particularly because of Winfrith in his constituency. I have to say to him that I do not think that a guarantee of the sort that he suggests will be necessary, but I shall examine carefully what he has said.

The Government have decided not to build up an unnecessary apparatus for control and monitoring within the Department to duplicate the resources of the authority. The programmes will continue to be funded from money voted by Parliament through the Estimates procedures, and the authority's accounts will continue to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. My Department will therefore remain accountable on policy and overall programme specification, and the authority will answer on its technical advice and efficiency of programme execution.

The programme letters will cover such research and development areas as the fast reactor, advanced gas-cooled reactors, pressurised water reactor safety, general nuclear safety, fusion, radioactive waste management, nuclear materials management, radiological protection and others. The programme letters will be settled each year following discussion between the authority and the Department, assisted by expert technical advisers.

One of the operational areas covered by the programme letters is the authority's existing waste management and decommissioning operations. The Government have in the past accepted that they would pay the costs of meeting waste treatment and decommissioning liabilities at the time they arise. Although the authority's operations are being placed on a trading fund basis, the Government will continue to accept responsibility in principle for the costs which the authority will incur arising from programmes carried out before 1 April 1986, and from future departmentally funded programmes. Expenditure will be monitored and controlled through the appropriate programme letters.

Turning now to the Government's decision to place the authority on a trading fund basis, I shall outline in a little detail the changes that we propose to the financial framework for the authority. First, the authority will have powers to borrow and a revised capital structure, including commencing capital debt, reserves and provisions. We regard a commencing capital debt as a sound feature of this revised capital structure. Full and detailed consultations have taken place with the authority and the Treasury both about the size of the debt and about the other elements of the financial framework. It is expected that the debt will be set at about £80 million. Uncertainties inevitably exist when looking to the future, but, assuming a broad continuation of the authority's existing business prospects, forward projections suggest that the authority should be left with a modest profit after payment of interest on its debt.

The trading fund's opening current cost capital employed is likely to be in the region of £250 million. The

commencing capital debt will therefore represent about one third of this and the balance will be represented by reserves and provisions. A clear financial target has been agreed with the authority. Over the next three years, it will aim to run the business so as to achieve an annual average return of 5 per cent. on current cost capital employed. Reporting profits, before interest at this level, while still remaining competitive, will be a challenge for the authority in the early years of the fund, but not, we believe, an unrealistic one. The financial target will, of course, be reviewed in the light of the authority's trading performance in the initial three-year period and the latest assessment of future prospects.

Overall, the Government expect the new framework to encourage the authority to maintain its excellent scientific and technical reputation, while responding effectively to the increased market and commercial pressures. The attitude of all those working in the authority is crucial to the success of the trading fund, and I pay tribute to the constructive way in which the preparations for it have been put in hand. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Arnold Allen, the chairman of the authority, for his distinguished and effective leadership during this period.

Many of these changes—important though they are—do not require legislation, but placing the authority on a trading fund basis with powers to borrow does, because under the 1954 Act the authority has no such powers, and as an already established body the provisions of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 cannot apply to it. The nine clauses of the Bill therefore provide for the main structure of a trading fund without affecting the essential functions set out in the 1954 Act. In brief, their purpose is as follows.

Clause 1 provides for the assumption by the authority of a commencing debt. This will be a debt related to the value of the authority's net assets at the start of the trading fund. The commencing debt will take the form of a notional loan from the national loans fund, deemed to be made on 1 April 1986, and repayable with interest. The period of repayment will be agreed between the authority and the Secretary of State. A commencing capital debt is a standard feature of trading funds. It reflects the fact that the Government have, in the past, grant-aided the authority so that it has been able to build up its asset base to its present levels. The commencing debt, and the interest on it, is to be repaid by the authority out of its trading profits. I have already described how it will fit into the authority's overall capital structure and financial framework.

Clause 2 defines the authority's borrowing powers. It allows for borrowing from the national loans fund in sterling, and for borrowing from elsewhere in any currency if the Secretary of State, with Treasury approval consents. The purposes for which the authority may borrow are to discharge its functions and meet its obligations, or those of any subsidiary that it might set up. As a trading fund, it is intended that the authority should fund its capital requirements, including working capital, from internally generated funds and borrowing. The amount the authority can borrow will be subject to the overall limits set in clause 3 and to an annual external financing limit set by the Secretary of State with the approval of the Treasury after consultation with the authority.

Clause 3 imposes an initial borrowing limit of £150 million on the authority, prescribes what is to count towards the borrowing limit, and allows for the limit to be increased by order to £200 million if Parliament approves. Such an order would be subject to affirmative resolution. Clause 4 empowers the Secretary of State to lend to the authority and sets out the procedures governing such loans. Clause 5 permits the Treasury to guarantee borrowing by the authority from non-Government sources, and sets out the arrangements to be followed if any such guarantee is called. Clause 6 provides that the authority carry out capital investment and other developments only within plans approved by the Secretary of State.

Clause 7 provides that compensation may be paid to members of the authority for loss of office, for which there is no provision in the 1954 Act. This clause also repeals, as anachronistic, a section of the 1954 Act which requires the Secretary of State to lay a statement before Parliament when the salaries of members of the authority are altered.

Mr. Evans: Can the Minister tell us why the terms of the 1954 Act are regarded as anachronistic— that the terms and conditions and salaries of board members should be laid before Parliament so that they are clearly visible? Will he tell the House also the reason for a new clause which will allow compensation to be paid to any member of the board whose appointment is terminated? Does this not in effect put the present Secretary of State and subsequent Secretaries of State in a position to hire and fire, and to appoint people who better suit their requirements? It seems a peculiar clause to write into a Bill of this nature.

Mr. Goodlad: On the contrary, it is not a peculiar clause. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is no. The answer to the first question is that information about the salaries of members of all boards of statutory and other bodies is set out in the booklet "Public Bodies" published annually by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on behalf of the Management and Personnel Office. Copies of this are placed in the Library of the House. Information on the ranges of salaries of authority board members can also be found in the authority's annual report and accounts, which are laid before Parliament in accordance with the 1954 Act.

This is a small Bill, but it is also a significant one. The effect will be to make the authority more like a nationalised industry, and to give it a greater scope for development than grant-in-aid arrangements can provide. The Government consider it to be the logical outcome of the evolution in the role and activities of the authority over the last 30 years. I should like, at this point, to emphasise again the contribution of all those who work in the authority. Their skills and dedication are the authority's most important asset. The success of the trading fund will owe much to their ability to meet customers' needs and to push forward the frontiers of technology.

We believe that operation as a trading fund, within the financial framework that I have outlined, will provide a sound basis for the future. The authority will be able to contribute still further to the development of civil nuclear power and non-nuclear technologies, while continuing to provide a source of expert advice to Government on a wide range of issues. I believe that the proposals provide an incentive for all concerned, and I commend them to the House.

5.40 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Our debate will be marred because hon. Members have not had access to the full Manley report, which is one of the reasons for the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) made an intervention about that. The Department of Energy was given every opportunity to produce the Manley report, because I tabled a question asking for it to be laid before the House before we debated the Bill. The Minister has some explaining to do. Why is there such obsessive secrecy in the Department of Energy? If it does not release the report, a lasting impression will remain that the Government have something to hide.

To some extent, we endorse the Minister's views. The Bill is not an innocent or mundane Bill; it is important. However, we are also suspicious about it. With a new Bill involving an establishment with at least 14,000 staff and 2,800 qualified scientists and engineers, housed in about 10 sites all over the country, and with a gross expenditure of around £400 million per annum, we need to know a great deal. Legislation may be inanimate, but, faced with such figures, the subject becomes more material. The people and the skills that they have are of the highest importance. That is why we shall want to hear something about the authority's best asset—its work force—and how it will fare under the Bill's proposals.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): The hon. Gentleman has asked how the work force would fare under the Bill. However, how would the work force fare if the motion that the last Labour conference passed by a 1·5 million majority, calling for a halt to the nuclear power programme and the phasing out of existing plants, came into effect?

Mr. Eadie: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman makes his own speech in favour of nuclear energy when we have a debate about that. At the moment, we are discussing the Bill, and I shall be dealing with the staff later.

One of our main suspicions about the Bill is that its provisions for putting the authority on a trading fund basis simply pave the way for future privatisation. In the other place, the Minister said:

"Privatisation of the authority is not a realistic option at this stage." — [*Official Report, House of Lords,* 19 November 1985; Vol. 468, col. 527.]

On 11 February 1985, the Under-Secretary said in the House that there were no plans to privatise the AEA. In the Second Reading debate of 19 November, my noble Friend Lord Stoddart of Swindon, at col. 537 of *Hansard* pressed Lord Gray of Contin in an intervention, and got an assurance that the AEA would not be privatised in the lifetime of this Parliament. We want the Minister to put on record the Government's intentions on privatisation.

Will the hon. Gentleman also assure us that we shall not have privatisation by the back door? Can we have an explanation of what is meant by clause 3(3)? Part of it states:

"If a body corporate ceases to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the Authority, the Secretary of State may, having regard to the extent to which the amounts taken into account for the purposes of subsection (1)".

Clause 3(3) is about the possibility of denationalisation of a subsidiary of the AEA. Does that mean that the authority can be privatised piecemeal? The clause gives the impression that the authority may dispose of a wholly owned subsidiary without reference to Parliament. The Minister will recognise that the matter was raised in the other place on Second Reading. I am not too sure whether it was dealt with or answered satisfactorily. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to this later.

When I questioned the Minister on 11 February 1985, he assured me that a change of trading fund status would mean that there would be no change in accountability to Parliament. However, we did not have a Bill then, only a statement, and there is a whale of a difference. I hope that, under the Bill, commercial confidentiality will not be wheeled in as an excuse for weakening Parliament's role in nuclear matters and keeping from it information that is necessary and vital for its oversight of the authority's affairs.

I have an example of this from the Department of Energy. Commercial confidentiality is preventing me and my constituents from getting information from the Government and the NCB about how much Lothian Estates was paid for houses and subjects in the Lewton grange area when the NCB lease expired in 1982. This is a classic example of a cover-up.

Parliamentary control will be affected by the Bill in one way, contrary to what the Minister has said. Clause 7(2) provides that the duty to lay statements of remuneration and so on of members of the authority is repealed, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North pointed out. Members of Parliament often glean a good deal of information from statistics about salaries and conditions of members of boards. In addition, I notice from the annual report that six members of the board are due to retire this year, and one retired in December last year. No new chairman has been appointed since the retirement of the present chairman was signified on 30 December 1985.

Mr. Evans: I am sure that my hon. Friend appreciates my concern, and I share his, about this issue and about the number of board members who are about to retire. Is my hon. Friend aware that there is some concern among the staff and workers in the industry about the fact that some people on the highest salaries retire or leave the board for one reason or another and then subsequently reappear as consultants, often at very high fees. Surely we should be given more rather than less information about board appointments and people who are hired.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend has raised a good point. There are people who retire from Government service generally at what may be described as a comparatively early age and on adequate pensions and who then go on to other jobs and enjoy higher salaries. Something must be done about this. There should be a self-denying ordinance, if not a denying ordinance, to prevent this from happening.

The Government's record on appointments to all types of board is not a good one. The main qualification of new appointees seems to be that they are either sympathetic to or supporters of the Tory party. We are entitled to ask how the Government propose to appoint or reappoint members of this board. I hope, too, that the Government will let us know who its new chairman will be. I hope that it will not be another merchant banker from the City. We should be told who it is to be before the Bill completes its stages in Parliament. The Minister has a lot of explaining to do on clause 7(2).

One of the most important parts of the Bill is that which deals with the authority's finances. Clause 3 sets the authority's borrowing limit at £150 million, which may,

by order, be increased to £200 million. The borrowing limit is to include the authority's commencing capital debt. What does that entail? At one time, it was thought that it might be £50 million or £100 million. I notice that the hon. Gentleman concurs with the Minister who spoke in another place, because today he has mentioned a figure of £80 million.

Clause 1 refers to consultation with the authority and the approval of the Treasury. As experienced parliamentarians, we know what that means. It means that the icy hand of the Treasury will be on the authority from the start. We are entitled to ask the Minister to state the rate of return expected from the authority. In his speech, he gave some figures. He knows, of course, that 5 per cent. is what is mooted. It is alleged that, based on the likely calculation of its assets, the authority could be surcharged at £13 million from the start. What sort of financial start does that give the new authority? We all know — the Minister referred to this in his speech—that if the rate of return is set too high it could affect staffing levels and indeed salaries, which could be squeezed as the authority strained to meet an unrealistic rate of return.

Another aspect is the risk to research if an unrealistic rate of return is set. I hope that in Committee we will return to this whole question of research.

The Minister must give not only an explanation but some assurances on the issues that I have raised.

Turning to the effect on the fusion programme, the Minister may not be aware of it but I was the Minister responsible for the fusion programme coming to Culham. It was the first joint EEC programme that came to the United Kingdom. I know that this is not the time to discuss the details of fusion technology, but we have heard that the Government may not be as committed to this programme in future as they have been in the past — and how committed they were in the past, I am not very sure. The Minister must take the opportunity in winding up to be as informative as possible about this.

Perhaps the Minister could also fit into his reply more information about the fast breeder reactor programme, which was dealt with in surprising detail by the Minister in the other place. Even since that time, November 1985, it has become much more important because Dounreay has become a focal point of discussion in Scotland since the proposal to have a fuel fabrication and reprocessing facility without a full-scale planning inquiry. We are entitled to an explanation of how it is envisaged that the programme will be managed, and whether greater control of it will pass from the proposed new Atomic Energy Authority to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

This is of great importance to the debate because the chairman of the CEGB, as I understand it, is more or less running around the country saying, "Please privatise us." That would have consequences for this Bill. To some extent, it would make nonsense of what the Minister had to say about safety and about the relationship between the CEGB and the Atomic Energy Authority.

Returning to the composition of the authority's board, it should be seen as completely independent and free of pressure from commercial interests. Its commitment should be to the organisation and its objectives. That being so, part-time members who have a beneficial interest in organisations which have formal contractual arrangements with the authority should not be permitted to serve on the new board. I hope that the Minister will tell us today that the Government take the same view.

I referred earlier to another important aspect, the people who work for the Atomic Energy Authority. As they have told me, they undoubtedly feel that their jobs and their conditions of service would be at risk from commercialisation. When the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority was established in 1954 and when British Nuclear Fuels was hived off in 1971, employees were given a guarantee that their terms and conditions of service would be no worse than those of other civil servants.

The 1953 White Paper even promised salaries

"not seriously out of scale with those paid by other public corporations".

That promise has certainly not been kept. Government pay policy has held salaries down, with the result that the authority is losing professional and scientific staff and is unable to recruit replacements. The people working for the authority need to be assured that their terms and conditions of employment are maintained. Salaries should be at a level at where staff of all grades can be recruited and retained. We need an assurance that the Department of Energy will not impose cash limits on the authority's wages and salaries bill which will cause an unjustified contraction of staffing levels. The staff must not be made sacrificial lambs on the Government's altar of commercialisation.

Nuclear safety cannot and must not be jeopardised by the drive for commercialisation. The public is entitled to expect that the AEA's contribution to nuclear safety will not be compromised by the Government's preoccupation with commercialisation, or the new customer-contractor relationship between the authority and the CEGB. We need an absolute assurance from the Minister of that. He has a duty to outline the safeguards that are intended to ensure that nuclear safety will not suffer as a result of the Bill.

The Minister's reply to some of my questions will determine our attitude to the Bill and its progress through the House. We do not intend to obstruct its Second Reading, but I give no commitment about what our attitude will be at future stages before the Bill leaves the House.

6.1 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I welcome in principle the creation of a trading fund arrangement for the Atomic Energy Authority. Indeed, many aspects of a public corporation are envisaged in the Bill. Obviously, I welcome the creation of genuine financial objectives—the introduction of the profit principle into the company's operations, and the opportunity which that gives to provide a disciplined and commercial approach to its customers.

None of that in any way influences one in saying that the authority during the 31 years of its existence has enjoyed an outstanding record on research into nuclear power. Nevertheless, during those years there have been so many changes that it seems appropriate that the Government should have instituted an inquiry into the work of the authority, and advanced the proposals in the Bill. The changes have included hiving off what is now British Nuclear Fuels plc, and what was Radio Chemical Laboratories and is now Amersham International. Both became trading fund organisations, and Amersham International went one stage further along that well-trodden path and became a private company.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, will he say something more about that in respect of the authority?

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

RCL went into the private sector as Amersham International, but BNFL has not. Clearly, what the Manley report said in private is of interest. I would not disagree with Opposition Members who suggest that the Government could have been a little less coy about the contents of the evidence that was not released. The summary of the report stated:

"privatisation of the Authority as an entity, while possible in principle, is not in practice a realistic option at present."

Conservative Members who in principle are in favour of privatisation feel entitled to ask why that was said, and why the Government are not prepared to consider the further development of the company into a private one.

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that the Government have not published all the evidence because the arguments against privatisation were, obviously, compelling? If they had been in favour of privatisation, not only would the Government have produced the report, but they would have privatised the UKAEA.

Mr. Coombs: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to guess the contents of the report, as I am. However, I seek the truth about the matter, and then we could discuss it. I should like the Minister to say something more about the subject when he replies. I seek to draw his attention to the authority's anomalous position in that it will operate in competitive markets in a halfway-house position which could make it difficult to compete with private companies.

The Bill proposes a change in the funding for both the major reactor research programmes, although the fast reactor programme's change of funding is to come later. Either way, the extra cost will fall on the generating boards, and ultimately on their customers. That must have an effect on prices, however small, and it is important that the Government explain it clearly to the public. They should not simply say how the changes will affect prices, but should spell out positively the benefits that the public enjoy from a nuclear power programme which is properly researched by the authority.

I wish to concentrate on two aspects of the authority's work inasmuch as they will be affected by the Bill—the research programme to improve the efficiency of nuclear power generation, and safety. In several respects we see the potential for improvements — in efficiency in the development of reactors, the improvement of fuel, and the recycling of fuel. All stand to benefit the generating boards, which will be major customers of the authority. Clearly, it is in their commercial interests to support these programmes in order to remain competitive, not only with other fuels in the United Kingdom, but in world markets for electricity generation.

I shall give the House some examples. It has been estimated that a 5 per cent. improvement in the efficiency of the reactors of the present generation would yield £50 million per nuclear power station. It has been estimated that five years' additional life per reactor would be worth a total of £600 million. It is being estimated that a 10 per cent. improvement in the efficiency of fuel would generate £15 million per annum of additional income. When we consider the fuel recycling research programme we see that if the fast reactor programme is successfully introduced on a commercial basis, the recycling of plutonium and depleted uranium — that is the isotope known as uranium 238—could generate an improvement that would be represented by the equivalent of one tonne of uranium 238 equalling 1·5 million tonnes of coal. Mathematicians in the House may care to consider the implications of that ratio. Clearly, the Government will benefit also because nuclear power must be a vital element in their overall fuel policy for the future, and it is important that the Government should demonstrate their commitment in that respect.

Reference has already been made to underlying research — what I should like to refer to as "initiative" research — which involves knowing what the customer needs before he gets around to asking for it. Should the cost of that research be borne by the large customers of the authority, by those customers that it wins in a competitive environment, or by the Government? The answer seems to be a combination of all three, although I accept that the first is logical and that the third is inevitable. I ask the Government to think about the effect that increased overheads to fund the underlying or initiative research programme might have on the kind of bids that the authority would be in a position to make in a competitive environment.

I should like to point out to the House, as if it needed to be reminded, that safety is of critical importance in the lives of us all. BNFL, the generating boards and the authority need sizeable investment in safety research, which of course is in the hands of the safety and reliability directorate within the authority. As a good employer and for the sake of public relations, it is important that the industry maintains the highest standards of safety and that it should be seen to be playing its part in achieving them. The Government are involved, particularly through the nuclear installations inspectorate, and I am pleased to note that £20 million has been earmarked for this purpose. We have to accept, whether we like it or not, that there is still a great deal of public concern and confusion, even fear, about the use of civil nuclear power. I think that the resistance that is borne of that confusion and fear is one of the prime reasons why the United Kingdom lags behind other countries in its nuclear capacity.

A table published in October 1985 shows that in 1985 France was estimated to have generated 65 per cent. of its electricity from nuclear sources, Belgium 55 per cent., Taiwan 46 per cent., Bulgaria 29 per cent., the Federal Republic of Germany 25·5 per cent. and Japan 24 per cent. The United Kingdom is still well down the list at 20·5 per cent. That is a disappointing figure for the United Kingdom and one which I know the Government seek to have improved. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that the Sizewell B inquiry has been held up for so long, and one can only hope that the results will be published in the near future.

People still say, "Yes, that is all very well, but what if something terrible were to happen?" Those of us who believe that the nuclear industry has an important part to play clearly have a public relations exercise to perform and that can be based only on the maintenance of the highest standards that the available technology of the day will allow. However, the public is entitled to an explanation that the advantages of nuclear power far outweigh the disadvantages. It is cheaper, and a brief prepared by the authority sets this point in context. It explains that a single bar electric fire consuming 1 kilowatt of energy can run on one pound of coal for one hour, on one pound of oil for one and a half hours, on one pound of uranium from

one of the present generation of reactors for two and a half years and on one pound of uranium from the fast breeder reactors of the future for 150 years.

I invite the House to compare one pound of coal for one hour with one pound of uranium in a fast reactor for 150 years to see the value in terms of a reduced cost electricity supply. It is not only cheaper, but cleaner. Those of us who are concerned about the conservation of the environment and can see the problems of acid rain must surely appreciate that this is a power source which does not pollute the atmosphere, and the minimal risk associated with the nuclear industry—much as it is overplayed by some opponents—is a risk well worth taking for the benefits that will accrue.

It is wrong to compare the military and civil uses of nuclear energy. Few people today have not benefited from radioactivity, especially in medicine. I hope that, for those reasons, the Government will be seen to support safety research up to the hilt.

I welcome this Bill as a fresh beginning for the work of the authority. It might be appropriate to suggest not only a new start in commercial terms but even a new name, as the title "Atomic Energy Authority" smacks more of 1954 than of 1986. Something along the lines of "British Nuclear Research" would emphasise the modern tasks that we ask the authority to undertake, and might be more appropriate for its future development. Under whichever name, the quality of the work done by all the staff of the authority ensures that it will have a healthy future—no doubt, aided and abetted by the Bill.

6.16 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) has, I think, illustrated the importance of this measure and the nuclear industry. The House will be grateful to him for that.

I have two immediate constituency interests in this industry. The first arises from the fact that we have contractors and designers of nuclear installations, and the second from the fact that over the last couple of years there has been the proposal for dumping nuclear waste at Billingham. That was the other side of the coin. Thankfully, that threat has now gone away, but it illustrated to the people of our area the difficulties as well as the benefits that flow from this industry.

I begin by joining other hon. Members in paying tribute to the work of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. It has a good reputation for great professionalism, and it has made a major contribution over the years. In this controversial matter it has managed to maintain that reputation for professionalism throughout, and I think that we should all pay tribute to it for that. We support the Government's proposal for the establishment of a trading fund for the authority, but, having said that, I want to make it clear that we should strongly oppose any suggestion, such as that made by the hon. Member for Swindon, that it should at some future stage be privatised.

A case can be made for a trading fund, because it brings with it the right combination of commercial behaviour, customer and public responsiveness and accountability. On those grounds, the Bill's proposals and the development of the authority as a trading fund will help to make the authority's activities more efficient. The Bill will make it responsive to commercial and public pressures, and accountable to the public. We welcome the proposals and will support them in their passage through the House, but because of the authority's strategic nature and the degree of public concern about the industry, we should reject the idea of privatisation.

I should like to refer to public concern about the nuclear industry, which is a combination of confusion, fear and genuine misunderstanding of the dangers. It is often difficult to disentangle those different attitudes. There is no doubt — the United States illustrates this in the clearest way—that public concern is an important factor in the industry's future.

As the hon. Member for Swindon said, it is vital that the authority's work on nuclear safety, especially nuclear waste research, is maintained and supported by the Government. Until we have lanced this boil of the dispersal of nuclear waste, it will, understandably and rightly, continue to act as a brake on the industry's development. I urge the Department of the Environment to proceed apace with the Department of Energy and the other bodies involved to come up with firm proposals and carry them through as speedily as possible, taking public opinion with them as far as possible. This will bring about progress in the industry and will mean that people will not be worried—as they are in the United States—to such an extent that a major brake is applied to developments.

The Bill proposes to establish a new financial structure for the authority. This consists of the financing of capital debt and loans given by the Government through the Public Works Loan Board to provide a commercial structure for the financing of the body. This imposes a rather rigid requirement. Will the Under-Secretary of State consider the proposition that was made in another place that part of the capital should consist of public dividend capital? This would provide flexibility and greater freedom for the management than would a loan.

Will the Under-Secretary of State consider also the proposal that was made in the other place to widen the scope of the authority's activities to include other aspects of energy research and promotion of new fuels and power sources? It is difficult to distinguish between the different sources of energy and different fuels. There is a tremendous overlap in energy research. We believe that this is an aspect, especially on the conservation side, where the authority's expertise could make a major contribution that would help the Government and the whole country.

Another aspect of concern is consultation with staff —both those in trade unions and those who are not unionised. The change over seems to provide an opportunity for management to draw staff into the fullest possible consultations on the authority's activities. I should be grateful if the Minister would comment on the proposal to ensure that that consultation occurs.

There is a widespread feeling that in the past the authority and the Department of Energy have been more reticent than they might have been in publishing information. One reason why so many fears abound is that there is not as much openness in Britain as there often is in other countries. Inevitably this leads to suspicion and lack of trust when information on developments in the industry comes from the publication of the facts and details in other countries rather than from the authority and the Department. I appeal to Ministers to ensure that the authority is as open as possible—as open as security or, more likely, commercial reasons, allow—in publishing information and giving as much information about their activities as they can.

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will comment on those points. We look forward to considering the Bill in Committee, when we can test these matters in more detail with amendments.

6.24 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): A substantial proportion of the 14,000 staff of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority live and work in my constituency at Harwell and Culham, and on their behalf I welcome the Bill. For them, it constitutes a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to prove the cost-effectiveness of their work in a more competitive and commercial trading environment. The opportunity is to take advantage of the loosening of the bonds of Treasury control that the Bill represents.

The best way to look at the Bill is to see it in its historical perspective. Like all dynamic institutions, the authority is in a process of continuing evolution, and the Bill marks an important—but not a final—stage. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State referred to a number of landmark dates—the establishment of the authority in 1954, confined simply to nuclear research and financed exclusively by the Government; the broadening out into non-nuclear research areas after 1965; the hiving-off in 1971 of some of the authority's commercially successful developments; and the removal of weapons work in 1973.

The Bill is a further stage in this evolution. It reinforces the trend to broaden the financial basis of the authority's work from the Department of Energy to the nuclear industry as a whole. It strengthens the trend to research and development in the authority on a customer-contractor basis. It builds on the experience and management capability that has been developed in the authorities over the past 30 years to enable it to operate more commercially, to carry forward its surpluses and deficits from year to year, and to borrow subject to an overall limit.

I dwell particularly on the evolutionary character of these developments because, at the time of the commissioning of the Manley report, there was a great deal of speculation about the possibility of radical changes in the authority. We detected some echoes of this in the speech of the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). I am pleased, but not surprised, at the vote of confidence that the Manley report appears to have given to the authority, and at the confidence in the authority which the Government show in the Bill.

Having welcomed the Bill, I shall make three points about it. First, I hope that the Government will not lose sight of its fundamental purpose — to enable the authority to maintain and improve its work in developing and transferring technology to industry. I understand that the authority is not dissatisfied with the proposed financial starting arrangements, for the capital base and for the proposed return on capital. So I hope that we shall not have in Committee the discussions that occurred in another place on that point.

But I believe that these financial arrangements must —I am sure that they will—be kept under review so that, as the authority, the Government and the authority's customers gain experience of the operation of the trading fund, these financial arrangements will not get in the way of the rational progress of the organisation and its work. The same may be said of the range of responsibilities conferred on the authority by this and previous legislation. This was also the subject of a proposed amendment in another place, but I do not believe that a change is necessary and I am glad that the hon. Member for Midlothian did not press the point in his speech. I understand that the authority is confident that it can operate successfully within the present broad limits of its responsibilities, but, as with the financial arrangements, I think that this matter should be kept under review so that, after the new trading fund comes into operation, it does not find that it is inhibited in pursuing commercially viable research and development opportunities.

My second point concerns the authority's underlying research programme, much of which takes place at Harwell. I do not share the scepticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) about this work. It costs £20 million plus a year, and of course this is a time of excessive financial constraint in resources for science.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the early-day motion on the "Save British Science" campaign now before the House. Consequently the authority's research budget has attracted the beady eyes of other scientists. But I was privileged to take part in what I believe was the first ever visitation of Harwell and Culham by the Advisory Board on Research Councils in 1983, and all the grand panjandrums there assembled were, I am glad to say, impressed by what they saw. I understand that negotiations about the proposed levy to finance the authority's underlying research are virtually completed. I hope that BNFL and the CEGB, as well as the Department of Energy, will show the right support for this work.

Thirdly I wish to focus on the position of the authority's staff, many of whom are my constituents. I support the idea of employee participation mentioned by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) and I think that the authority will stay in the vanguard of progressive employers in that regard. But I think that it is dangerous to overload the new trading fund with additional requirements just as it is getting off to a delicate start.

On the other hand, I believe that the hon. Member for Midlothian is right about the important issue of pay and conditions. I see problems emerging, especially in the ability of the authority to "recruit, retain and motivate" staff of the right calibre. I can testify to the fact that motivation is high; but the ability to retain good staff is declining. Over the past two years there has been a sharp increase in the quit rate at the Atomic Energy Authority, and it has doubled at Harwell over the past two years, expecially among the younger staff and notably in computing and electronics. The difficulty of retaining staff spills over into recruitment, because there is a loss of the skilled and experienced staff required to train recruits who are often taken in with inadequate training from the schools or universities.

I welcome "supplementary payments" as a way of addressing this problem, but they cannot be extended and multiplied indefinitely. I am pleased to say the they are not yet the subject of resentment within the authority—but they could become so. There is also a danger that we shall end up with a byzantine pay structure. More important is the introduction of unified grading. This will end the existing pay discrimination between administrative, professional, technical and scientific grades.

I was pleased to be able to give some parliamentary support to that work, but I am disappointed about what appears to be the long lead time that is being envisaged for the introduction of unified grading. I understand that four years is envisaged for engineers and five years for the scientists and scientific officers. I think that this is too long, and I hope that the Government will attempt to shorten that time.

The Bill and the whole concept of a trading fund challenge all those who work in the Atomic Energy Authority to take full advantage of the greater freedom they will have to operate commercially. In due course, this new freedom is bound to raise the question of the costs and benefits to the authority and its employees of the long-established link between authority and Civil Service pay and conditions. That link has no statutory basis. It is a matter of custom and practice, and I believe that there may be advantages for all concerned if the link were to be phased out. That could offer greater flexibility to management and the prospect of greater reward for the staff. Of course we must enter the caveat that, in a commercial situation, salaries can fall as well as rise in value.

The main point is that in a commercial situation closer links can be established between performance and reward. That is what the Bill and the trading fund it establishes are all about.

6.35 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I express sceptical neutrality about the Bill. Two miles from my home in the village of Culcheth sits the headquarters of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and, together with the headquarters of BNFL, there are thousands of people employed in the industry who work on that site, including my son. The headquarters was in my constituency for 10 years, until parliamentary redistribution. Although it is no longer in my constituency, many hundreds of my constituents work at the Atomic Energy Authority. I frequently meet the workers — manual, non-manual, scientific and others—at the Daten social club in the village, and it is fair to say that the view of the work force at all levels in Culcheth and Risley is one of sceptical neutrality.

There is some pleasure at the fact that the authority is not being privatised, although there is some bewilderment as to why the Manley report was not published in full. I raised that matter in an intervention with the Minister. I think the main reason the report was not published was that the Government decided that it was not in their interest to publish it because the arguments against privatisation were strong, if not overwhelming. It would probably have given us ammunition to use against other privatisation measures.

It is a pity that the report has not been published. The people who work in the industry are upset that it has not been published, because non-publication precludes a full and proper debate in Parliament and in the country about not only the future of the authority but the future of nuclear power. That is a pity, because one of the reasons for the declining support in the concept of nuclear power is the inordinate secrecy and bureaucracy that surrounds the industry. It is no good the Minister shaking his head. I have met that time after time, not only under this Government but under my own. I shall be even-handed in my criticism of the Department of Energy and not merely make a party political point.

The excessive use of the Official Secrets Act 1911 bedevils the industry. There will be no change in that respect. All the employees of the industry will still be covered by that Act but the nuclear power industry requires more openness and less secrecy. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) about the debate and vote at the Labour party conference. He seemed to want to make a debating point. He should be as concerned about the vote as I was because many unions which have always voted in favour of nuclear power are moving away from it. That is to be deplored. The reason for the shift in attitudes should concern us all, because there is a growing fear about the future use of nuclear power in the country.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) described the proposal to bury nuclear waste in Billingham as a threat. He did not tell us why it was a threat. It is that sort of fear which people are beginning to express, and on which they are not receiving answers that is damaging public support for nuclear power.

Many issues could be raised on the Bill. It is a tragedy that the House rarely debates nuclear power. The last major debate in which I took part was in 1974 when we debated the choice of a nuclear reactor. We have not debated the issue from that day to this. It cannot be said that the House bores itself or involves itself heavily in a subject that is of great concern to all our constituents.

I am concerned about the fact that the Bill will reduce parliamentary scrutiny. I am worried about clause 7 for I suspect that we shall lose the power of parliamentary scrutiny in other areas. That is likely to happen at a time when there should be much more parliamentary scrutiny of the activities of the nuclear power industry.

I am concerned about clause 6, which appears to give enormous powers to the Secretary of State to direct the new authority. I am not sure whether the actions of the Secretary of State will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny, but perhaps the Minister will tell us when he replies. The clause will strengthen the Secretary of State's powers and weaken Parliament's.

The Minister has told us that there will be an annually agreed programme letter between the authority — presumably its contractors — and the Department of Energy. I hope that the Minister will tell us whether Parliament will get a glimpse of the letter. Parliament and the people are entitled to know the contents of such documents.

Will the Bill clear up the doubt and uncertainty that has bedevilled the nuclear power industry for so many years? I suggest that the industry has been clouded and bedevilled with doubt since the 1960s, when the initial AGR programme was first agreed. Since then we have had nothing but twists and turns. There have been a succession of Secretaries of State under different Governments but no Secretary of State has cleared up the doubts and uncertainties about the industry.

We are nowhere near the integrated energy policy that we used to talk about 20 or 25 years ago. In that context, I suggest that the Bill represents a lost opportunity of considerable proportions. It could have formed a key role in the creation of a new energy authority that would have led to an integrated energy policy. Surely that would have been better for the nation and the people. It would be far better to establish an energy authority which would move

[Mr. John Evans]

towards the introduction of an integrated fuel policy than to continue the piecemeal methods that have been adopted so far, which include privatising British Gas, crucifying the coal industry over the past two or three years, leaving the North sea depletion rate to market forces and the measure that is before us, which will establish a hybrid organisation for the Atomic Energy Authority.

If we were prepared to move towards such an energy authority, the UKAEA would have tremendous responsibility in the light of its expertise in so many areas, apart from those that relate directly to nuclear power. It has the ability and the skilled scientific and engineering forces to allow it to develop new techniques in biofuels and wave power. A new area could be opened up to us if we approached these matters with some imagination rather than what appear to be excuses on the part of Department of Energy Ministers due to their inability to privatise the authority.

If we moved down that track, we would be able to kill a notion which has developed over the past three or four years, which is that the Government are determined to increase the capacity of the nuclear power industry so that the coal industry can be wound down. The Minister will probably deny that that is the Government's intention, and he will probably be right to do so, but he cannot deny that the feeling which I have described has grown considerably over the past few years. It was seen as an additional reason for the resolution which was agreed to at last year's Labour party conference. There is a feeling that nuclear power will be used by the Conservative Government to help further to run down the coal industry. That is not true, and it has never been true, for there is a great future for coal, but the future of the coal industry would be better served if there were a clearer understanding among the public of the part that nuclear power will have to play in our energy policy.

It is essential that the research and development capability of the authority is not hindered in any way. It must be accepted that R and D is extremely expensive and that it rarely results in a return of capital, but I trust that there will be no suggestion that the vital research and development that goes on within the authority will not be diminished by any reduction of the funds that are made available to it by the Department. Such a reduction would be a disaster for the authority and a further nail in the coffin of public confidence in the industry.

The disposal of nuclear waste is paramount in the minds of many. Various methods have been used in the past—dumping at sea, storage tanks and burying within dry land sites—but they are proving increasingly unacceptable to many people. It is all very well to talk about foreign countries and the percentage share of nuclear power of their energy industries, but the evidence is that the populations of other countries are becoming increasingly concerned about waste disposal. There must be further massive research into disposal. We shall not solve the problem by trying to find a few more dry land sites where the waste can be buried, unless we can find a desert somewhere which is population-free.

For far too long the work force of the authority has been subject to the whims of various departmental decisions, and often to the whims of the authority's board and the decisions that it has made. It is essential that the wages, terms and conditions of service and job security of the employees, both manual and non-manual, are safeguarded. I trust that the proposed new format for the authority will not initiate a rush to privatisation methods that will lead to putting all the cleaning staff, canteen staff and maintenance staff out to private contractors, who will pay lower wages and offer inferior conditions.

I should be grateful if the Minister would say something about those who have no great skills and no degrees as well as those who are highly qualified scientists, or others who work at the highest levels within the authority. We must realise that the lifestyle and the quality of life of those with lesser skills and qualifications depend on their employment, and continued employment, within the authority.

If the Bill is suitably amended, I suspect that it will prove to provide a new dawn for the authority. Handled correctly—I doubt very much whether it will be—it could mark a new beginning. The authority needs a new beginning, because for too long it has been stifled. I hope that it will enjoy one, but I rather suspect—I hope that I am proved wrong—that the Bill is the first step in what the Government hope will be a successful march to privatisation once they have the measure on the statute book.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Civil nuclear power has become an essential and established part of Britain's energy requirements. By 1984, more than 18 per cent. of electricity supplied in the United Kingdom came from a nuclear source. Jobs in the United Kingdom nuclear industry—I use the term in its widest sense—total about 100,000. I make no apology to the hon. Member for St. Helen's, North (Mr. Evans) for introducing a political note when I questioned the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). It is ironic that they should question some of the minutiae of the Bill and the detailed terms and conditions of employment for the Atomic Energy Authority's staff.

If the motion passed by an overwhelming majority six months ago at the Labour party conference takes effect, we shall have no nuclear power programme. All nuclear plants will be phased out. That is a political fact and I make no apologies for mentioning it. There would certainly be no concerns about the details of safety as there would be no nuclear power.

When the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) says that we will not divide the House and we will monitor the progress of the Bill, he should make it clear whether that "we" refers to the Social Democratic party or to the whole of the alliance. As I understand it, the Liberal party policy is to phase out nuclear power and have fluidised bed systems.

The hon. Member for St. Helen's, North (Mr. Evans) is correct when he says that there have been doubts and uncertainties for many years under all Governments. These doubts and uncertainties are not fuelled by Conservative Members who believe in nuclear power and how essential that is. It is fuelled by the doubts expressed by Opposition parties and their intrinsic hostility to nuclear energy.

The proportion of nuclear electricity in this country will exceed 18 per cent. and reach 21 per cent. when the three new nuclear power stations most recently linked to the national grid reach full power. There will be a further increase to 25 per cent. when stations now under construction are completed.

All of that has been achieved within an excellent record on nuclear power so why is there a need for a change? There are sound commercial advantages to the Bill. The move towards a more commercial style of management will offer the industry greater opportunities both for its own development and for the work it undertakes. The plan contained in the Bill will mean that cash surpluses earned by the authority will be invested in the future of the organisation's business. The main sphere of the authority's work will continue to be research and the support of the United Kingdom nuclear power programme, and it will also continue to act as the main adviser to Government.

A balanced energy strategy for the United Kingdom must take full account of the need for diverse fuel supplies, and that is crucial in view of the events of the past two years. We all know that it would be unwise to base Britain's electricity generation upon a single fuel. At the moment the United Kingdom electricity system is dominated by coal-fired generators. Under such circumstances there is a definite need and an important role for a cost-effective nuclear component. Nuclear power, as we all know, offers a safe, clean, cheap and secure source of electricity. Most major electricity utilities in the world have decided that nuclear technology is the most cost-effective means of meeting future generation needs.

Nuclear research and development will become increasingly important as the world energy market expands and as nuclear power will not be the only possible solution to energy needs. Therefore, it is essential that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is at the forefront of any progress made in that important scientific field.

That brings me to several important questions which I hope my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy will consider in his summing up. These questions relate to Dounreay. I have a personal interest in Dounreay as I have family in that part of the world. I also have a constituency interest as I believe that most of the fuel moved between Sellafield and Dounreay may be transported through my constituency.

The fast reactor and the fuel cycle project are vital to this country. I believe that £100 million worth of business is tied up in that research project. Britain is at the forefront of that technology although, as one wag said at the nuclear forum I attended recently, we ought not to be in the forefront, we should be second and therefore do it better. That is why the Americans are so successful.

My particular questions concerning Dounreay are as follows. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the project will be an integrated European collaborative project or is there any possibility that the United Kingdom may try to go it alone?

Will my hon. Friend comment on people's worries about discharges into the Pentland firth? Will the discharges be as low as at Sellafield, or will they be as low as they will be at Sellafield? My hon. Friend will know that millions of pounds are being spent at the reprocessing plant at Sellafield on drastically reducing discharges into the Solway firth and the Irish sea.

Will my hon. Friend comment on the transport of nuclear fuel? Will there be any substantial changes to transport arrangements, whether by land, sea or air which already exist between Dounreay and Sellafield and which have worked most effectively without any hazard for the past 30 years?

The Dounreay project is very important to Britain. I hope my hon. Friend will deal with these questions and that he thinks it appropriate to deal with them in relation to the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend can allay some of these worries which are causing unnecessary anxiety locally. If he manages to do that then both sides of the House should welcome this admirable Bill.

6.58 pm

Mr. Eadie: I had thought that the Minister was going to reply first. I wanted to hear his answers to the points that have already been raised.

Some Conservative Members seem to act in the spirit of the best anti-nuclear lobby in this country. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) that those Conservative Members would frighten the people of this country to death when they start to talk about privatisation and passing over research and development and technology into the hands of private industry.

It is wrong to say that people are not concerned about the effluent associated with nuclear power stations. One is living in cloud cuckoo land if one imagines that there is a great enthusiasm on the people's part about nuclear power and that they are not concerned about the hazards and dangers of nuclear power.

The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has been doing a lot of research and development work. People have some confidence in that organisation because of its record, but then Conservative Members say that we should consider passing the whole thing to private enterprise. At least the Minister did not say that but it is important that he makes some comment on that.

Of course there should have been some discussion in the Bill about the non-nuclear research aspect of the activities of the authority. The whole question and philosophy of research and development, the idea that one can have research and development on the cheap, that one can forecast the developments that will arise and that they will be cheap, and the philosophy that one can always back winners is wrong, because if one always backs winners there will be no research and development. The purpose of research and development is to make discoveries. Sometimes there are disappointments and work and research must commence again.

As my hon. Friends have said, there is a good opportunity to change the whole direction of the authority in the Bill. There may be an opportunity in Committee to improve the Bill. We may have the chance to lay to rest for ever the ghost of privatisation and give the enthusiasm which the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) mentioned through the authorities to the people who work there. I must say that I have not seen that great enthusiasm in the people that I met.

6.59 pm

Mr. Goodlad: I should like to take up the more important points raised in this helpful debate. Hon. Members have mentioned the publication of the Manley report. As the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will know from his very distinguished term of office in Room 1255 at the Department of Energy, it is not normal practice to publish confidential advice to Ministers. The conclusions and recommendations of the report are summarised fully in the press notice issued by the Department of Energy on 3 October 1984, a copy of which

[Mr. Goodlad]

was placed in the Library of the House. We should not have been able to have such a full, interesting and helpful debate today without that report.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) mentioned the ghost of privatisation and asked me about the significance of clause 3(3) of the Bill which gives the Secretary of State power to reduce the authority's borrowing limit if a body ceases to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the authority. That does not have the sinister intent that the hon. Gentleman may imagine. As he can see from clause 3(1), the borrowings of any wholly owned subsidiary of the authority count towards the borrowing limit but those of any body in which the Atomic Energy Authority has less than a 100 per cent. stake do not, unless the borrowing is guaranteed. That is in line with general nationalised industry practice.

The authority has no wholly owned subsidiaries at present, but if, for the sake of argument, one was set up to exploit a nuclear invention and it was decided that some private venture capital should be introduced to help the development and to aid the transfer of technology, the company would cease to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the authority and under clause 3(1) the borrowings of such a company would cease to count against the borrowing limit, even though the authority remained a shareholder. The Secretary of State might then wish to reduce the authority's borrowing limit by an amending order.

With regard to the chairmanship, the Secretary of State is concerned to ensure that the best possible person is appointed to succeed Mr. Allen. The role of the chairman is important, especially in view of the changes being made in the authority's operations. The urgency of the matter is fully recognised and I expect my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make an announcement shortly, certainly before the start of the trading fund.

The hon. Member for Midlothian mentioned the authority's fusion activities which started during his tenure of office as a Minister. He also referred to the JET project. The Government remain committed to that project. As I said in my statement early last year, a substantial programme will be maintained at the authority's own laboratory at Culham.

On pay and conditions for all staff employed by the authority, I agree that these must be sufficient to enable the authority to recruit and retain staff. The contract of employment for non-industrial employees includes a provision that pay and conditions should be no less favourable than those for analogous grades in the Civil Service, due allowance being made for factors peculiar to the authority. It would not be for the Government to suggest any change in those arrangements. They are a matter for the authority and its staff side. I assure hon. Members, however, that the Department has no intention of imposing specific cash limits on the authority's salaries and wages bill.

Nuclear safety, as I said in opening the debate, is of the utmost importance and it will in no way be adversely affected by the move to a trading fund. The British nuclear industry has an excellent safety record — more than a quarter of a century of safe, civil nuclear power. In no other industry, I believe, has so much time and money been devoted to safety, and rightly so. We expect the authority to continue its contribution to maintaining high standards of nuclear safety in this country. The Government attach importance to the authority's independent capability in this area and we expect to fund some £20 million of safety-related research and development by the authority in 1986-87.

With regard to the 5 per cent. return and its relationship with the commencing date, I confirm that we expect the commencing capital debt to be about £80 million. Servicing a debt of that size and the additional working capital required for the trading fund could cost the authority some £10 million per year, depending on interest rates. The financial target of a 5 per cent. return on current cost capital employed at £250 million would be achieved if the authority could declare a profit of about £12·5 million before interest: it is in no sense a surcharge on the authority. It is merely a target profit out of which the authority will pay interest on its debts.

The hon. Member for Midlothian and the hon. Member for Stockton South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) and others mentioned consultation on plans and programmes. The consultation arrangements are based on the joint bodies — the authority Whitley council for non-industrial employees and the National Joint Industrial Council for industrial employees. These bodies consider and discuss annually reports on the authority's present and future programmes and take regular reports on programme developments and plans at each establishment. The authority does not expect the operation of the trading fund to require any major changes to its procedures for consultation and negotiation with the staff and trade union sides.

The new corporate planning procedures associated with the trading fund will require a new approach and the authority recently put detailed proposals to the staff and trade union sides. These allow for discussion of the authority's annual medium-term corporate plan, which sets out detailed business plans for the next five years, and for a staff and trade union side input into the authority's strategic review, to be carried out every other year starting this year, which will determine a broad strategic framework for 10 years ahead.

The hon. Member for Midlothian mentioned management for the fast reactor programme. I assure him that the change to a trading fund will in no way affect the management of that crucial programme. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the fast reactor reprocessing application, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). I cannot comment on the merits of the specific proposal, which will be the subject of the public inquiry starting in April. Hon. Members may recall, however, the open letter which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of the authority on 21 May last year, in which he said that the Government considers that the fast reactor, which is 50 times more efficient in the use of uranium than thermal reactors, will be of major strategic significance for the United Kingdom and the world's future energy supplies. The United Kingdom is among world leaders in this technology as a result of the successful research and development programme undertaken by the Atomic Energy Authority at Dounreay.

The Government also recognise that substantial resources are needed to achieve commercialisation and that some international sharing of the cost is desirable. Since January 1984, the United Kingdom has been involved in research and development collaboration in Europe. To achieve the fast reactor's full potential,

commercial demonstration is required not only of the reactor but also of the fuel cycle. A demonstration reprocessing plant will therefore be needed. The United Kingdom is a strong contender for that plant and the Government see advantages in siting it in this country subject to the necessary planning, safety and environmental consents being granted. This will enable BNFL and the AEA to build on their long experience in this sphere. It will also provide job opportunities during construction and operation and potentially in the longer term.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border referred to safety. The safety of nuclear materials in transit is a matter for the Department of Transport, but in general safety is inherent in the package design and does not depend for its effectiveness on the method of transport or on routeing considerations. My hon. Friend also referred to discharges. The AEA and BNFL have said in their planning applications that the quantities and activity levels of liquid discharges from Dounreay will not increase as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed plant. Discharges from the permitted establishment at Dounreay are less than 10 per cent. of existing authorised levels.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) raised the question of public dividend capital. The AEA does not meet the Government's usual criteria for public dividend capital, which is normally available only to public sector bodies subject to considerable fluctuations in returns due to their trading conditions and the nature of their assets — for example, British Shipbuilders. That is not the case with the AEA.

The hon. Member for Midlothian and the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) referred to radioactive waste. The Government will continue to ensure that all necessary steps are taken for the safe management of the radioactive waste which already exists and that which may be created in future. The authority carries out extensive research and development programmes on the management of radioactive waste and other nuclear materials and I do not expect the United Kingdom nuclear programme to be affected by inadequate research in that area.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South mentioned extending the authority's remit to other power and fuel sources. Under the Science and Technology Act 1965 the Secretary of State already has power to require the authority to undertake research and development in specific non-nuclear areas, which could include the production of fuels and power sources. Indeed, a requirement dating back as far as April 1974 already enables the authority

"to undertake scientific research into the provision, distribution and use of energy resources and associated technology".

A number of hon. Members asked how much money the underlying research levy would produce, whether it is enough for an adequate programme and whether it will affect the authority's competitive condition. The Department of Energy will be contributing more than £16 million in 1986-87 by a 10 per cent. levy on the nuclear research and development done under programme letters. With contributions from other customers, this should provide funds for an underlying research programme of about £25 million overall, which would be similar in size to the authority's present programme. I do not believe that these arrangements will have a significant effect on the authority's competitive position.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North suggested that we should change the authority into an energy authority. We have no such plans. The authority review concluded that there was a continuing need in the United Kingdom for a body of expertise like the authority's. The authority's raison d'etre is high quality research and development. Its expertise has widened over the years since the Science and Technology Act 1965. It now covers many non-nuclear areas as well. We see no case for changing the role of the authority into that of an energy authority to run an integrated energy policy for the United Kingdom.

The aims of the Government's energy policy are clear. There should be adequate and secure supplies of energy available and the supplies should be available in the forms that consumers want at the lowest practical long-term cost. The Government believe that those aims are best secured not by requiring the supply industries to follow an inflexible centrally imposed blueprint, but by responsiveness to market forces.

I have tried to answer briefly the main points raised by hon. Members. If there are any points that I have missed, I shall endeavour to write to my hon. Friends, who have made knowledgeable speeches, before the Committee stage. I am conscious of the fact that we are trespassing on the time of the next debate.

I remind the House that the purpose of the Bill is to place the authority on a trading fund basis from 1 April, with a revised capital structure and powers to borrow. We believe that that will encourage a more commercial approach and greater efficiency while preserving the key role of the authority as an independent United Kingdom source of high quality nuclear research and development. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

ATOMIC ENERGY AUTHORITY BILL *[LORDS] [MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Atomic Energy Authority Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make loans to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority ("the Authority"), subject to the limit that the aggregate amount outstanding in respect of—

(a) money borrowed—

(i) by the Authority or a wholly owned subsidiary of theirs, or

(ii) for the repayment of which the Authority or a wholly owned subsidiary of theirs is a guarantor or surety

other than money borrowed from a wholly owned subsidiary or from the Authority,

(b) the Authority's commencing capital debt, and

(c) sums issued by the Treasury in fulfilment of guarantees of borrowing by the Authority or their subsidiaries,

shall not exceed £150 million or such greater sum not exceeding £200 million as the Secretary of State may specify by order;

(2) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfil guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Authority or their subsidiaries;

(3) the payment of sums into the National Loans Fund or Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.12 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill offers us a sharp new weapon in the fight against drugs. Before I outline the thrust of the Bill and the advantages which we think that it will bring, I would like to say a few words about how it fits into our general strategy.

Because drugs can degrade and destroy human beings in the most pitiless way, there is no strand of public policy more important than the fight against drugs. Our strategy is effectively overseen and co-ordinated by the interdepartmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, chaired by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. It is doing an admirable job.

We have to tackle both supply and demand. Last year we stepped up action on both fronts. On the supply side, the key tasks are international co-operation, effective enforcement and deterrence. The United Kingdom has for many years worked energetically with others to reduce supplies of drugs from abroad. Last October, we announced further grants to help to reduce drug production and trafficking. They were directed particularly at opium poppy cultivation in Pakistan and cocaine production in Latin America. Both customs and the police are targeting substantially increased resources on the drug traffickers. For example, the number of customs specialist investigators has more than doubled since 1979 and is set to increase again. The appointment of a national drugs intelligence co-ordinator, Mr. Colin Hewett, has further enhanced the co-operation between the two services. Our determination to strengthen deterrence is exemplified in the Bill.

On the demand side, up to £8 million has been set aside for our continuing successful national prevention compaigns, which include television advertising, posters, leaflets for parents, videos for professionals and young people, and action in the schools. Extra resources have been provided to expand treatment and rehabilitation services for drug misusers, including a further £5 million a year through the health authorities from April.

It is fair to claim that this strategy is producing results. In 1985 customs seized a record £107 million-worth of drugs and smashed more than 70 drug rings. Police seizures have also risen rapidly, and so have convictions for trafficking offences. An independent evaluation of our prevention publicity suggests that it has made young people more aware of the harmful effects of drugs, such as heroin, and has stiffened their resolve to say no to drugs.

Those are clearly encouraging signs, but the situation remains serious. I would be quite wrong if I did not warn the House that the drugs problem in the United Kingdom could continue for a while to get worse before it gets better. The world is awash with drugs, and we may see an increase in the number of traffickers and misusers. We can reasonably expect price and purity levels to remain fairly static. The number of seizures and arrests are likely to increase as the efforts and effectiveness of the police and customs continue to improve.

Heroin will continue to be our main problem, and there are signs that as Pakistan has more success in cracking down on the traffickers, so the source for smuggling heroin into the United Kingdom shifts to its neighbours in south-west Asia. The cocaine explosion which has been forecast by some commentators has not materialised, but we need to remain especially alert in view of the massive quantities that are being produced in Latin America. We should also worry about the scale of illegal manufacture and import of amphetamines, which are widely available to youngsters on the streets at affordable prices. Fortunately the "designer" and synthetic drugs which have appeared in the United States of America are still almost unknown in the United Kingdom, although LSD is becoming more common.

The Bill fits firmly into our strategy. By attacking the profits made from drug trafficking, we intend to make it much less attractive to enter the trade. We intend to help guard against the possibility that the profits from one trafficking operation will be used to finance others, and, not least, to remove the sense of injury which ordinary people are bound to feel at the idea of traffickers, who may have ruined the lives of children, having the benefit of the profits that they have made from doing so.

Those matters are urgent and imperative—and they stand at the top of our list of legislative priorities. Accordingly, the Bill deals only with drug trafficking offences and not with other profitable types of crime. There is, of course, a case for making corresponding provisions for other sorts of crime. Several hon. Members have already suggested to me that this Bill should do so. The 1984 report of the Howard League committee, chaired by Mr. Justice Hodgson, to which we are indebted for many of the ideas in the Bill, made recommendations—most of which it believed should be generally applied. As a Government, we are committed to the idea of attacking the profits of crime in a way that goes beyond drugs offences, and we shall have to return to the subject. We have, however, judged it best to deal with drugs offences and other offences separately. Perhaps they should also be dealt with differently, but that is a matter for another day. In any case, the Bill has been prepared solely as a basis for dealing with drug traffickers and it should be judged in that light. The Government will want to pause and reconsider before seeking to extend any of the Bill's provisions to other offences.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the Secretary of State agree that the Hodgson committee recommended that powers should be introduced to enable the courts to confiscate the proceeds of crime, or money representing the proceeds of crime, not in the circumstances which the Bill rightly postulates, but to reduce the prison population? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that those constructive proposals in that context should be considered for early legislation?

Mr. Hurd: There is an argument for that, as one would expect with a proposal that came from the Howard League. We will think hard about it, although not necessarily from the point of view which Mr. Justice Hodgson argued. I suggest that we postpone that discussion to another day and concentrate tonight on this Bill, which deals only with drug offences.

We need the legislation, because the forfeiture powers in existing law have proved inadequate. The courts cannot

order the forfeiture of the proceeds of an offence once they have been converted into another asset—a house, stocks and shares, or valuables of any sort. The Operation Julie case was the most notorious example of the courts being unable to deprive convicted traffickers, as they wished, of the proceeds of their offences. Let me give an example.

In August last year, a group of five offenders were convicted at the Crown court at Maidstone of the importation of heroin with a street value of £2 million. They were sentenced to a total of 146 years' imprisonment. Before passing sentence, the judge inquired into the assets of one of the principals. It emerged that this offender, while awaiting trial, had transferred all his property to his wife. She had then sold the house, put the money into a building society and left the country. The judge was satisfied that the house had been bought partly from the proceeds of drug smuggling, and said that he would have liked to order the confiscation of the money in the building society; he regretted that he had no power to do so.

The Bill is designed to remedy those defects. It will provide powers for courts to confiscate proceeds even after they have been converted into some other type of asset; it will provide for the restraint of a defendant's property to prevent him from disposing of it before the end of his trial; and in certain circumstances it will allow property placed in other people's names to be confiscated, along with the offender's.

We have only a short time for the debate, and I do not wish to take up too much of it. The proposals in the Bill were described in a statement which we placed in the Library of the House in November, and they have been widely publicised since then. Therefore, I need not go through the Bill clause by clause. Instead, I shall point out some of the new elements in the Bill to show how they will contribute to our aim of stripping traffickers of their illegal gains.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It would help the House if the Home Secretary mentioned clause 3. What consideration has he given to the protection of innocent dependants when it comes to stripping the convicted trafficker of his assets?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue, I shall deal with that point later. If I do not deal with it to his satisfaction, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will certainly do so.

Under clauses 1 to 4, the Crown court will in future be required to determine, in the case of every person convicted of a drug trafficking offence, whether he has benefited from drug trafficking and, if he has, to impose a confiscation order to deprive him of the entire proceeds of his trafficking in so far as they can be assessed. This will be in addition to his ordinary sentence, and will apply not simply to the proceeds of the offence of which he has just been convicted, but to those of his entire trafficking career. Of course, those proceeds will not always be easy to assess. That is because what his legitimate income has been, and which of his assets have been legitimately acquired, are matters which are especially within his knowledge and which cannot easily be determined by others.

Therefore, we propose in clause 2 that courts should be able to assume that the whole of an offender's property, together with any assets which have passed through his hands in the previous five years, represent the proceeds of trafficking, except in so far as he shows otherwise. That provision has attracted special attention. This reversal of the burden of proof will apply only after conviction: the prosecution will still have to prove the offender's guilt beyond reasonable doubt in the normal way.

We have in addition provided in clause 4 that assets which the defendant has transferred to others for less than full value should also be liable to confiscation, if the transfer took place within the previous five years, or if the property can be shown to represent the proceeds of drug trafficking. It would be an obvious and unacceptable loophole if the trafficker could avoid confiscation by putting the proceeds of his offence into the name of his wife, brother or friend. But such third parties — this should deal with the hon. Gentleman's point — must have a right to put their case, and we have specifically provided in clause 9 for them to make representations to the High Court before confiscation is enforced.

Just as important as provision for a realistic assessment of the trafficker's proceeds will be provision for effective enforcement. We propose in clauses 9 to 11 that all the authority and experience of the High Court should be available for this purpose. If necessary, a receiver will be appointed to realise the available property. I should point out that any of the offender's property will be liable to confiscation, not simply that which is derived from drug trafficking. Thus, if an offender has spent or salted away his drug income, and kept to hand only his legitimate assets, those assets will be seized instead. If an offender is tempted to keep assets beyond the reach of the receiver, he will face up to 10 years' imprisonment in default of payment.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am worried about the concept of sales for less than full value. One can imagine many circumstances in which a drug trafficker, for reasons of his own, puts his house on the market and tells the estate agent to get as much as he can quickly. That may be a sale for less than full value. In those circumstances, do the provisions of the Bill mean that the purchaser, who will be completely innocent, will have to apply to the court and meet the costs even of a successful application?

Mr. Hurd: I always hesitate to answer the hon. and learned Gentleman off the cuff, because he always poses pertinent and rather difficult questions. If it could be shown—as it could be in the case which the hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned—that there was a bona fide transaction, I think that the purchaser of the house would be in the clear. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will reflect on that during the evening and will deal with it in his reply.

The new powers to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking are at the heart of the Bill, but they are not all that is required. That is why the Bill includes important new powers to help the police and customs trace the proceeds of drug trafficking, and for the courts to freeze them pending the outcome of the trial.

Under clauses 18 to 20, the police and customs will be able to apply to a circuit judge for authority to examine bank accounts, financial records, and other important material at an early stage of a drug trafficking investigation — indeed, as soon as they can satisfy the judge that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a named person is involved in, or has benefited from, drug

[Mr. Hurd]

trafficking and that the material in question is likely to be of substantial value to the investigation. There is a balance to be struck here, which we have spent some time considering, and we are stopping short of random checks or mere fishing expeditions.

We must further help to ensure that proceeds are not disposed of before the end of the trial. Therefore, we are introducing into criminal law procedures already tried and tested in civil law. From about the time of the defendant's arrest, clause 6 gives the High Court the power to make a restraint order—similar to a civil Mareva injunction—freezing property which might later be needed to satisfy a confiscation order. It will also be able to make charging orders in respect of land or securities, to the same end.

Another especially important feature of the Bill is the new offence of assisting another to retain the benefit of drug trafficking—in common parlance, laundering. That is a serious activity, for which we propose a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment. As laundering is defined in the Bill as a drug trafficking offence, those guilty will be subject to its confiscation procedures.

The Bill relates to England and Wales, but we intend shortly to introduce legislation for Scotland and Northern Ireland, and for the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Of course, we must be able to chase proceeds further than that, because they do not stop at the boundaries of the United Kingdom. Therefore, we shall seek the widest possible range of agreements on mutual enforcement with other countries. The Bill will provide the framework in English law for such international agreements.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I understand from the Solicitor-General for Scotland that Scottish judges have some powers to compensate. If those powers are available in Scotland, why is it necessary to introduce such legislation? I do not say that we should not have the legislation, but I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman believes that we need it.

Mr. Hurd: A hasty consultation suggests that in Scotland there is a power to fine but not to confiscate. That matter needs to be further considered among the Scots. Today we are dealing with a Bill which covers England and Wales.

I hope that I have said enough about the Bill to show how we have approached confiscation as a system rather than as an isolated procedure. We have not looked at the moment, at the end of a trafficker's trial, when the judge orders how much the offender must pay. The comprehensive approach set out in the Bill begins with the examination of financial dealings early in the investigation. It moves logically through restraint of property pending the outcome of the trial and provides the basis for a realistic assessment of the amount of the trafficker's proceeds after conviction. It ends with the enforcement of the confiscation order against property in the hands of the offender or his associates, in this country or abroad. In some areas, we have had to break completely new ground. In others, we have been able to draw on procedures established in civil law and harness the experience of the High Court for the purposes of this legislation.

I hope the House will agree that in total we have worked out a machinery which still lies firmly within the boundaries of what we in this counry regard as acceptable and just but which will enable the confiscation of proceeds to play a major part in out continuing crucial battle against the trafficker. I commend the Bill to the House.

7.31 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Home Secretary has given his usual accomplished explanation of the need and purpose of the Bill. I make it quite clear to the House that the Opposition do not wish to delay or impede the Bill. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and many other Opposition Members have warned for a long time about the growing horrors of rising addiction.

There has been an explosion in drug smuggling and addiction, especially in heroin and cocaine, during the last four or five years. It is putting a generation of young people at risk and it is doing great social damage. It demands draconian action against those who make fortunes out of this vile, destructive trade. I anticipate that the Home Secretary and his colleagues will agree with me when I say that most young people, their parents, voluntary workers, teachers, those in the medical and caring professions, the police and customs officers are among those who insist that a better attempt should be made to stem the tide of cocaine and heroin that is reaching these shores and finding, in my view, too easy access to them. There must be no easy hiding place for either the traffickers, their money or their assets. Every stringent, sensible step needs to be taken to secure this end. This Bill is part of that process.

The Home Secretary referred to the Operation Julie exercise. Assets estimated at £750,000 were identified and converted at that stage into French chateaux, Krugerrands and gold bars in a Swiss vault. That case reached the House of Lords, which had to rule, with considerable regret, that the courts had no powers that would enable them to get their hands on these items which had been purchased with the profits from trafficking.

I join the Home Secretary in paying tribute to the committee, chaired on behalf of the Howard League for Penal Reform by Mr. Justice Hodgson, which inquired into the profits of crime and their recovery. I pay tribute also to the work on that committee of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) who served with such independent distinction upon it.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman did not agree with what the committee said.

Mr. Corbett: That is why I said that my hon. Friend served on that committee with independent distinction. That report, and the interim report last year of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, provides the basis for the Bill.

Traffickers take part in this trade because the profits are so gigantic. Great fortunes are to be made from drug dependency. The degradation to which it leads is now openly to be seen on the streets of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and other big cities. That applies also to glue sniffing and solvent abuse. It is almost as though large parts of our young society are at war with themselves and with society generally. These young, wrecked, hopeless lives bear testimony to where the profits of trafficking come from and what they cost in human terms. The misery, degradation, estrangement from family and home and broken lives result in the walking corpses who

provide the luxury life styles for the "Mr. Bigs" in the drugs trade. It is almost, with sustained and severe addiction, as though the just living envy the just dead.

It is not only the profits that attract the traffickers to the fast fortunes that are available. They do it because, like other criminals, they assess the risks and work out the odds on them and others working with them of being caught. It gives me no pleasure to have to say to the Home Secretary that drug smuggling is now Britain's fastest growing industry. In the United Kingdom the odds regrettably favour the drug smugglers because our defences have been dangerously lowered since 1980. Page 141 of the Hodgson report says:

"Detecting movement of 'dirty money' out of the United Kingdom has become much more difficult since the abolition of exchange control."

That must be so. To the extent that the Bill remedies that position and provides powers to raid bank accounts and records of financial institutions, I welcome it. It will put right that deficiency.

Again I have to say to the Home Secretary and his colleagues that, despite any juggling with the figures, there are fewer customs officers now on the front line of our defences. That must almost inevitably mean that more drugs get through. Even impressive seizures by customs —an estimated eight out of every 10 come from cold searches at ports of entry — and drugs seized by the police indicate not so much success in this war but, in my view, failure. I do not put all the responsibility for that upon the Government, but I certainly put part of the responsibility for it upon them.

Even the best estimates claim that only about one fifth of smuggled drugs are detected. Others would put the figure lower than that. However, heavier hauls by Customs and police may also indicate that more drugs are getting into this country. In other words, it could be a rising percentage of a rising amount. Between 1978-79 and 1984-85 there was an increase of one third in the number of passengers arriving at our air and sea ports. The total was about 42 million. There was also a rise of 9·5 per cent. in the number of cars and drivers and a massive rise in the number of container lorries. The Home Secretary mentioned that there is evidence of increased attempts to smuggle drugs into this country on lorries. However, precisely at the time when this was happening there was a net cut of 11·5 per cent. in the strength of Customs and Excise. I accept that not all these cuts are on the drugs enforcement side, but it is indicative of the Government's approach until now. The number of customs officers has fallen from 28,800 in 1978-79 to 25,300 in 1984-85. There is a target of 25,500—that is, an extra 200 officers—by 1 April 1986 and it is planned that a level of 26,000 should be reached by 1 April 1988.

I have to remind the Home Secretary that Mr. Sandy Russell, a customs commissioner, told the Select Committee on Home Affairs on 11 December 1985:

"next year"—

that is, 1986—

"the position on the preventive uniformed force at the ports and airports will be just a little under the figure it was in 1979."

In practice that means there has been a 30 per cent. cut in uniformed officers, and that is against the background of an increase of about 10 times in heroin smuggling and an increase in cocaine smuggling of three times since 1979.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House the source of his statistics? Is he certain that he is correct? I ask because on 12 December last year I put down a written question for the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking how many customs officers were employed on drug detection duties over the previous 12 months. I accept that the hon. Gentleman was good enough to say that he was quoting overall figures and not just the figures for officers engaged in drug detection duties. In my written question I also asked what number the Chancellor of the Exchequer estimated would be so engaged in the coming years. The reply was,

"1 April 1985, 2,823; 1 April 1986, 3,000; 1 April 1987, 3,300". — [*Official Report*, 12 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 771.]

Therefore, the number of officers appears to be increasing, not decreasing as the hon. Gentleman appears to claim.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because he has made the point. I do not want to waste the time of the House by bandying figures about. I say he has made the point because no one can deny that from 1979 until lately—let me put it broadly like that—there has been a decrease in the number of uniformed custom officers on duty at ports of entry. Broadly speaking, that means there has been a lowering of customs cover.

As I said, that has coincided with a 10 times increase in heroin smuggling and an estimated three times increase in cocaine smuggling. I am not trying to make party points about this. I will try to put the point as flatly as I can. I am glad that the customs service seems to have the cash to provide more uniformed officers and more officers on the detection side in order to cope with the increasing amount of drugs, particularly cocaine and heroin, that are being smuggled into the country. That is progress; we can argue in another place about who did what and what they did not do and what they should have done earlier. There will be more officers in place. I welcome that, as I am sure does the whole House.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the number of customs officers in the green channel is not necessarily relevant as long as the green channels are manned? What is important is the number of customs investigators, and that has nothing to do with the number of uniformed officers. If the hon. Gentleman knows anything about the way in which large-scale drug importation is detected, that is what he ought to be saying.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman ought to have a care about what he is saying, because he is going to tempt me into arguments which would be better put at the Committee stage. It is on the record that eight out of 10 seizures at, for example, Heathrow, are the result of cold stops — people coming through the green channel. On the intelligence and investigative side, the number of uniformed officers able to respond to intelligence is quite critical to the catch rate.

I do not want to start a long discussion about this, because it does not help to get into an argument about whether uniformed people are better than the mobile squads or the investigative officers. I see that the Home Secretary is smiling. I am perfectly prepared to embark on such an argument, but I have an eye on the clock. Both uniformed and investigative officers are important. I sincerely believe—I am trying to put this in a flat way —that the lowering of the uniformed customs presence in red and green channels at ports of entry has not helped

[Mr. Corbett]

in the war against drugs. That statement will probably not satisfy the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that we may pursue the detail in Committee.

There is some evidence, part of which we heard in the Select Committee on Home Affairs, that because of the strength of the defence at airports such as Heathrow more attention by the traffickers is being given to the smaller ports around the east and south coasts as far down as Plymouth. I know the right hon. Gentleman is aware of that but I just want to remind him of it. It must be accepted that customs cover is not at the level we expect for the proper monitoring of the arrival and departure of yachts and other small boats. I do not want to make heavy weather of this point, because I know the Home Secretary is aware of it.

At the moment there is a review of the work of immigration officers. This is a step before the customs officers come into the picture. The immigration service has accepted cuts and I understand that one of the proposals is to downgrade the status of some of the immigration officers, who are now at executive grade level, to clerical grade level. We in the Opposition are also interested in efficiency, but if proper consideration is not given to the move and adequate training provided before the change is made, we run the risk of lowering the quality of the important on-the-spot decisions which immigration officers are called upon to make at ports of entry. I should like the right hon. Gentleman to take that point on board.

Hon. Members will agree that in the war against drugs words are not enough. Actions are needed and some of the actions are contained in the Bill. I should like to deal with three or four specific points. The proposed powers of confiscation are in clause 1. We share the view that the drug trafficker needs to be hit where it hurts most, and that is in his assets. There may be problems about the way in which the Bill is drafted, and the Minister may be able to deal with those when he is winding up.

We are all united in aiming at removing the assets from the "Mr. Bigs" in this game. In that sense we are talking about the wholesaler, but I fear that the Bill will also trap the smaller user-dealer. Many if not most users also deal in drugs. In legal terms they supply drugs to help to finance their addiction, which for an addict is estimated to cost around £9,000 a year. In most cases theirs is a hand-to-mouth existence, and only rarely would the user-dealers have assets of any substantial value. As I read the Bill it is mandatory when someone appears before a Crown court for a sentence for confiscation orders to be made irrespective of the amount of the assets. Is that really the intention? If it is, might it not be more sensible if the Bill were to set a limit below which in relation to the assets, confiscation orders need not be made or, to turn the coin over, a level at which it is mandatory for the court to impose them?

My second point about confiscation orders is that they can be imposed only in the wake of a drug trafficking offence. What is the position where a person sentenced claims that the assets arose from another illegal activity? Let us instance a bank robbery. In the Bill, confiscation orders relate only to drug trafficking offences, and that is for the reasons that the Home Secretary explained. It would appear that the undetected, uncharged and unconvicted bank robber could have those bank robbery assets left untouched. If that is so, it would seem to be unsatisfactory. I am not experienced in these matters, but I am advised that many professional criminals run vertically integrated businesses; in other words, they are involved in a range of criminal activities and it would be difficult to establish with precision which profit had come from which activity. It is unlikely that the villains would voluntarily show the police their profit and loss accounts.

Clause 15, the laundering clause, creates a new offence in which the burden of truth is put upon the accused. Subsection (3) sets out the grounds for defence, which show how the burden of truth is being moved. We are talking here possibly about a whole chain of people, many of them professionals such as accountants, lawyers, bankers, estate agents and so on. As I read the Bill, it is possible that some or all of those people could be convicted of the handling offence and get a sentence of up to 14 years while the trafficker escaped conviction because of lack of evidence. I cannot believe that that is right or is intended. In practice, it would mean that someone would go to jail because of another person's more serious offence.

Mr. Alex Carlile: It happens all the time.

Mr. Corbett: That does not make it right.

Mr. Carlile: Is the hon. Gentleman really suggesting that a person who has committed a serious crime should not be proceeded against because there is insufficient evidence against someone who has committed a more serious and related crime? That is an absurd suggestion.

Mr. Corbett: I was trying not to say that. Let us stick to the drug trafficker. If people were to be convicted of charges of handling and laundering and were to get a sentence of 14 years while the main offender got off, that would be very difficult for many people to understand. I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's point but, if I may say so with respect, it is a lawyer's point and I am trying to put the point of the man on the Clapham omnibus or the Erdington tram.

Clause 18 deals with the making available of evidence and clause 19 gives authority to search for evidence. The Home Secretary said—in a side comment, I think—that there was no intention of using the powers under these clauses to go on fishing expeditions. The Bill as drafted refers to a constable entering premises and seizing and retaining material. I hope it will be made clear that it will not be any old constable but a constable with enough training and experience to ensure that he knows what he is looking for and that it is strictly related to the suspected offence. In that context there is an obligation upon the Government to ensure that police services have the necessary resources to provide specific training on the handling of financial records. It is not a job that any constable can properly be expected to do.

The Home Secretary will recall that one of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs was that both civil and criminal proceedings should be used against assets. The Minister will know directly, as do those of us who were on the Select Committee, of the experience in the United States. The Americans, and I believe the Australians too, set great store by the alternative of civil proceedings against assets where they feel that the evidence for a criminal prosecution is not strong enough to stand a reasonable chance of securing a conviction. If the Government considered that and rejected it, may we be told why they came to that view?

The final point is perhaps the most intriguing. What will happen to the seized assets? To bring it up to date, what would happen if, say, Blenheim palace was confiscated? The Bill is strangely silent on that. In regard to financial and manpower effects, the explanatory and financial memorandum assumes that there will be 100 cases a year involving additional costs of £5·5 million, plus £1·1 million extra for customs and excise staff. Reassuringly it coos:

"This sum is likely to be more than offset, however, by the revenue from confiscated assets."

So, taking the most cautious view, the Government anticipate that at least £6·6 million will be raised each year from the seizure of assets. I hope that they are right and that that amount is exceeded. That is fine, but who will get the loot? I expect Ministers on the Front Bench to remain immobile when I suggest that there are no possible circumstances in which the Treasury can by any stretch of its vast imagination make any legitimate case to grab the loot. Clearly, it will not be revenue. It will be cash raised from the seizure and disposal of assets. It will not be money owing to the Treasury, recouped through the courts in default, as it were. It will be a new source of money. I can see the appeal of this to the Government, but I am trying to put down markers.

The matter becomes important when we consider the victim or the victim's family. There has been a recent prosecution against a convicted dealer. I accept that this is a difficult area because, as I understand the law, it is based on the assumption of an innocent victim. There might be argument about someone who is addicted to drugs being innocent, but what will the position be if a victim or his or her family wants to sue a convicted trafficker? In the event of a successful prosecution, where should the money come from? It would be wrong to suggest that it should come out of the taxpayer's pocket if the Government expect to raise £6·6 million from the seizure and disposal of assets.

I have little doubt that the Home Secretary will need to consult about this. Will he consider the suggestion that all money raised from the seizure and disposal of assets, perhaps after the settlement of any claims against the trafficker on behalf of a victim or his or her family, should go into a trust fund to help pay for the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts? There would be sweet justice and great merit in using the proceeds of this vile trade, properly seized through the courts, to try to rehabilitate those out of whom the trafficker had made part of his fortune. I hope that that idea may commend itself to the House. We shall co-operate to help the Bill reach the statute book, no doubt with amendments, and I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to support it.

8 pm

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): I agree enthusiastically with much of what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said. I shall not identify those parts of his speech with which I disagreed, to avoid being drawn into a subsidary debate.

I hope that I speak for the whole House when I say that this is an admirable Bill with admirable provisions. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his colleagues on producing the Bill in its present form —no doubt it will be amended in certain areas—and on the speed with which it has come before the House.

The House will remember that the Home Affairs Select Committee went to America in the early summer of last year to study the drug problem in the United States. Before the Committee left, we saw my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). He invited us to make such recommendations as we could when we returned and to put them into a report which the Government could consider. As the hon. Member for Erdington rightly said, the Bill is based on that interim report's recommendations. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members of the Home Affairs Select Committee when I say that when we returned to our duties here at Westminster it took a long time to shake off the effects of what we had seen and heard in the United States.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I have still not shaken them off.

Sir Edward Gardner: Indeed. It was a deeply disturbing experience. We saw for ourselves what has happened in the United States and we realised that what has ravished American society could one day, very soon if we are not careful, happen here. We noticed the growth in drug taking. Cocaine—the drug of choice, as it is called—has taken over the American continent. It has 12 million regular users in America and each year claims 5,000 new addicts.

We saw the power of the people who traffick in these drugs. Their economic power is such that they earn between $90 billion and $100 billion a year. Their industry, if one can dignify it with that word, in terms of money, is second only to the motor industry in the United States. The growth of drug taking in America is something of a phenomenon which has happened during little more than five years. The Americans are a deeply alarmed, as we were as observers, at what has happened there.

The United States has introduced into its civil and criminal law an amendment which enables it to get at drug traffickers and strip these evil men of every dollar, every bit of land and all the vehicles and aircraft that they boast they own. Much of the money that is collected by the courts is used for anti-drug measures. The hon. Member for Erdington drew this to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. We were also told that some of the money was being used to build prisons in America to contain people convicted of drug trafficking. That makes sense.

The effect of the American legislation which enables the forfeiture and seizure of the assets of drug traffickers has been salutary and satisfactory. The Committee therefore recommended that our law be amended to allow for the seizure and forfeiture of drug traffickers' assets.

The short time—it is something of a record—between our recommendations, the Bill's being published and its Second Reading today illustrates the acute awareness of the problem as declared by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The Government are aware of the perils of the drug problem. The Government's determination to avoid and defeat this terrible threat which is hanging over the country will have the support of the House and of the country.

The Bill is aimed at undermining and ultimately, we hope, ending drug trafficking. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, this Bill introduces the reversal of the onus of proof. I am sensitive about that and could

[Sir Edward Gardner]

become hostile were it not for my understanding and others' understanding of the gravity of the problem. The Bill will try to solve that problem, so I give it unqualified support. I believe that it will receive support from this House and the country.

The establishment of the guilt of the accused in the criminal court had to be to the standard of proof of putting the matter beyond reasonable doubt. This is not the most up-to-date direction for a jury, but it does for the purpose of discussing and distinguishing between beyond reasonable doubt and the civil standard of proof which is on the "balance of probability". The Bill, as I understand it, although it is not stated—one does not expect to find the standard of proof defined in a Bill—suggests that the standard of proof is on the balance of probability. When the court has made the assumption that clause 2 allows about the identity of the assets, the defendant would have to satisfy the court that there was no connection between his assets and the offences with which he was charged.

I agree with the hon. Member for Erdington, in that I wonder whether we could have an explanation why the Government decided to leave reference to civil proceedings out of the Bill and instead chose to focus exclusively on criminal proceedings. The American model, on which we suggested British legislation, enables the court to deal with forfeiture in civil and criminal proceedings. I shall not go into the technicalities of the distinction between the two except to say that, in criminal proceedings, standard proof is beyond reasonable doubt and, in civil proceedings, the balance of probability is standard proof, which makes it easier for the courts. I should have thought, as the Home Affairs Select Committee decided, that that has an attraction that might have an influence on the Government's thinking. I should be grateful for some comments on that.

I should like to express the Home Affairs Select Committee's gratitude to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for his assistance and, perhaps even more important, his untiring efforts at every conceivable opportunity. He has travelled wherever he can to fulfil his ambition of ensuring that this terrible plague of drug taking is at last brought under control.

8.12 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I apologise to the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) for appearing to interrupt him. He treated us to a splendid speech which, like all of the best Beethoven works, had two perorations. It was at the end of the first that I rose, thinking that he was about to finish.

Recently, a man called Thomas Comerford, who for years had been the most notorious criminal in the Liverpool area involved in drug trafficking and all manner of other serious crime, was sentenced to many years imprisonment here in London. The more sparsely written newspapers, in their features on the Comerford trial, gave a rather shabby picture of the values of contemporary society. Instead of concentrating, as they might, on the wretched misery which drug traffickers such as Comerford have caused in cities and towns throughout the country, they concentrated their attention on his gains and his life style. It is important that the public should know first that drug addiction brings misery and living death—indeed, even death for some. That is what is really being achieved by the drug pedlars, whose temporary affluence is of less importance.

I do not have the advantage of serving on the Home Affairs Select Committee, but I cannot forget the first time that I met a heroin addict. He was in trouble before the court, which was bad enough; but I remember above all his physical features. I recall his scabby, pockmarked arms, his eyes completely dead like marbles on a solitaire board; and his attitude to life, which to him was indeed nothing more than living death. Young people such as he face that frightful prospect on an increasing scale.

I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for his part in what I believe is the most important part of the fight against drug addiction—the campaign through schools, through parents with children at school, by advertising and all other channels through which we can reach young people, to persuade them that involvement in drug abuse will destroy their lives. I am pleased to be able to tell the Minister that even in my distant constituency in rural mid-Wales, parents of children at local schools are able to attend sessions at which they are taught how to detect the early signs of drug abuse. My wife will go to one of those sessions later this week at the school which one of our children attends. No effort should be spared to ensure the continuation of such campaigns.

I welcome the opportunity to enact legislation that will ensure that the ill-gotten gains of drug pedlars are taken away from them. I am sure that the Home Secretary will understand why I have some instinctive misgivings about parts of the Bill but, on balance, it is obviously right to enact it because of the seriousness of the problem. I too acknowledge the contribution made by the Home Affairs Select Committee's report and that of the Hodgson committee—the report of the Howard League in 1984 under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Hodgson.

I remind the Government that the Hodgson committee considered far more general issues than drug trafficking. It examined the confiscation of the proceeds of crime generally. Because this Bill has distracted us from the broader issues raised by Hodgson, I regret that the report has been misrepresented to some extent in the publicity leading up to the Bill and today's debate. My perception of the thrust of Hodgson is that the law should be expanded with a view to allowing seizure of the profits of all crime with the idea of reducing the incidence and amount of imprisonment, especially at a time of gross overcrowding in prisons, and also with a view to ensuring that people who commit serious crime do not benefit from their ill-gotten gains.

I hope that the Bill will ensure absolutely that the proceeds of drug trafficking can be seized. However, I hope that the Government will tell us that they are satisfied that the Bill covers the many serious cases in which the prosecution choose to present specimen counts only on the indictment before the jury. We must be absolutely sure that, when the Bill becomes law, all the ill-gotten gains can be taken by the court, including those which have not formed part of counts in the indictment, provided that due notice is given to the defence. Hodgson made that point and it is important.

Hodgson emphasised the need for a two-stage process. We are concerned here with the second stage—the power of the court when the defendant has already been arrested. What about the first stage?

The Hodgson report put emphasis on empowering the freezing of the assets of offenders before they are even arrested. I draw the Minister's attention to conclusion 29 on page 154 of Hodgson, which said:

"On the application of the police or prosecuting authority a high court judge should have the power to grant . . . an order freezing specific assets or the defendant's assets generally, if there is a *prima facie* case that he has committed an indictable offence."

It seems a little illogical that the power to freeze occurs only after the defendant has been arrested. Surely there ought to be a power to freeze in the course of the inquiry so the police can have the full advantage of surprise during that inquiry. It would be no more, after all, than an adaptation of the now well-established powers developed by the civil courts in the use of Mareva injunctions. It seems to me that clause 18 fails to go far enough in making an effective transfer of the power used by the civil courts in Mareva injunctions to the criminal courts in relation to drug trafficking. It still leaves considerable opportunities for assets to be salted away before the police ever reach them. There may be room for amendment of the Bill in this context.

I also urge the Government, as did Hodgson, to look beyond drug offences. Having said that, I urge the Government to restrain themselves before applying these particular powers, far beyond Hodgson in some respects, as the unalterable basis for extension to other offences.

It is worth putting it on the record that there are some mildly, at least, critical views of the Bill. I remind the Minister of the comments in the Justinian column in the *Financial Times* on 20 January:

"If the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill passes into law unamended it will represent one of the most fearsome pieces of legislation in modern times, both in the investigative powers it gives to public authorities and in its penal sanctions. In the limited scope of drug trafficking it spreads the tentacles of criminal process far beyond those recommended 18 months ago by an independent committee chaired by Mr. Justice Hodgson. In *'Profits of Crime'* it proposed more modest powers over the whole range of criminal activity."

I share what I think is the Minister's view, that some fearsome legislation is required in this context.

I seek to urge the Minister to extend the philosophy, but using the Hodgson principles rather than those fearsome principles contained in the Bill. The Bill should not be used as the benchmark, in other words, to justify a relativistic approach to the context of other offences; for some of the provisions in the Bill are quite alarming in the powers they give the police and the courts. In my view, they can be justified only by the serious and special nature of the crimes with which we are concerned.

I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) that one of the most worrying issues has been the reversal of the burden of proof as particularly set out in clause 2(3). However, I support the Home Secretary in the point that this is not a reversal of burden of proof relating to guilt; it is a reversal of burden of proof relating to a procedural and sentencing matter, and in that context in my view it can be justified. It is of course worth bearing in mind, when we are discussing our judgment on the question of reversing the burden of proof, the fact that the Hodgson committee did indeed divide on the issue even though it was considering far lesser powers than are before us in the Bill.

We have to be a little cautious about these powers because, whenever a court convicts of a drug trafficking offence, the court will be empowered—indeed will have —to assume that the whole of the defendant's assets together with any property that has passed through his hands during the five years prior to conviction are the proceeds of drug trafficking.

With that in mind, I am concerned about the position of what may very well be innocent third parties who may have bought a house, a car, jewellery or whatever at less than full value but in good faith. It is very important that we should ensure that, if they have to apply to the court in effect to keep property which they have bought in good faith, they should not have to be faced with legal costs in making such an application.

Mr. Greg Knight: Can the hon. and learned Gentleman give us an example of an occasion when a person could buy property at less than a full value in good faith?

Mr. Carlile: I think I gave an example a little earlier. A drug trafficker who suspects that the police are on his heels may have a property to sell—a house, for example —which he will hand to an estate agent and order him to sell very quickly and for whatever he can get. It may be sold very quickly to a purchaser who will be acting completely in good faith and without the slightest idea of who the drug trafficker is, let alone that he is a drug trafficker. It is important that a person in that position should not be faced with having to fund legal proceedings. There are many other examples of which I can readily think.

For the entirely laudable purpose of protecting young people from the dreadful ravages of drug addiction, we have embarked on what is actually a rather unenticing legislative path. Some of us have had to wrestle with the argument that these are laws which change substantially and to very great disadvantage the position of a defendant before a court. Generally, I do not welcome laws which do that. I do not generally welcome laws which place upon a defendant, outside the broad philosophy of our system, both an evidential and a legal burden which it may often be extremely difficult to discharge.

I suspect that, as a result of our eventually enacting these provisions, there may be some injustices, especially to third parties, and of course we all know the truism "hard cases make bad law." But the crisis caused by burgeoning drug offences is such that I am persuaded to support the Bill, albeit in the belief that it is somewhat imperfect and may well be capable of some improvement.

8.27 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): This is an unusual evening, in that hon. Members in all parts of the House are in wide agreement with the measure proposed by the Government.

I am delighted to speak after the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) because I share many of his concerns as, indeed, did the Select Committee on Home Affairs when it considered its report on the issue. As the House has heard so eloquently and magnificently from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner), we were in no doubt, following our investigations of the drugs issue both at home and overseas, that the quite exceptional circumstances justified the measures which we proposed and which the House is now considering.

I do not propose to repeat what has already been said, save to draw on one or two more points. I recall, in

[Mr. John Wheeler]

company with my colleagues on the Home Affairs Committee, going to a secret storehouse in Miami and looking at a relatively small room which was crammed from floor to ceiling with cocaine and heroin and other drugs in smaller quantity which had been seized by the authorities. There was at least £10 billion-worth of drugs in street value in one small room. It represented a small amount of the drug traffic that was entering the United States from central and south America. It represented awesome financial power.

When afterwards we went on in Miami to see the customs, coastguard and revenue authorities and we saw the extent of the wealth, particularly in the vessels, the buildings, the property and the assets that the people who managed drugs were making out of this evil crime, we were in no doubt at all about the seriousness of the problem and the terrible risks that we in the United Kingdom and, indeed, in the other western countries run unless we can unite in our efforts and ensure that our defences and our law are up to defeating these evil people. As a result of those experiences, we made the recommendations that go to the heart of our legal proceedings, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery has said, and hesitatingly seek to reverse what is normally regarded as proper in our legal system.

In discussing this subject in the United States, I learned from the police there that about 60 per cent. of all property crime is committed as a result of the need of the drug user to fund his or her drug taking. Thank goodness, we do not appear to have reached anywhere near that level of drug-related crime in the United Kingdom, but there is growing evidence that some crime, and some serious crime, is being committed by those who wish to fuel their addiction to drugs.

Therefore, it is right that we should support the Bill. In the Home Affairs Committee interim report on drugs, we set out a strategy that the Government are determinedly following. We suggested four basic ways to deal with the growing threat of the international drug traffic. First, we suggested that they include stopping, as far as possible, the importation of drugs—first by the physical interception of supplies, secondly by the prosecution and punishment of those engaged in this traffic and thirdly by eliminating all drug crops.

I share the enthusiasm of the House for the work that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary has done in his globe-trotting activities to achieve the third of those points. It is no good merely looking to the defence of the United Kingdom. We have to involve the international community—those countries where drugs may be grown and produced and those through which the drugs may pass in the course of their journey to the United Kingdom and other western countries.

Secondly, we suggested attacking the profits of the traffickers, a measure set out in the Bill. Thirdly, we suggested stopping the disposal of drug profits through the laundering of money, which is again set out in the Bill. Finally, and in some ways most importantly, we suggested reducing the long-term demand by education. That is a most complicated subject, which requires the whole-hearted commitment of the community and all the institutions within the community, particularly those engaged in education. I hope that, in the inner cities in particular, the local authorities and those responsible for education will take this subject seriously. Sometimes I think that in the inner cities there is complacency about drug-related crime that we must resist. We must turn back to a determination to tackle this subject with immense enthusiasm.

There is no doubt that in some ways the first line of defence is our customs and police services. The Home Affairs Committee looked at both those services carefully. Whatever may have been the case in the past, today they work together with a dedication and courage that is a joy to behold. The Committee was most satisfied about that part of the institution.

It is important to have customs officers on duty at air and sea ports, but, as we heard both from the evidence in the United States and from our customs officers, to pretend that one can stop all the drugs coming into the country at air and sea ports is nonsense. It was reckoned in the United States that only about 10 per cent.—even that was a generous estimate—of all drugs approaching the United States would be detained by the authorities, even with an enormous amount of money and expertise and vast services, including the armed services, engaged in the exercise to beat the importer.

In the case of the United Kingdom, what matters is not the number of customs officers but the extent of their training to stop the person who is carrying. The so-called cold stops, 80 per cent. of the spot checks, are not random spot checks but stops carried out because the customs officer identifies the profile of the individual coming through the port and is resolved to investigate.

I place immense importance on the investigation services. I am delighted that the Government have increased the number of specialised customs officers—those who do the hard-core investigation—from 121 to 212, with a further 50 to be appointed to new preventive posts. That is important, just as the gathering of intelligence for the more sophisticated exercises is vital. I am pleased that the Government are extending the number of overseas posts for customs officers engaging in the intelligence gathering operation. Through a variety of strategies involving all our resources, and above all through our determination in education, we shall contain and defeat the threat that faces the people of the United Kingdom.

8.37 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State clarified the point about legislation in Scotland, and I look forward to the Bill's provisions being extended into Scotland and Wales. I have been assured by the Solicitor-General that any criminal trying to evade the law by putting assets into Scotland would not succeed. I welcome the legislation. It is a step in the right direction. I recognise the excellent work that the Minister has done in the past year.

My constituency was changed to include another area by the Boundary Commission at the last general election. The area was well known to me because it was a part of Glasgow where I had served my apprenticeship and I had made many lifelong friends. It was the area from which my wife came, and she had lived there since she was a child. It was a typical Glasgow housing estate with tenemental property—what was known in Glasgow as intermediate housing. I am not saying that every part of the estate was attractive and that it did not have its problems of vandalism and crime. However, I was

shocked when constituents started telling me that they wanted out of it because they were fed up with the drug addiction in the estate. Despite those complaints, there was not a cheep in the newspapers about the situation and no statistics to show that the problem was so serious.

One woman brought the situation home to me. In one of the unusually good summers recently, she lifted the window in her flat to get some fresh air. She had lived in this part of Glasgow for 30 years. She looked across the street and there was a young addict in another tenement property injecting heroin into himself without even bothering to draw the curtains. I was absolutely horrified. When I tackled particular officials in the Health Service, they denied that the problem was any worse than in any other part of Glasgow. They tried to play the affair down. I did not publicly mention the area because I did not feel that it was fair to do so, but I did mention it to them and they told me that it was nonsense.

It is sad that, when officials are faced with a problem, they try to cover the matter up. When I confronted them at a meeting with my colleagues, they then produced a map which showed drug addiction problems in every postal district of Glasgow. Lo and behold, the very area that I had complained about had the biggest addiction problem known to the Health Service—and that was only the tip of the iceberg.

I know that this legislation does not cover the Health Service, but I want to suggest that the Minister looks at the problems faced by Health Service staff in general hospitals. Consultants in my local hospitals tell me that they have to carry out heart bypass operations on people who are only 22 or 23—certainly less than 30. This creates a problem in a general hospital ward.

I do not want to give the impression that I think that drug addicts should not be treated under the Health Service; I simply want to show the problems that they cause. As a consultant explained, his medical and nursing staff are not trained to look after drug addicts; they are trained to do surgery and to nurse post-operative patients. The trouble is that the addict still has the craving. The staff need eyes in the back of their heads to look after these patients and to make sure that the other patients are also looked after.

I know that we need more resources for education and for the police, but I hope that proper resources are put into our hospitals to make sure that both addicts and other patients are looked after properly.

I was born and bred in Glasgow and am proud of my native city. It is a very friendly place. But one of the things about being brought up in a city like that is that from early childhood we got to know the names of the criminal element on the Glasgow scene—what we call the hard men, the heavy men, the loan sharks. I know them all by name. These people are no longer into doing the collecting for moneylenders; they are no longer into bank robberies; they are no longer the first people to be served in the queue at the post office because they happen to have a double-barrelled shotgun. These people are now into the drug scene and are making a great deal of money.

Good luck to the Home Secretary. All I can say is that he will have a tough job, because these people have had their ill-gotten gains transferred into property in Spain and in Ireland. The money has gone into pubs, garages and various legitimate businesses. Possibly because of their background, these people also seek the cloak of respectibility: when a charity function is being held, they are there. They try to gain acceptance in the respectable parts of the community by giving to charity and so on. It will be a difficult job to get these assets into the public purse where they belong, but I certainly wish the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland well in trying to tackle the problem.

I also ask the Home Secretary to look at the situation in council estates. I have the highest number of multi-storey dwellings of any constituency in the United Kingdom. On the estate that I mentioned earlier, there are serious difficulties in keeping the peace, because these drug peddlers are operating from council houses. Next to pubs, the main places for selling drugs are council houses. The houses have double-security doors. The drugs are passed through a letterbox. If the police come to the door, by the time that they get the door down, the stuff is washed down the WC. In addition, addicts are coming to the wrong door and are waking people up at 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the morning.

This is known to the housing department but meets with a great deal of complacency: "Unless the police take action, we can't do anything about it." In one case, in the Balgrayhill flats in my constituency, the police managed to take action. The pusher has been tried, sentenced and gaoled. Now his common law wife has moved into the flat, which means that the flat will become available for that person when he comes out of prison. He could start pushing drugs from that house. Even if he does not, this kind of incident fills the neighbours with fear. The fear among the elderly in that multi-storey block is shocking. Decent men and women, who have fought to keep a good community together, are sitting wondering whether, when he comes out of prison, he will go back there.

I do not like to see anyone left homeless. I spend long and weary hours at my surgeries, where 90 per cent. of the problems brought to me are related to housing. But I have no hesitation in saying that, if a house has been used for pushing drugs, the tenant should be evicted and a decent tenant put in, to give people the quiet life they deserve and to which they are entitled.

I congratulate the police on their efforts in Glasgow; they have no easy task. I understand from speaking to police officers that when they are searching a house they have to keep a close watch, even when they are going round a settee or a chair, because if they get a jab from a needle they may catch AIDS or a serious form of hepatitis. I do not envy them their jobs.

Mention has been made of the programme about Operation Julie. I do not know what licence the producers of that programme had—television sometimes changes events in some respects—but it seemed a very accurate record of what actually happened. I gathered from the programme that the officer involved was not always given the help that he required from his senior officers. Sometimes he was hindered. If that happened, I hope that it will not happen again. When the officer concerned was interviewed in a subsequent programme, he said that a national drugs squad was needed to co-ordinate the efforts of customs officers, policemen and everyone the length and breadth of the country in tackling the problem.

When I visited the United States—not with a Select Committee—I spoke to Congressmen who told me that cocaine pushers were prepared to see boats and aeroplanes shot down—assets which cost millions of pounds—because they have so much money that they can put

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

another one into operation straightaway. Those pushers are now looking at Europe as a market and are attempting to push cocaine in the United Kingdom.

It would not be correct or proper for me to say that I have studied the advantages of having a national drugs squad, but if a police officer who has been involved in one of our biggest operations suggests such a squad, it is worth considering that suggestion. Will the Minister consider it?

My final point is related, although perhaps only indirectly, to the legislation, but as the Scottish Office Minister is present I have a chance to put the matter on the record. In my area, genuine and decent people are attempting to tackle the drug problem by counselling and helping young addicts. At a public meeting held, unusually, in a church, I noted that the different voluntary groups seemed to be arguing with one another, and saying that one group was better than another and that some groups were not doing such a good job. I said to myself, "It is shameful, when we are dealing with the lives of young people with a serious disease—drug addiction—that we leave tackling that problem in the hands of amateurs." I do not want to stifle amateurs or volunteers, but we must consider the present circumstances in various communities where small groups take over a flat in a tenement and create problems for the neighbours. Moreover, we do not know the credentials of the volunteers. Some could be of dubious character, and sometimes they are taken on at face value by the project leader.

It is sad that young men and women who, because of their drug addiction, could be dead this time next year are left in the hands of such groups, which cannot cope. We need the help of the National Health Service in tackling the problem. It is shameful that in Scotland we do not have even one facility where we can take an addict from his or her environment and treat him or her in isolation and away from the community that tempted him or her to take drugs.

I hope that those matters are taken on board. I am grateful that some steps are being taken to attack the people who are making massive profits form ill-gotten gains.

8.54 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): It is right for the House to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, who has done a splendid job. He has seen parts of the world where drug traffickers are sentenced to death, and the opium trails and poppy fields of India, Afghanistan and Turkey. All those trails end up in the vast continent of America, and they are beginning to be directed to the United Kingdom. Nobody could find much to fault in the Bill. The Committee stage should be remarkably friendly, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent Bill.

First, Mr. Big must be traced, and the Bill is aimed particularly at the Mr. Bigs. There are small pushers who live in council houses and who have no assets, but the Mr. Bigs are around. There are no two ways about it. Moreover, the organisation is extremely big. It may be difficult to freeze and confiscate funds because the Mr. Bigs will try to act even quicker than the courts. The few days between tracing Mr. Big and Mr. Big getting the alarm and the court accepting a confiscation certificate application will have to be narrow.

In the Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe I have already criticised the Swiss banking system, with its numbered accounts, and the completely and utterly secure banking facility it offers for those with vast sums which they do not wish to disclose. Switzerland is a well organised country and the Swiss are extremely law abiding, but it has kept open an Aladdin's cave for master criminals. As my hon. Friend will know, it will be extremely difficult to get the numbered accounts to disgorge their assets. Although some international agreement may be reached, I doubt it.

The Customs and Excise is to receive 35 more investigation officers. In Southampton the collector of Customs and Excise, Mr. Jones, has been under severe pressure for some time because of the shortage of staff. Whether they are uniformed or working under cover, it does not matter. I am sure that the collector of Customs and Excise in my area will be pleased to see provisions made for extra staff. The difficulty is that all the yachting harbours and marinas that are being built now on the south coast are almost a complete open door. A Customs and Excise dinghy cannot be expected on a weekend to catch up with all the powerful yachts that are steaming in and out. This must be dealt with drastically by additional staff who make it a point almost to swamp certain marinas on certain dates to pluck out those using the channel as the easy means of entrance.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State wants to know how far the Bill should be expanded in the future. I have already written to my hon. Friend because I feel that all those who profit by vice should be included. I think particularly of the massive amounts earned from prostitution in my area. There is a small number of organisers. Proceeds from the soliciting trade are such that a fine of £10,000 is almost a joke.

Sometimes, the vice barons, as they have been called by my local newspaper, may well own a whole parade of houses and be housing all their "staff". They may be making enormous profits and, even if they go inside for a year or two, the business may carry on as usual. We must stop that. We have to show that these criminals are prepared to live by vice, and that there is no profit at the end of the day, and certainly no moneys waiting for them when they come out. The difficulty will be in tracing the amounts. This is another part of the Bill which is practical, which means that anyone laundering illicit money will be subject to a prison sentence.

I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are not a gambler, but most of this money seems to be laundered through practically every gaming house, every race course, greyhound course, motor racing track — practically everywhere that large sums of money change hands through gambling. In the United Kingdom, legitimate business use of this money is not quite as apparent as it is in the United States. The dealers do not have large legitimate businesses at the moment, but I am sure that if organised drug trafficking gets a real foothold in Europe they will have identical businesses for laundering money. That will be a very difficult problem, but I am pleased to see the provision in the Bill.

Anyone who gives information when Mr. Big has been traced and either prevents the seizure of assets or alarms the criminal can be sentenced — once again, I must congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State — to a maximum of five years for disclosing information. It may be only a whispered message over the

telephone but it does irreparable harm. Naturally, it allows the criminal to take all necessary precautions with his assets. He could easily leave the country at short notice.

If confiscation amounts to more than £1 million and the criminal evades the confiscation order, up to a maximum of 10 years will be added to his prison sentence. That is worth while. We must take the profit out of criminal activities. It is as simple as that. Although we cannot legislate for every detail—I am sure that in Committee it will become even more apparent that it is impossible to do so—nevertheless, the Bill is a round picture showing how to deal with those who live by vice or criminal activities. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will comment on the increased number of criminal activities that can be included in this assets confiscation.

This measure will put a chill on the master criminal. It is no good him working for nothing. If we make it hot enough for him, he may try another country or decide to turn to legal work, although I doubt it.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Lawful work.

Mr. Hill: Yes.

The report of the Howard League on the profits of crime and their recovery puts this succinctly. During the past 20 years, liberalisation has crept in so that the victim is given less consideration than the criminal. I am pleased that we are reversing that trend. I wish Ministers every success in Committee.

9.6 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): It makes a change to be able to join forces with all hon. Members in supporting a Bill. I commend the work of the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—on this aspect of what should be a multi-pronged attack on the vile drug pushers and those who wish to inflict even more social ills on an ailing society.

In some respects, my constituency is similar to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). My constituency does not include the same number of multi-storey blocks as my hon. Friend's constituency, but there are some. They give cover to some drug pushers who use binoculars to look for miles around at strangers coming on foot or by vehicle. The Bill does not do enough.

Although the Bill attempts to deny the evil drug pushers their ill-gotten gains—my constituents would back me to the hilt in whole-heartedly commending that provision, although they do not by any means favour the Government's other policies—I am bound to ask myself whether this measure meets the problem in areas such as the Croxteth housing estate in my constituency.

On 31 July 1984, I wrote to the Prime Minister about the case of Jason Fitzsimmons, the 14-year-old youngster who died from the effects of a drug cocktail he had taken because he had been a heroin addict for some time and was attempting to find an antidote. My letter called for urgent action to designate areas such as Croxteth and the Ford estate in Birkenhead as special priority areas—not just in terms of policing, although that is a problem in itself. The measures that have bitten into the drugs problem have come solely from the Home Office. Unfortunately, the Government have not produced a sufficiently coherent policy.

I am pleased that on Merseyside the drugs squad has been increased by 18 officers and that it is concentrating on areas such as Croxteth. We need more than that. There is a need for the establishment of local treatment centres on the estate to treat the victims of the drug problem. There is a need for the funding of local bodies. Unfortunately, because of other Government legislation to abolish Merseyside county council and other metropolitan counties, one of the sources of funding for voluntary bodies attempting to tackle the problem is being removed. Councils such as Liverpool, no matter what controversy there might be about the measures that the city council has taken, have been under great pressure as a result of the reduction of rate support grant.

Mr. Mellor: I want the hon. Gentleman to know that we take the problems of Liverpool seriously. I opened the Hope street clinic last year. When I visited Liverpool we were able to estimate that in the previous year almost £1 million had been devoted by central Government resources to the alleviation of Liverpool's problems. I had food for thought when I visited the Merseyside drug centre because, of the full-time workers employed there, six of them were paid for by the Wirral borough council, which is less of a large spender than Liverpool council. At that time, Liverpool city council was funding only one centre. Spending priorities come into this issue. The Government have certainly not forgotten the problems of Liverpool.

Mr. Wareing: I am pleased to hear that, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are many areas that I think the Government should be dealing with. I noted the comments of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) about reducing the long-term demand for drugs. He talked about the need for education. Nobody would argue with that. However, although I would not over-emphasise unemployment as a factor, I insist, because I know Croxteth and Norris Green as I was brought up in the area, that the problem of drugs has appeared only recently. It coincides with the enormous increase in youth unemployment which, on those two estates, is now over 90 per cent. Unemployment is not the only factor but we cannot argue that a reduction in unemployment in those areas would not help to destroy the market for the evil products. The Government must look at that issue in working-class housing estates such as Croxteth.

One must remember that there have to be local outlets for the energy of young people. Perhaps when the Minister visits Liverpool again he will look at the sports centre provided by the local city council. Although the council may be abused, it provides an outlet for the people of a socially ravaged estate.

The Under-Secretary of State has mentioned the Hope street clinic. Most of those who are afflicted by the drug disease are not living in the centre of Liverpool in the area in which the Hope street clinic is to be found. Instead, they live in the outlying areas, in Birkenhead or in Croxteth in my constituency. Clinical advice and treatment should be available on the spot where drug takers are to be found.

I fear that good accountants will save some of the drug pushers from the full punishment that is set out in the Bill. However, as I am neither an accountant nor a lawyer, I shall await advice on that issue. I reinforce the argument which was advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on the need for more surveillance at ports of entry. I know that the hon. Member for Westminster, North has doubts on this score

[Mr. Wareing]

and has some evidence from the United States to support them, but the figures speak for themselves. In the letter that I received from the Prime Minister, the right hon. Lady mentioned the 160 customs officers who have been appointed, but 60 of them are merely redeployed officials. The other 100 have been appointed only because planned cuts have not been implemented. Thousands of general officers in the customs service have been lost to us since 1979.

I understand that 93 per cent. of the drug seizures at Heathrow have been the result of cold finds following spot checks. Out of 97 detections, only seven were the result of information received. That shows that more uniformed officers are required irrespective of the doubts that some might have about their efficiency falling short of 100 per cent.

Dover is one of the main ports of entry, and many of those entering the country do so by car. If others have their way, even more will come by that route via the Channel link. That factor can be thrown into the general argument about the Channel tunnel. There are 23 car bays at Dover but only seven are being used, because of staff shortages. We know that 75 per cent. of those entering Britain do so through Dover or Heathrow. Yet, according to the Civil and Public Services Association, the union which represents the officials concerned, only one in 400 are stopped as they pass through the green clearway. Despite the comments of the hon. Member for Westminster, North, there must be something to be said for remedying that deficiency.

Since 1979, there has been a 236 per cent. increase in the number of notified drug addicts. Residents in parts of my constituency suffer many of the drug-related crimes of burglary and mugging. Indeed, in some areas of my constituency people are loth to leave their premises even during the day. Some of the few who have employment have even been deterred from going to their places of work because of the prospect of their homes being burgled in their absence. The burglaries are all too often the result of young people who are unemployed and who are looking for kicks. They get their kicks by taking the drugs which the evil men are pushing. They have nothing more to do with their time.

The hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) has made a number of impassioned pleas for action. He made one tonight, and as Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs he was responsible for that Committee's report. I offer no excuses for repeating to the House part of what that report states:

> "We believe, from all that we saw and heard, that as the American market becomes saturated the flood of hard drugs will cross the Atlantic. We fear that unless immediate and effective action is taken Britain and Europe stand to inherit the American drug problem in less than five years. We see this as the most serious peacetime threat to our national well-being."

The Bill, commendable though it is, is a inadequate response to that challenge. It is only a step on the way. Piecemeal approaches, even if they are prefaced by the Home Secretary's admission earlier today that a much more coherent policy is necessary, deny the House the chance of a full-scale debate on all the social problems relating to the drug addiction problem. We need a comprehensive and coherent policy that will examine unemployment and deal with surveillance at the ports of entry, as well as merely dealing with policing and the ill-gotten gains of the drug pushers.

Tonight the Opposition will give their approval to the Bill which, on this occasion, will have the support not only of myself and the majority who support me politically in my constituency, but of all my constituents.

9.23 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in the debate as the Bill represents a major and radical step forward in deterrence and prosecution of drug traffickers. In particular, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on his efforts in bringing the legislation before the House.

There is agreement on all sides of the House that the people who perpetrate large-scale drug trafficking are as evil as any other category of criminal. Amendments to the law have already been made making sentences more suitable to the scale of their crimes. But the profits that are made from drugs make even these risks look negligible. The possibility of a spell in prison seems acceptable to many criminals if that is to be followed by access to a considerable fortune on leaving prison.

From the point of view of many more organised criminal groups which may be involved or which may be thinking of becoming involved in drug trafficking as an additional dimension to their normal sphere of operations, the additional legal risks and complications to which they will be exposed as a result of this legislation would pose a real disincentive.

Some aspects of the Bill do not go far enough. In particular, I am concerned that the assessments of the proceeds for confiscation should be limited only to those assets which can be shown to be in the possession of the defendant or held on his behalf. There will often be cases where he or she has been convicted of trafficking which will have yielded profits vastly in excess of the visible assets. It should be open to the courts to take that into account in assessing proceeds so that convicted drug traffickers will be forced to repatriate funds, if necessary, to avoid the further sentences provided by the Bill for non-payment.

My other main area of concern about the Bill has been referred to by other hon. Members. Given the sophistication of financial markets and of many of those involved in drug trafficking today, it is not inconceivable that a suspected trafficker could arrange, through a single telephone call, to have substantial assets moved out of the country between the moment of arrest and the obtaining of a restraint or freezing order. There can be no clearer case for amending the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to delay notification and keep a suspect incommunicado in such cases to avoid that possibility.

Another area of concern is how to recruit the necessary expertise to carry out the financial operations envisaged by the Bill. As with the growing problem of financial fraud, it may be too much to expect officers with purely police training to carry out such work. I suggest that Ministers consider recruiting from the areas of finance, paying the salaries necessary to recruit such people. We may also need some kind of central multi-agency unit to take full advantage of the provisions in the Bill. This would cover specialists in various areas, including the Inland Revenue, but I believe that it would be improper if the people concerned were not ultimately under the control of the

criminal investigators. I understand that experience abroad, especially in Canada, shows that in some cases financial investigations have run ahead of criminal investigations and the persons under investigation have been warned off and thus escaped arrest.

The arrangements for the seizure of assets and the provision of evidence from other countries are also relevant. If the trail ends when assets leave this country, many of the benefits of the Bill will be wasted. I hope that in winding up the debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will report on negotiations with other countries on this important aspect.

Finally, to put the Bill into the context of the drug problem as a whole, there is a huge and, I fear, still growing demand for hard drugs in this country and so long as that demand exists it will be met in one way or another. With 40 million passengers and millions of vehicles and cargo shipments coming into this country, drugs are bound to arrive here. Efforts at education, I fear, are still in their infancy, but until children realise that involvement with drugs puts them in the greatest physical and mental danger and until parents realise that it is up to them to see what their children are up to and with whom they consort I do not believe that any real progress will be made.

Unfortunately, the Bill is not about demand but only about supply, which might be thought easier to control, although not much easier. If one shipment of drugs is intercepted there is no doubt that there will be others to replace it. Nevertheless, it is vital that supply is disrupted as often and as widely as possible so that the street price of drugs is kept high and life is made more difficult and dangerous for the major drug traffickers.

The Bill is a radical measure, and I am certain that it will contribute to those aims. Even if its effects make only a small dent in the problem, in view of the gravity of the problem it is a major step in the right direction; and for that reason I unreservedly welcome it.

9.29 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a pleasure to be among friends with whom I have served during the past two years on the various Home Affairs Committees. However, I hope that the Whips do not take that as an offer to serve on the Committee stage of the Bill. My intervention shall be short and, I hope, cogent. Several hon. Members have remarked on the work carried out by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. He has had a series of peripatetic journeys round the world and the hon. Member has made the word "ubiquitous" sound pleasant. I am not on the Home Affairs Committee at present, but I have followed with great interest the work of the Under-Secretary of State. I have read the various documents produced by him and I have followed the progress of his initiatives, one of which is the Bill, which gives new powers for tracing and freezing the proceeds of drug trafficking. The Bill is welcomed by my constituents and I add my congratulations to the Under-Secretary of State.

The issues that I wish to raise relate to my constituency of Middlesbrough. Like my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), we have several problems on Teesside, but none as grave as those that we have heard about tonight from my colleagues. The problems on Teesside are of solvent abuse and prescribed drug dependancy, rather than hard drugs. For that reason, I participate in the debate to show the determination of an elected representative of Teesside to ensure that the position does not worsen. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) mentioned the threat, or even the forecast, that our drug problem might be as great as that of the United States within five years. My hon. Friend called for a comprehensive and cohesive policy and a whole range of Government action to deal with the problem. My remarks relate to that Government action.

Recently on Teesside the local customs and excise took the decision to redeploy a rummage crew working on Teesside. The duties of that crew were to search vessels and to seek out drugs and other illicit cargo. It was decided that those men should be redeployed to other duties. The appropriate unions, the Minister of State, Treasury, and I intervened. As a consequence, the redeployment, decided upon by the collector of customs in Newcastle upon Tyne, is deferred until 30 September 1986. The Minister of State, Treasury, was kind enough to explain to me the background to that decision. The proposed deployment was in accordance with customs policy to allocate resources to the best possible use. He pointed out that in the interim, local management will reappraise the need for the rummage crew, taking account of local and national priorities and any resources for customs preventive work that are allocated to the region. We follow with interest the future of that crew.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), in a speech to which I listened with great interest, referred to the work of the customs service as being the first line of defence. He rightly pointed out that we cannot stop all the drugs that come into the United Kingdom through sea ports and airports. He noted that only 10 per cent. of the drugs entering the United States can be detained by the authorities, despite the enormous amount of money and the vast resources at their disposal. However, that does not mean that there should be no attempt at the ports to prevent drugs from entering. The hon. Member also made the point that the number of specialist customs officers has been increased from 121 to 212, with a further 50 being appointed. My hon. Friend the Member for West Derby mentioned redeployment and said that those figures show some redeployment.

The concept that there is an attempt at the ports to prevent drugs from entering and the concept that not all drugs can be stopped are not mutually exclusive. It would be wrong for would-be traffickers in drugs to get the impression that we shall be lax at our ports of entry and that they are an easy target for the importation of illicit drugs. We must accept that our island position is somewhat different from that of the United States, which has a long border with Mexico. Therefore, we can curtail the illicit importation of drugs, notwithstanding the fact that, in a few years time, we may have a Channel tunnel. The rummage crew on Teesside and the customs and excise officers at the ports of Glasgow, Liverpool and Southampton should be maintained so that the threat of apprehension might at least be a deterrent.

The South Tees district drug advisory committee, established in July 1984, wished to fund a resource centre on Teesside that could set up a professional action committee to treat drug addicts and possibly to counsel them. It also considered the appointment of a full-time worker who would work under the direction of the action committee. It asked the DHSS for £86,000 over three years

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

to fund the resource centre. It was a multi-discipline committee of health authority, local authority, the police, the probation service and voluntary organisations.

Unfortunately for Teesside, that request for funding was rejected. The Under-Secretary of State will recall that he was kind enough to advise me that the Phoenix house residential rehabilitation centre, which is established in London and Sheffield, proposed the opening of a residential rehabilitation facility in south Tyneside, for which it received a grant of £273,419 over three years from the DHSS. Its 30 places were meant to cover the north of England. My constituents are worried by the fact that there is no provision between Newcastle and York or Leeds, and it is a matter of some concern to us that the application was rejected.

However, during the past few days, Middlesbrough has heard the good news from the Department of Education and Science that it will fund an advisory teacher to fight drug abuse. The teacher will liaise with schools and colleges in an attempt to stamp out drug abuse in the county. He or she will liaise with Health Service workers and voluntary agencies. This relates to the point made by the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) about the involvement of parents in the attempt to curb drug abuse. Perhaps the advisory teacher can help in that area.

My constituents welcome the Bill. I accept that it is part and parcel of a broad frontal attack by the Government on drug addiction and abuse and illicit importation. I urge the Government to seek better co-ordination among the resources of the DHSS, the Department of Education and Science and the Home Office so that the attack on this heinous problem—we listened with great interest to the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) recount his visits to the United States with the Select Committee—can be given greater force. We welcome the Bill and the Government's broad frontal attack on the problem. Teesside, which has the third largest port in the country, must not be missed out of that broad attack.

9.39 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): When my private Member's Bill, now the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act 1985, was debated in Standing Committee I said:

"The Bill does not provide a magical miracle cure for the highly complex, extremely serious and ever-growing problem of drug misuse. There are various aspects of that problem, including prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The Bill covers just one aspect of deterrence, which is only one part of prevention. Anything we can do we must do."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 27 March 1985; c. 5.]

This Bill covers a further crucial aspect of deterrence. My Bill was supported by all of the political groupings in the House and by every shade and faction within those groupings. This Bill deserves equal non-partisan support.

There is, to me, no distinction between convicted drug dealers and those who are convicted of burglary or fraud. All gain financially from criminal activity. There is no difference between murder by heroin for financial gain and murder by shotgun in the course of a bank robbery. Neither the burglar nor the person who is convicted of fraud is allowed to keep the proceeds of his crime; nor should a drug trafficker be allowed to do so.

The whole point of deterrence is to reduce the supply of drugs and thereby slow down the dramatic increase in the number of addicts. The measure of the problem can be shown by referring to the notified figures of heroin addicts in 1984. The number was 6,611, a 324 per cent. increase on the figure for 1979, and notified addicts are just the tip of the iceberg. The number of regular users is much greater. The lowest estimate is about 60,000, rising, according to some estimates, to as many as 150,000. Recently in another place Lord Lane said:

"Let us take even the lowest figure of 10,000 addicts in the country. It requires, at the lowest, £20 a day per addict to feed their addiction. That is £7,000 a year per addict. If one multiplies that by 10,000, that totals £70 million. Those figures can probably be multiplied by four. But whether it is £70 million or £280 million, that money has to come from crime."—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 January 1985; Vol. 459, c. 660-1.]

And that money goes, of course, to criminals.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Metropolitan police estimate that 23 per cent. of its targeted criminals are now involved in hard drugs. Ten years ago they would have confined themselves to armed robbery, but now they find that hard drugs are much more lucrative. Indeed, it has been shown that some of them profit by as much as seven-figure sums over a very limited period from the importation of drugs. It is clear that they will continue to do so unless they are deterred by the toughest possible system of penalties.

It is true that the seizure of controlled drugs has increased dramatically—in the case of heroin from only 3·3 kilos in 1973 to 312 kilos in 1984. The seizure of increasingly large quantities of heroin is a tribute to the work and the efforts of customs and excise and the police. But the seizures only confirm the severity of the problem. Heroin purity is still high—47 per cent., on average, in this country, compared to only 7 per cent. in the United States. And the price of heroin is cheap. It is one of the very few commodities whose price has fallen in the last few years, by one fifth between 1980 and 1983. The combination of high purity and low price means a plentiful supply of the drug.

The need for action is urgent. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, for the Home Department said when the Bill was published last month:

"even the risk of long prison sentences is acceptable to some if a life of affluence awaits them on release."

We must ensure that it does not do so. We must not be diverted by legalistic controversy over the concept of the reversal of the burden of proof. It is not a novel concept; nor is it, as some have suggested, such a fundamental change in our criminal justice system. As we are all aware, it already exists in taxation matters. And Lord Denning has pointed out in another place that it is already established in English law, in the case of the chief constable of Kent and another in the Court of Appeal in 1983.

Of greater concern to me is the implementation of the Bill and how effective it will be when it becomes law. When attempting to trace offenders' assets we will be dependent on close co-operation with foreign countries. Drugs are not only big business; they are international business. A major drug trafficker does not tend to have a large deposit account in the National Westminster bank down the road. He is among the most sophisticated of criminals and his money is laundered through a multiplicity of accounts in a multiplicity of countries, many of them far away.

The Bill allows for reciprocal enforcement agreements with other countries so that an order by a British court can be enforceable against assets held overseas. I hope that during his closing speech the Minister will tell us how

quickly he expects such agreements to be reached after the Bill becomes law. Perhaps he can also tell us the current position on proposals for the new United Nations convention to deal with all aspects of international drug trafficking, and what progress is being made through the Pompidou group of the Council of Ministers on drug misuse. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the issue of drug trafficking at two recent internatinal conferences and I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could tell the House about the follow-through on those discussions. International co-operation is vital if the Bill is to be effective.

I should also like to ask about the public service manpower effects of the Bill. As my hon. Friend knows, I welcomed the increase last year of 150 Customs officers specialising in drugs. I remember, as he will, that during the debate in Standing Committee on my private Member's Bill he said he would not hesitate to recommend a further increase if he thought it was necessary. This Bill allows for some 35 new customs and excise investigative staff which, it says, are

"necessary to exploit the opportunities presented by the new legislation."

I am well aware, as we said earlier in the debate, that the main thrust of customs effort is in intelligence, and that leads to some of the more spectacular seizures. However, I believe that there is a need for more random searches. Of the 36 million visitors to this country from abroad each year, only one in 100 can expect to be searched. Major drug traffickers are also becoming more adept at using the cover of commercial freight to ply their evil trade. I believe that customs policy at the moment is that only 2 per cent. of EEC goods coming into this country are examined, and that in terms of the total of all freight the figure is only 6 per cent.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) spoke about private yachts. That is a serious problem, especially when in Chichester there are 6,000 in harbour, on the Hamble 4,000, and at Lymington another 4,000. The Society of Civil and Public Servants has said in a survey on the Hamble that an average of 60 yachts come in on Sunday nights and request Customs inspection. About the same number come in and do not bother to request it, but there are not even enough Customs officers at the moment to inspect the 60 that request inspection. Perhaps my hon. Friend could tell us how the figure of 35 extra Customs officers in intelligence was arrived at and why the Bill does not advocate more officers for random searches. After all, the additional cost of staff is likely to be offset by higher income from confiscation.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs described drugs as

"the most serious peacetime threat to our national well-being."

It is indeed an insidious, all-pervasive threat that knows no boundaries of class or geography. It is no longer an inner city, a city, an urban or even a suburban problem. It is prevalent throughout our villages and our countryside. I represent a partly urban, partly rural constituency in north Wales. It is covered by the north Wales constabulary, and in that area we have seen a dramatic increase in drugs offences—from 292 in 1978, none involving heroin, to 956 in 1984, 522 of them, more than half, involving heroin.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) quoted Justinian's article in the *Financial Times* which said that the Bill, if passed, will be

"one of the most fearsome pieces of legislation in modern times, both in the investigative powers it gives to public authorities and in its penal sanctions."

That should greatly satisfy Ministers and officials in the Home Office. To me such a response is only too appropriate to such a serious threat to our national well-being.

9.50 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): We are dealing with an international problem which shows all the signs of approaching and remaining at epidemic proportions during the 1980s and the 1990s unless fairly drastic action is taken. Between 1974 and 1984, the number of reported drug addicts increased fivefold. The number of those receiving medical treatment trebled. The figures show that heroin imports have increased by some 640 per cent.

The most frightening aspect of all is that the size of the problem, as illustrated by the figures, is only the tip of the iceberg, as my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said, because the official statistics show only reported instances. Those who have tried to estimate the scale of heroin addiction have suggested that the number of addicts is over 60,000.

I will not be as rash as the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and claim to speak for every one of my constituents, but I am sure that the majority of them are behind the measure, as are the Derby Christian Trade Unionists who have shown a commendable interest in the subject.

I thought the hon. Gentleman was a little ungenerous in his reference to customs officials. The emphasis of detection has changed somewhat and, as I understand it, increasing importance is being given to long-term intelligence work. While I agree with some of the points he made about the desire to increase the number of customs officers, it is fair not to overlook this other point.

Britain can learn from the experience of the United States of America. America has been a dumping ground for drugs for a number of years and comparatively its problem is a lot worse than ours. I note that America has proceeded along the path that we are being invited to follow.

I should like the Minister, when replying, to comment on one point. I understand that in America not only is it lawful for drug proceeds and the assets achieved from drug dealing to be forfeited but that that can be achieved by civil proceedings before a criminal conviction. Has my right hon. Friend given further thought to whether or not we should introduce a similar measure?

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) asked what will happen to assets confiscated by the courts. In America, a percentage of the assets seized goes to the general fund of the Treasury. However, the recent crackdown on drugs there has also proved profitable for the police because, as I understand it, some states in America offer an inducement to police authorities whereby a successful drug detection unit is sometimes allowed to keep a percentage of the assets for whose confiscation it has been responsible. I should like my hon. Friend to deal with that point.

It seems that to some degree the success of the American legislation is based upon the motivation factor. That is a good Conservative principle—the principle of self-interest. If police squads are successful, they should

[Mr. Greg Knight]

be able to have some share of the confiscated assets in terms of new equipment or perhaps an expansion of their departments. Will this happen, even to a small extent, in Britain when the Bill becomes law?

Some hon: Members have expressed concern about the shift in the burden of proof. I know that the former right hon. Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, also expressed concern about this aspect of the Bill. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn—I do not have any misgivings about this provision of the Bill. First, it applies only after conviction. I think that the successful business man, the successful pop singer or even the unsuccessful working man who has won a bonanza from a newspaper bingo game or has won money from any other source would have no difficulty in showing the actual source of the money.

Secondly, it is not creating a precedent because—in areas of law which are substantially less serious, such as commercial law and some traffic offences — the principle does exist. When a motorist is stopped by the police, the burden is on him to show that he holds a licence, that his vehicle has an MOT test certificate and that he is insured. We are not creating a new principle although we may be extending the principle. This should be done, in view of the horrors of the drug problem, if we are to bring the guilty to justice and take the profit out of their crime.

The drug problem, rather like the economy, has two sides to it—supply and demand. Some people suggest that all the Government can do is attack the supply side and try to prevent drugs from coming into the country. I disagree. Although it is important to see that drug hauls are intercepted, the demand side does need to be tackled. It is vital that the public, especially the young, are educated about the effects of drugs. There is a tendency —not just for the reasons of unemployment or social deprivation suggested by the hon. Member for West Derby —among some young people to experiment and a desire to try something out that is fashionable. They may hear of a pop singer admitting to taking drugs and think it is something to try.

I must add my voice to the praise which has been given to my hon. Friend the Minister, the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—much praise has been given to him this evening and earlier, I thought, from the look on his face, that he was getting rather worried about it. However, the praise is welcome and deserved. It is worth underlining the fact that the Government have made £8 million available to try to drive home to young people the dangers of drug abuse.

It is not often that there is such consensus in the House as we see today. I hope that all Members will agree with the Prime Minister who, on 9 August last year, addressing her remarks to drug traffickers said:

> "We are after you. The pursuit will be relentless. The effort will get greater and greater until we have beaten you. The penalty will be long prison sentences. The penalty will be confiscation of everything you have ever gotten from drug smuggling."

Let us all say "Hear, hear" to that.

9.59 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I hope that brevity will not be taken for lack of concern about this vital issue. The co-operation shown by both sides of the House, which I hope will be demonstrated by suspension of the Ten o'clock rule, shows that the House is determined to support one of the most effective weapons in the fight against drug taking and peddling. It is a world war against drugs. We are in the middle of world war three, and it is as important and probably as costly in terms of lives as previous world wars.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Hanley: My confidence in the House is fully justified, and I am grateful for the unanimous vote.

I was honoured to be a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee that went to America. We had seen the depths to which people can sink through addiction to heroin in Hong Kong and Amsterdam and we saw the same with regard to cocaine in the United States. We have seen exactly what our future will be, or is likely to be, unless the Bill is supported fully by the British public. It is supported by the House. It is now up to the public to ensure that it works. On our return from America, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said:

> "I fear I have seen the future, and I do not like it."

That is exactly the mood of the Select Committee.

I well remember going on the visit. Most of us went with smiling faces, looking forward to our visit to a foreign country. Our smiles were very quickly wiped off our faces when we saw the evidence of drug taking, what it can do to people, the extent of drug taking and the amount of money that can be made from this pernicious habit.

I went with prejudices. I believed that marijuana, or cannabis, was possibly harmless and that perhaps it should be legalised—that at least we should consider that. I came away believing that marijuana is as dangerous as any other drug. It can lead to the harder drugs. It can lead to a mentality that accepts drug taking. Scientific evidence shows that, when mixed with tobacco, it can be as dangerous as any other cancer-inducing product.

I believed that cocaine was relatively harmless, that it was bearable and that one might be able to kick the habit. I have now seen that that is not at all the case. Although, unlike heroin, it can be put aside for a month or two, the feeling of euphoria, great power, ease and confidence that comes with cocaine is addictive and eventually the drug itself becomes addictive. The physical signs of taking cocaine are even more horrible. It can destroy the nasal passages and cause people to have metal implants in their noses because it has burnt the inside away.

I remember, as my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said, being in that small room in Miami surrounded by $10 billion-worth of drugs. That is almost twice as much as the budget for the Home Office, almost twice as much as the United Kingdom budget to the EEC and more than the budgets of the Department of Employment and the Department of Transport put together. It represents staggering power.

Anybody could spend $1 billion on a small army and multiply the profits 10 times. That is why the place is so secret and so heavily armed. However, that $10 billion was the product of only six months of seizures in the

Miami area. It represents one tenth of the drug industry in America worth $100 billion. That is bigger than the gross domestic product of 14 out of 25 OECD countries.

I learned a hard lesson in America. I learned that cocaine cannot be regarded as the champagne drug, as it is often called. I learned that it is the norm to take it at parties, especially among show business people. However, industry is also tainted by it. We even discovered that one of the representatives of the people, a Congressman, had been addicted to it but, now cured, tours the country telling of its evils. Anybody can be addicted to this drug once they have tasted it. In Pakistan, it has been discovered that two children of Cabinet Ministers are suffering from heroin addiction, and the authorities are clamping down effectively on the production of drugs, with the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor).

When one sees the activities of the drug traffickers and the couriers who bring drugs through Heathrow and other ports, one realises just what this can lead to. Drugs couriers carry drugs not only for money; they do it because they are threatened and blackmailed. There was the recent case involving the Nigerian lady who died when one of the 32 contraceptives containing heroin which she had been forced to take into her stomach exploded. That illustrates what people are forced to do. We know that she was forced to do it, because on her back were 32 razor cuts so that she would have to account for every one of the packages she had been forced to smuggle through. If that is the pressure under which people are put, it shows the evil of the drug for the world.

With regard to the funds which are seized — admittedly very effectively in America, in the fight against drug traffickers — I do not believe that in the United Kingdom context they should be used specifically for prisons, for rehabilitation, for education or against the drug trafficker. I believe that every penny that is seized should be taken and put into the coffers of the Treasury. However, I believe that it is undeniable that we need to spend sufficient—or even more—on building prisons to house the traffickers, on rehabilitating those who have fallen prey to the drugs, on educating children so that they never go to drugs and against drugs traffickers in every way possible.

The fact that the document "Tackling Drugs Misuse" was signed by seven Secretaries of State is an almost unique example of co-operation in Government in modern times. It is a document to be remembered, for the simple reason that one of those Secretaries of State was the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself. The Chancellor of the Exchequer should remember that, in signing that document, he signed a whole-hearted commitment to provide the funds to fight drugs. We need more than the proceeds of seizure of drugs to use against drug traffickers, and this money must be found.

Some people say that the police have gone soft on drugs. From evidence put before the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I do not believe that to be so. I believe that they are waging an intelligent and effective war and are being more constructive and effective in their approach. I can say, after four meetings with Scotland Yard, that I have never seen a body of men and women so concerned about one issue.

With regard to customs officers, of course numbers matter. If the numbers fall below what is needed to do the job effectively, then obviously drugs will come in. If customs officers go on strike, as they have done in recent years, that is when drugs can flood into the country. This is particularly so when they announce that they are going to go on strike in advance, to gain extra industrial pressure. I wish that they would not go on strike because they play a vital part in stopping drugs coming into the country.

Of course numbers matter, but I believe that the present numbers are about adequate. It is not numbers ultimately that make the difference; it is the intelligence that Customs officers receive, the training they have in drug-related matters, the co-operation with the police force, which I am glad to say is now better than it has ever been, and the co-operation with other services that are so important. It is being able to identify the drug trafficker, the courier and the transport that brings drugs into the country. I am glad that the customs service has, in Pakistan, a man who is doing such excellent work in passing intelligence back to this country, and about the spread of this service to other countries. Given the contacts that we have—both police and customs officers—diplomatic status is a tremendous benefit, and helps co-operation with other countries.

This is one of the best and most interesting Bills that has ever been introduced in an attempt to stop one particular crime. I was proud that I was on the Committee and that all members of the Committee agreed to the seven parts of the interim report. I was pleased, and I hope that the Government would take notice. The Government have done more than that—independently, they have come to the same conclusions. My hon. Friend the Member for Putney has worked tirelessly. It is known that he is probably one of the hardest-worked Ministers in the Government, and this co-operation role is particularly difficult. Wherever the Select Committee went, he had been before. Instead of saying that we wished that the Government would see what we had seen, we knew that my hon. Friend the Minister had seen it first. He has learnt what we have and has come to the same conclusion.

This is an excellent Bill. I wish that it were tougher on civil remedies, but that is my only criticism of it. I wish it fair speed.

10.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): It is a pleasure to be able to respond to such an interesting and absorbing debate, which has shown such a wide-ranging accord across the Floor of the House. I thank those who paid warm tributes to my efforts. I am touched by what has been said. It is a privilege for me to be engaged in this issue, which we all know to be of such profound significance to future generations. My right hon. Friends and I are glad that the Bill has achieved such wide-ranging support and that the points that have been made have been so constructive. We shall have the opportunity to look at them in Committee, where I am looking forward to playing a part in the proceedings.

I am also glad that it has been possible to broaden the debate and to make some more general points about the overall problem and the work that we are doing to combat it. It is clear that, although this is a significant Bill, which represents a further major brick in the wall that we are building against the trafficker, the Bill alone cannot resolve the drugs problem.

In a typically wise speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) made abundantly clear his view that there is no excape from the drug

[Mr. David Mellor]

problem down the law and order route, although we must make those services more effective in their battle against traffickers. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) pointed out that escape comes through education and widespread recognition by the community that there exists no problem that drugs do anything but make matters worse. We must get more people to say no to drugs. The willingness of people to pay for and take drugs puts the pressure on, and creates the incentive for, the drug trafficker to find other, more complicated ways of avoiding authority. We must face the fact that in a free society there will always be ways to do that. We can never block off every route into the country.

We have to make the law and order services ever more effective. The police and customs are now working together in the closest way — unparalleled in their history. They have never been better resourced to do this and the other jobs that they are asked to do. We talk in terms of raising several million pounds from the Bill, but we should not begrudge the Treasury that money, as expenditure on the police under this Government has gone up from £1·1 billion to £2·8 billion a year. The police service at every level — from the drug squads to the copper on the beat to the regional crime squads, increased by 20 per cent. as a result of announcements made in the summer, to the national drugs intelligence unit, headed by one of our most experienced policemen — is playing a full part in this with the customs.

I do not want to get into detailed discussion at this hour about the customs position, but I should like to pay tribute to the work of the customs, as I did the other day when their seizure figures for 1985 were announced, showing just what a rich harvest their professionalism is reaping. The fact that they smashed 70 drug rings last year is a major achievement; and the fact that 1,500 people were arrested is also something for which we are all very grateful.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) raised the point of uniformed preventive staff. I appreciate that there has been controversy about this matter. Certainly since my ministerial group was formed there has been a steady increase in the number of uniformed preventive officers, and there are more to come. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) must not think that we are talking of only 35 extra officers in this context. Thirty-five extra intelligence officers relate to the work of this Bill. But I am happy to tell him, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) well knows, because this information was given in answer to his question, that in the two years from April 1985 to April 1987 it is proposed that the number of uniformed preventive officers, whose main priority is drugs detection, be increased from 2,823, as at 1 April 1985, to 3,300 by 1 April 1987—almost 500 more over a two-year period. By the same token, the number of specialist intelligence investigators dealing with the careful tracking of drugs conspiracies, the careful targeting of flights and of individuals, the profiling of suspects—which is such a help to uniformed officers — has increased already from some 121 to 262 and, as a result of reconsideration of the implications of this Bill, is scheduled to increase to some 297 by April 1987.

We have also seen, in parallel with those increases, a great change in the sophistication with which customs are able to tackle the drugs problem, in particular by being able to concentrate more not on the predictable checks —the red and green channels—but on the unpredictable checks. Anyone who has visited Heathrow as I have knows how much goes on apart from what one sees in the red and green channels, and rightly so.

The greatest tribute to the customs, to the efforts that they are making, and the success that they are achieving, is what was reported by Mr. Lawrence, the chief investigation officer, a few weeks ago, when he said that smugglers were no longer generally bringing their drugs on the direct route into the country; they recognised that that was now very well targeted and they were taking ever more complicated and tortuous routes around Europe. There are, of course, the particular problems of other continental countries where the law and order services are perhaps less effective, particularly the Netherlands, where drugs can be warehoused and run into the United Kingdom in containers, lorries and cars. This poses, however many men there are and however well disciplined they may be, an almost insuperable problem.

Some points of detail have been raised to which I really ought to refer. Some of them reminded me a little of what Richard Strauss said about conductors: "There are those who take the music too fast and there are others who take the music too slow." Some hon. Members think that some provisions go too far; others think that some do not go far enough. We have tried to strike a balance between the two extremes.

Our friend Justinian says that it is a ferocious piece of legislation. I gather that "Justinian" masks a well-known progressive thinker whose lines of thought are not always in keeping with those of the man on the top of the Clapham omnibus. If we have offended him, I do not suppose that it is for the first time. I do not think that there is anything particularly ferocious about the Bill in the sense that we are taking unprecedented powers. What we are doing is trying to take from other areas of the law, particularly the civil law, things that have worked well, like the Mareva injunctions and the vigorous investigations by the high Court masters. We have tried to ensure that they are put at the service of the criminal law so that we do not repeat the mistake that parliament made in 1971. At that time section 27 appeared to the layman to give a clear power to seize assets. However, because it was not sufficiently thought through and did not have a mechanism to make it enforceable, it led to the Operation Julie case, and the present hopeless distinctions between the man with the drug money hot in his pocket which can be confiscated, and the man who has invested money on the stock exchange in Westland shares, or whatever takes his fancy, which cannot be seized under the law. If in 1971 someone had suggested that that would be the effect of the legislation, no one would have believed it. That was the effect, and that is why we have worked so hard to get the right answer, stimulated by the work of the Home Affairs Select Committee to whose chairman and members I pay tribute.

The reason why we decided not to adopt the American example of civil proceedings was that we did not think that it could fit readily into the British system. The power is draconian and would have appeared out of sorts with anything that we have hitherto done, because it gives authorities the power to seize property, if they have reasonable suspicion that it has been acquired illegally. Then the individual who claims to be the owner is put to

proof. Without having been convicted of anything, it is up to him to establish that the property was lawfully acquired. If we had proposed that, I suspect that more than Justinian would have spoken of ferocity, and they might have been right.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I am receiving some instructions suggesting that I should not give way, but I shall.

Mr. Carlile: Before the Minister leaves the question of applications to freeze assets altogether, will he explain why the Government have not decided to introduce provisions which would enable the police to apply ex parte for the freezing of assets before arrest? That would be an effective power in their hands. Moreover, it was recommended by Hodgson.

Mr. Mellor: We provide for that in the sense that once a warrant for arrest is issued, it does not have to be executed. At that point the police can go to the High Court judge, before the individual knows that he is about to be arrested, and persuade that judge to grant the injunction. We have sought to balance every power that has been given with a safeguard, because that is the proper way to proceed. If the Committee takes the view that it would be better if the power to freeze were not linked to arrest, we would be receptive to that point.

It is important that we seek a balance. In striking it we reached the conclusion that this was the proper way to proceed. This major innovation in criminal law had to be balanced by evidence on which an arrest warrant had been issued, or on which an arrest without a warrant had taken place, and by the approval of a High Court judge.

Regarding the receipt of funds, a large sum has been invested in our campaign against drugs, and the extent of it is well set out in the publication, "Tackling Drug Misuse". I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not be begrudged the money that will be received as a result of this measure considering the Government's large expenditure on combating the problem.

I am grateful to colleagues who have taken part in the debate. I hope that those who have spoken so eloquently with such an obviously detailed knowledge of the problem and such a commitment to its eradication will join us in Committee. We have tried to think the Bill through, and to ensure that we give the courts a readily understandable, workable power which will result in drug traffickers losing the proceeds of their evil activities. This proposal, like all the others that come before the House, must be looked at rigorously. No doubt, it can be improved. I hope that those who have spoken so well tonight will join in improving it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) was right to remind me about the problem of others who are making money out of crime. My hon. Friend is particularly concerned about those involved in vice. He believes that they should be subject to the rigours of these proposals. We have a commitment which we intend to carry through in the Criminal Justice Bill, which we hope will find a place in the Government's legislative programme next Session, to legislate more widely on the subject of the seizure of the assets of the criminal fraternity. It is a matter for judgment on which we welcome comments, as to how far the principles in the Bill should be carried across into the law more generally. I accept the warning that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) issued, but I know the pressure that colleagues like my hon. Friend the Member for Test are under from their constituents who are troubled by the amount of money to be made out of vice. I can assure hon. Members that their message has not fallen on deaf ears.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCES BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money provided by Parliament, and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable into the Consolidated Fund under section 61 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Mrs. Sybil Gordon

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

10.36 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am pleased to have the opportunity at a comparatively reasonable hour to refer to the constituency case of Mrs. Sybil Gordon and the advice she received from the Nottingham probate office. This is one of those cases on which a Member feels so strongly that he continues—this is the fifth time I have applied for an Adjournment debate since 5 November—to press for a hearing in this ultimate Chamber, the House of Commons. I welcome this Adjournment debate because this matter needs to be settled. It covers events that have taken place since 1982. I have made at least three attempts in correspondence with the Lord Chancellor, in addition to Mrs. Gordon's efforts, to solve this problem.

Mrs. Gordon's experience is by any standards a real tragedy in that her son Malcolm David Cameron Gordon and her grandson, Gerald David Gordon, aged seven, died together in a road accident in June 1982. Her son, who had been divorced and had not remarried, died intestate along with his only dependant. At this time, Mrs. Gordon needed help and support during what we would all recognise was, by any standards, a dreadful tragedy.

Luckily, a friend of the family, a retired auditor, Mr. Harold Lipman, helped to sort out the legal position regarding Mrs. Gordon's son's estate, especially in terms of paying his funeral expenses and debts. Mr. Lipman has proved a valuable witness to the course of events which he described in a letter to me dated 30 May 1985 in response to the first refusal that I had from the Lord Chancellor to consider this case, based on the fact that the Nottingham probate office does not give legal advice. The probate office not only gave her advice up until the last contact with the Ipswich probate office, who gave Mrs. Gordon's daughter-in-law the correct advice two years later, but continued to maintain its original position that she could not make a formal application for settlement of her son's estate, when in fact this was the correct legal position. As Mr. Lipman stated in his letter, the basis for Mrs. Gordon's complaint against the probate office is that she made a claim in 1982 to the Nottingham probate registry for the purpose of taking out letters of administration to settle her son's estate. It is clear that the advice she was given at the time was that she was not allowed to do so. She was told that only her grandson's mother could do this and that the estate had nothing to do with her.

Mr. Lipman states that Mrs. Gordon, whom he had known for many years as a retired teacher, had made an accurate statement to the probate office of the circumstances when she asked permission to take out letters of administration on her son's estate. He confirms that, within a week or so of Matthew's death, he spoke to the Nottingham probate registry describing all the relevant circumstances. The lady to whom he spoke informed him that Georgina, the son's former wife, would inherit the estate via her small son, Joe, and that she was the person who needed to register the letters of administration. He says that she was definite about that.

Some time later, Mrs. Gordon was understandably distressed because the estate was still not being administered and the undertakers were asking for payment of the funeral expenses which she had guaranteed. Mr. Lipman, as a neutral person, spoke to the Nottingham probate registry. He spoke to the same lady who, he said, was quite short with him, saying that the estate had nothing whatever to do with Matthew's mother. It concerned only the ex-wife through her young son. This corroborates the correspondence that I have had from Mrs. Gordon. I have deliberately referred to Mr. Lipman's letter because I believe that he was a neutral observer.

In 1984 when, Mr. Lipman went with Mrs. Gordon to the probate office, two years after her son's death, the official who had dealt with the application said that the lady who had given the advice had left the probate office to be a senior registrar in Manchester. She was therefore still known and traceable.

The basis of the Lord Chancellor's rejection of Mrs. Gordon's claim of harassment, difficulty and distress has been that the registry staff has no responsibility to give legal advice. The registry staff may say, "It is not our business to give legal advice. We should advise you to go to a solicitor. We can give you guidance on how to register a complaint." That is reasonable. It is clear that, in this case, from the beginning, the probate registry staff told Mrs. Gordon and Mr. Lipman that there was no question of Mrs. Gordon being able to register the letters of administration.

Over a period of two years, Mrs. Gordon suffered considerable distress because her relationship with her former daughter-in-law deteriorated. The former daughter-in-law's solicitor notified Mrs. Gordon that he was trying to get the superannuation available to her via the young boy and that settlement of the estate would depend on whether the ex-wife gave the nod. The solicitor told Mrs. Gordon in no uncertain terms that she had no claim on the estate.

I must point out that Mrs. Gordon was seeking no claim on the estate in a material sense; she was merely distressed that her son's estate was not being cleared according to the law and concerned about whether his debts were being properly paid. Subsequently, the former daughter-in-law changed her solicitor. The new solicitor applied on her behalf to the Ipswich probate office for the letters of administration.

He was given what has subsequently turned out to be the correct advice which was that the ex-wife had no claim on the estate because the grandson was under 18 years of age and the only person who could settle the sad matter was the mother.

When Mr. Lipman and Mrs. Gordon returned to the Nottingham probate office, the staff confirmed that they remembered the case. When Mrs. Gordon told them the advice she had been given by the Ipswich probate office, they refused to believe it. It was finally left that the Nottingham probate office would ring the Ipswich probate office to corroborate the correct legal advice. That was two years after the event. Immediately after that they invited Mrs. Gordon and Mr. Lipman to come to the Probate Office and take out letters of administration to settle the difficult and sad matter. Mrs. Gordon had faced two years of misery in finalising her son's estate.

It is clear that after two years people have forgotten the advice they were given and it is difficult to trace those who gave the advice. However, I submit that there are not many cases submitted to probate of such gravity, where a person loses both her son and grandson in a road accident. It is clear from Mr. Lipman's evidence of the approaches that

he made that when Mrs. Gordon approached the Nottingham probate office she was given clear advice that she had no claim on the estate and she was not encouraged or allowed to register her case which eventually proved just and legitimate.

Having suffered the long period of distress and difficulty and having lost the relationship with her ex daughter-in-law, Mrs. Gordon feels aggrieved. If she had been given the correct advice, or even no advice at all and told that it was not the role of the probate office to advise or suggest any course of action and that she should consult a legal adviser who was knowledgeable in complicated matters of probate law, the matter may have been settled more easily. That was not the case. I am satisfied that all the correspondence I have seen and the events I have described to the House are accurate.

There may be a secondary case that Mrs. Gordon did consult a solicitor in Beeston who gave her the same sort of advice as the probate office. Therefore, it was not unreasonable for Mrs. Gordon to proceed with energy to finalise the problem when on two occasions at the Nottingham probate office, on one occasion from a solicitor and under pressure from her ex-daughter-in-law's solicitor, she was given the wrong advice. I am convinced that if she had been told to seek advice from a legal adviser or if the probate office had taken the trouble to consult its own legal records, as the Ipswich probate office did, the subsequent trouble and distress would have been avoided.

I understand why people who are not qualified—that certainly covers the probate office — should not give legal advice in such cases. As I understand the principle established by the case of Hedley Byrne and Company Limited versus Heller and Partners Limited, it is not unreasonable, when officials or officers are seen to have special knowledge of the law, and are seen by laymen to be in that position, to expect them to understand that the advice they give is likely to be accepted and that they should be held responsible for it. I submit to my hon. and learned Friend that this case is clearly within that principle. It seems to be beyond doubt that the Nottingham probate registry was not advising Mrs. Gordon on how to complete the necessary forms. Instead, it was advising her on her legal position as it saw it. That continued for over two years until it verified by telephone the alternative legal advice that was given by the Ipswich office.

I contend that it would be reasonable for the Lord Chancellor to accept that in addition to the grave tragedy of losing both a son and a grandson, which few of us can envisage, Mrs. Gordon suffered sadness and distress, and unnecessary distress, over two years in the settlement of her son's estate.

In this case there have been at least three applications to the Lord Chancellor and much correspondence to him as well as this Adjournment debate. Against that background, I ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether the case could not be reopened and considered in the light of the circumstances that I have spelt out to the House, with a satisfactory solution arrived at for Mrs. Gordon in view of the great sadness and distress which she has, in my view, suffered unnecessarily.

10.41 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) has brought to the attention of the House a complaint made by his constituent, Mrs. Gordon, which concerns the staff of Nottingham probate sub-registry. My hon. Friend, as all who know him would expect, has shown great assiduity in furthering the cause of his constituent and her desire that her grievance should be considered further and should find redress.

The matter comes within the departmental responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and I, accordingly, have been asked to respond on his behalf. My hon. Friend has outlined the sad circumstances and events which befell members of Mrs. Gordon's family in June 1982. It is impossible to hear of them without great sympathy for Mrs. Gordon on that account.

Mrs. Gordon's son died intestate and his estate therefore devolved in accordance with the rules relating to intestacy, which are set out in section 46 of the Administration of Estates Act 1925. Her son had been married and had one seven-year-old son, but was divorced in May 1979. That meant that his former wife could not have inherited his estate directly. At the time of his death he had not remarried. Mr. Gordon's only child died in the same terrible accident in which he himself perished.

For the child to inherit his father's estate, he would have had to have survived his father until he reached his 18th birthday, or have married before attaining that age. As the little boy was only seven when he died, Mrs. Gordon was by law the only person who was entitled to inherit her son's estate. She was, therefore, the only person who was entitled to obtain a grant of letters of administration to his estate.

After the tragic death of her son and grandson in 1982, Mrs. Gordon was helped by a Mr. Lipman. As my hon. Friend has said, Mr. Lipman is a professional man. He is a retired auditor and a friend of the family. He telephoned solicitors in Mansfield and was told that Mrs. Gordon's son's estate would pass to his former wife via their son, Joel.

That advice was based on the assumption that the so-called law of commorientes—that is, persons who died apparently simultaneously with one another—applied in this case. That law, as now contained in section 184 of the Law of Property Act 1925, concerns the situation in which two or more persons die on the same occasion in circumstances in which it is not possible to ascertain who died first, as in a fatal car accident. In cases in which this doctrine applies, the persons who have died are deemed to have died in order of seniority—that is, the oldest first and the youngest last.

The law of commorientes, however, was irrelevant in the circumstances of the deaths of Mrs. Gordon's son and grandson because at the time of his death Mrs. Gordon's grandson was only seven years old and therefore could not have inherited his father's estate at all. The estate therefore could not pass via the little boy to his mother. If the solicitors' advice was as stated, it was therefore misleading. Mrs. Gordon was the only person entitled to her son's estate.

Mr. Lipman subsequently telephoned the Nottingham probate registry and he says that he was told that Mr. Gordon's former wife was the only person entitled to his estate. Mrs. Gordon then contacted the solicitors and was advised to make an appointment at the Nottingham registry. It is not possible now to establish exactly what was said to Mrs. Gordon by the registry staff or what information she supplied to them. It is clear, however, that

[The Solicitor General]

after her attendance at the registry Mrs. Gordon believed that her former daughter-in-law was the only person entitled to her son's estate.

Some time after she visited the probate registry, Mrs. Gordon was again told by solicitors that she was not entitled to benefit from her son's estate. She has stated in a letter that she did not attend the probate registry to obtain legal advice. It is therefore reasonable to assume that it was because of the advice given to her by solicitors that she refrained thereafter from making a formal application in 1982.

Mrs. Gordon eventually obtained a grant of letters of administration in June 1984. The basis of her complaint is that she has suffered by reason of her acceptance of advice that she says was given to her by the staff of Nottingham probate registry.

As my hon. Friend fairly acknowledges, the staff of district probate registries are not solicitors but civil servants employed by the Lord Chancellor's Department. They may advise members of the public on the procedure relating to grants of probate or letters of administration, but they must not give legal advice and they are not qualified to do so—that is the function of solicitors or barristers. Not only is it not the responsibility of registry staff to give legal advice, as my hon. Friend has said, but they are instructed that they are not to do so and it is therefore their duty not to do so.

Owing to the passage of time, it has not been possible to establish clearly what was said by the staff of the probate registry to Mrs. Gordon or even what information she gave to them about the personal circumstances of her son at the time of the accident. It is clear, however—and it is only fair to acknowledge this—that there is no reason to doubt the good faith either of Mrs. Gordon or of Mr. Lipman. Mrs. Gordon may well have been left under the impression that one or other of them—either she or Mr. Lipman — had been given well-intentioned but wrong advice which confirmed the advice that she had been given by two firms of solicitors.

The Lord Chancellor is not and cannot in the circumstances be convinced that the registry staff exceeded their duties and, therefore, he cannot accept liability in this matter. Nevertheless, he is willing to instruct his officials to consider the complaint once again. If Mrs. Gordon is willing to discuss the matter with them, arrangements will be made for those officials to consider her complaint afresh with a view to reaching a solution which would be satisfactory to her.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having raised the matter. I know that he has tried to do so on at least a couple of occasions, and I hope that the suggestion that I have made, on the authority of the Lord Chancellor, will satisfy him and will demonstrate to Mrs. Gordon that her Member of Parliament has effectively brought the matter before the House of Commons, and that that has led to a further inquiry into her understandable grievance.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Coventry (Housing Expenditure)

1. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been his Department's allocation to Coventry city council for housing expenditure each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): The housing investment programme allocations made to Coventry city council each year, beginning with 1978-79, have been £13·3 million, £13·7 million, £10·5 million, £7·7 million, £12·2 million, £8·1 million, £8·9 million, £7·7 million and for 1986-87, £7·3 million. Comparisons between years can be misleading, because since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to add to their spending power through the use of the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that identifiable modernisations, repairs and renovations for Coventry now total about £150 million and that the Government's drip feed of £7·25 million means that many urgently needed repairs will not be completed until well into the next century? There is male unemployment of between 20 and 50 per cent. in the wards of Coventry, South-East, and not many of my constituents can afford £400,000 Barratt retirement homes in Dulwich.

Mr. Patten: That question was put by the hon. Gentleman with characteristic moderation. First, the hon. Gentleman should explain to his constituents that the Government's allocation of housing money is but one part of the resources that are available to the city council. Another substantial source of funds can be from the councils own accumulated capital receipts, and I understand that it is planning to make use of them.

Secondly, and lastly, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage Coventry city council to do what I am advised it is already considering enthusiastically, namely, co-operating with private sector interests to bring more much-needed money into Coventry. We shall do all that we can to help the council through the urban housing renewal unit.

Mr. Marlow: In the words of Opposition Members, are not some of the feudal estates that are run by some municipal authorities, including Coventry, among the great environmental disasters of the century? If we want to help the constituents of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), as we do, the sooner and the more we get the private sector into the management of public housing, the better.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. Some Labour authorities, to do them justice, do care and are trying extremely hard to bring all the private resources that are available to bear and into use. The Oldham and Salford authorities are two examples. Unfortunately, Labour-controlled city councils in other areas seem unable sometimes to manage their own housing stock properly. Yesterday—*[Interruption.]*—in Stoke-on-Trent, Central—the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) is not in his place—I saw an 80-year-old widow who had been left in the most awful conditions.

Mr. Park: Those who are waiting to have their houses made habitable in Coventry or to gain accommodation for the first time—there are several thousands of them—will not be comforted by the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). In an earlier debate, the Minister may know that I spelt out the time that it would take to complete some of the schemes on which Coventry is already engaged——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Park: I appreciate that you are calling me to order, Mr. Speaker, but you allowed the Minister to continue with his reply.

Mr. Speaker: I was worried that the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) might continue to recount a previous debate.

Mr. Park: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister take into account the fact that the figures that he has produced show a steady deterioration? Is he aware that Coventry city council negotiated with private builders to refurbish some of the high-rise blocks of flats that need revamping, including the installation of central heating? After months of negotiations they backed out, and the city council has had to start all over again.

Mr. Patten: I apologise for taking so long over my previous answer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not attempt to inhibit the delicate negotiations between the city council and a number of potential developers, which are aimed at bringing much needed private money into Coventry. It is that money, with perhaps the help of my Department and the urban housing renewal unit, that can lead to the solution of many of the problems to which he referred.

Exchequer Grant (Local Authorities)

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the aggregate Exchequer grant settled on local authorities in England for 1986-87 will be paid to *(a)* local authorities in London, *(b)* Liverpool and *(c)* Leeds; and what difference this is from the percentage of the same three areas for 1985-86.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The amount of grant to be paid to the authorities will depend on their own decisions on spending in 1986-87.

Mr. Hughes: No one can thank the Minister for that most unhelpful answer. I shall now ask her a

supplementary question which I hope she will answer. First, will she give the lie to the fact that the Government's rate support grant settlement has resulted in a reduction in the moneys given to the metropolitan districts outside London? The Library document confirms that fact. Secondly, will she confirm that Leeds will be £40 million short on the Government's own estimate of need, and that if Liverpool imposes the rate-capped settlement it will be unable to do other than cut services? The money has gone, not to the inner cities as a whole, but only to those where there are to be elections next May.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is incontrovertible, from the document that is available in the Library, that such money as has been diverted has been diverted to the cities. I am sure that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will confirm that fact.

The hon. Gentleman asked for figures relating to Liverpool and Leeds. Last year, Leeds city council received a block grant of £111·9 million. This year it is expected to receive £124·5 million. Last year, Liverpool city council received £119·4 million. this year it will receive £137·6 million.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker:: Order. We have not got off to a very good start today. I ask for brief questions.

Dr. Hampson: When my hon. Friend made that response, I am sure that she was not trying to mislead the House. Does she agree that as Leeds has inherited many of the county council's functions, about 2·5 per cent. less than last year is coming to Leeds from Government resources? Although some cities have benefited — and we believe that that is right — many cities under Conservative control have not.

Mrs. Rumbold: The inner city problems that face Leeds are already taken into account in its grant-related expenditure assessment. It loses grant-related expenditure overall in its 1986-87 settlement because of the technical improvements that we have made to the education and personal social services grant-related expenditure. However,the resulting grant loss is more than balanced by the grant gains to Leeds as a result of the abolition of targets and the consequent changes in the block grant mechanism.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister confirm that the amount of money that the Government are making available to Leeds does not adequately take into account the transfer of services from the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council? Will the Minister confirm the when that is taken into account, Leeds will be facing a cut?

Mrs. Rumbold: I repeat that the resulting grant loss which I analysed for my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) is more than balanced by the grant gains which go to Leeds as a result of the abolition of targets and the consequent changes in the block grant mechanism. The money that has been allocated to Leeds will more than adequately take up the effects of abolition.

Mr. Forman: I welcome my hon. Friend to her new appointment. Is she aware that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are very grateful for the measures that were taken to make some important concessions to the outer London boroughs in connection with the London arrangements after the demise of the Greater London council?

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. The aim of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was to ensure that the financial effect of abolition per se was as neutral as possible on all successor authorities. Therefore, the successor authorities have received block grant support for their spending through the reattributed grant-related expenditure that comes from the metropolitan authorities and the Greater London council, which are to be abolished.

Rates

3. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to say when he plans to publish his Green Paper on rate reform.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I hope to do so next week.

Mr. Atkinson: As the rate support grant system is utterly discreditable and incomprehensible and this year continues to penalise the thrifty, will my right hon. Friend use the opportunity offered by his Green Paper to abolish it lock, stock and barrel and to replace it with a system of local government financing which will hold councillors more accountable to their electorates and broaden councils' scope to raise expenditure?

Mr. Baker: I completely agree with my hon. Friend that the purpose of any change should be to improve local accountability and to bring home to local electors the consequences of their councils' spending.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State recall the view of the Layfield committee, that local income tax offers the only realistic way in which to provide a new source of revenue for local government and to increase local accountability? If so, why is he going for a flat-rate system that will bear most harshly on those most in need?

Mr. Baker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman, who speaks for the Social Democratic party on these matters, to await my Green Paper. I understand from what he said that the SDP is now in favour of local income tax, but I think he will find that it has certain unattractive features which might become more evident the more it is examined.

Mr. Heddle: Reverting to the last question, does my right hon. Friend agree——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot do that. We are on this question.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that abolishing the rating system in its present form root and branch and replacing it with local income tax would increase the standard rate of tax by at least 13p in the pound? Would that not be a total disincentive to every person in the country to work?

Mr. Baker: Those are the questions that the SDP will have to answer when it formulates its proposals for reforming local government financing.

Mr. Freeson: Reverting to the first supplementary question, may I ask whether the Secretary of State intends

or expects to bring forward legislation on this major reform, for which we have waited 10 years, during this Parliament?

Mr. Baker: That depends on when the next election will be. I intend to consult widely during the coming months. We will then be able, I should think at about this time next year, to present a White Paper setting out the Government's proposals clearly so that, by the time of the next general election, all parties will be able to set out the attractions of their proposals to the electorate.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Can my right hon. Friend assure me that any proposals in his Green Paper concerning the rate support grant system will be fairer to counties such as Hertfordshire? What possible morality can there be in the average rate support grant being 46 per cent., when rate support grant for a country that keeps its expenditure under control is only 13 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend, who is knowledgeable about local government finance, has put his finger on the point. One of the elements of local government finance is the system known as resource equalisation, which means that there is a substantial transfer of resources from more prosperous areas to less prosperous ones. It has been endemic in the system since 1929. My hon. Friend will find that in the Green Paper I quantify it, set out the pros and cons about whether it should remain, whether it should be reduced and over how long it should be phased out, if it should be phased out.

Mr. James Lamond: What is the point of the Government trying to improve local accountability when they have so far introduced 12 local government Bills, most of which restrict local councillors' ability to carry out the mandates on which they were elected?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman goes to the heart of the problem. When the Green Paper comes out next week, he will see that there is a clear choice, not only for the House, but for the country, as to whether there should be more central control of local government or more local accountability. In essence, this is a constitutional question.

Mr. Ward: When my right hon. Friend brings his proposals for reforming the rating system before the House, will he bear in mind that, while many of us accept the need for some redistribution, there is great resentment in the shire counties because money is being transferred to areas where there is no local accountability and large sums are squandered on hare-brained schemes?

Mr. Baker: I agree. The whole thrust of my proposals, as my hon. Friend will see, is to give local authorities greater responsibility for making their own spending decisions so that they can say to their electors, if they want to support proposals, that it will cost them so much. At the moment, when a local elector goes into the polling booth and makes a judgment on his council, he finds it exceedingly difficult to judge whether the council is efficient or inefficient and whether it is thrifty or not, because of the complicated grant system.

Rate Support Grant

4. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following the recent announcement on rate support grant settlements.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): I think it is fair to say that my right hon. Friend and I have both received numerous representations.

Mr. Pike: The Secretary of State will have received representations regarding section 137, which many local authorities principally use to attract industry, to keep jobs in their areas and to assist voluntary organisations. Because of the way that the RSG is being changed, many councils will have insufficient money to maintain those important services. Will the Minister give me an assurance that until the Widdicombe committee has reported on these aspects he will guarantee that councils can maintain those important programmes?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman refers to a real problem, which my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) has met the Association of Metropolitan authorities to discuss. I cannot yet give the assurances that the hon. Gentleman seeks. We are still gathering facts about the matter, but I recognise the problem.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. Friend aware that supporting the Government on this issue is hazardous in the extreme? After nearly 16 years as a Member of this House I find myself in the extraordinary position of being criticised by the Christchurch and East Dorset Conservative Association for voting in favour of the rating proposals which were passed on Monday. Will he make it quite clear that, the Government having made their proposals known in Dorset, it is up to the Dorset county council to decide whether to introduce a large, medium or small rate increase this year?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. The most crucial decision is the spending level of the council, and that is up to the local authority. I confirm what he said.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister confirm that he has had representations from Leeds city council pointing out that not only will the net amount that it will receive go down on comparable terms this year, but that in comparison with the other metropolitan districts it has been treated particularly badly? Will he explain to the council when it comes to see him and his colleagues on 3 February why it has lost so much money compared with other local authorities?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not sure that the situation in Leeds is quite as bad as the hon. Gentleman sets out, but I have no doubt that when the council meets my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or any other Minister, it will have the matter properly explained to it.

Mr. Powley: I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to a statement made in my constituency on Friday last by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who said publicly that were a Labour Government to be brought back into office after the next general election they would immediately pay back to the shire counties the sum of £13 billion, which the Labour party allegs has been shifted from them by the Government? Is that not a most irresponsible statement? Is it not made even more irresponsible in the light of the fact that under the regression analysis basis the Labour Government shifted vast resources from the shire counties to the inner cities?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend's question confirms what I have long suspected to be the truth—that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is anxious not to find himself part of a future Labour Government who would be an embarrassment to him. Therefore, he is making a number of irresponsible comments to ensure that there is no danger of that.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Has the Minister received representations from the leader of Sefton council, a Conservative council which is a paragon of underspending virtue? The leader of the council, Mr. Ron Watson, supported rate capping on the basis that when the overspending councils were dealt with there would be more money available for low-spending councils, such as Sefton. He is wondering where that money is. The rate support grant settlement will mean a 20 per cent. rate increase in an authority which has already cut services to the bone.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that inner city authorities have gained from the settlement. There are still problems for all authorities, because we are still seeking economies, even from reasonably low spenders. However, this year's settlement has brought more help than the previous system, even to authorities such as Sefton.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Colvin.

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Cunningham: On the previous question to the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and I expressed a wish to be called.

Mr. Speaker: It was my fault. I did not see the signals. I apologise.

Mr. Straw: I refer to the stunt performed by the Secretary of State on Monday, when he published the grant recycling 1986-87 paper in which he tried unsuccessfully to persuade his hon. Friends about the amounts that would be received under grant recycling. Will the Minister answer the question that he dodged on Monday? What assumption about increases in local authority spending were included in that document? Was it 9 per cent.? If not, what was the percentage?

Mr. Waldegrave: I dodged no question and no answer. There was an assumption as to what would be the effect of a pool of £400 million.

Waste Management (Report)

5. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recommendations of the document produced by the Commission on Environmental Pollution entitled "Managing Waste—the Duty of Care".

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend announced on 10 December last a number of measures which the Government propose to take to tighten up control over waste disposal. Some of those respond directly to recommendations in the latest report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. The Government are considering the other recommendations and will be responding fully later this year.

Mr. Colvin: Is my hon. Friend aware that the report, on page 160, suggests that the regulatory authorities should be more ready to communicate the findings of their investigations to the public in an open-minded way? Does he agree with the recommendation that waste companies should be more ready to make the results of monitoring of waste plants public, in order to allay anxiety that can arise from the veil of secrecy which at present overrides the monitoring results?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend has become an expert on such matters as a result of events in his constituency. His comments are correct. The Government intend to try to achieve further openness in these matters. A working group is trying to find ways to do that without loading intolerable burdens on industry. I accept the policy direction in which my hon. Friend wishes to move.

Mr. Heffer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government's failure to deal with pollution of the environment has been absolute? Over the years they have done nothing to carry out the proposals in the reports of commissions. Is it not time that they faced the problem of pollution? Unless we are careful, the entire nation will be dying stage by stage, because the Government have not begun to deal with the problems of pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think the hon. Gentleman has shot himself in what the late Fats Waller called one of his pedal extremities. The Government moved quickly to accept many of the recommendations of the most recent Royal Commission on environmental pollution. For over 10 years the previous Labour Government—of which the hon. Gentleman was a member for a time—failed to introduce part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, which we have now moved to implement.

Dr. David Clark: May I draw to the Minister's attention paragraphs 5.28 and 5.29 of the Royal Commission's report, which refer to the experiments and small-scale developments in two of the most illustrious universities in the country—Manchester and Salford—which have been so greviously hit by the Government? They are developing a plan of extracting oil from domestic refuse. Will the Minister pay heed to those paragraphs, and not wait for a wider response? Will he encourage those two universities to escalate those experiments to a pilot scheme?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall look into what the hon. Gentleman says. I cannot respond to him off the cuff now, but I listened with sympathy to what he said.

Parish and Town Councils (Rates)

6. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environmet how many parish or town councils raised a rate of 3p or more in the last year for which records are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: About 1,900 in 1985-86.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her answer. Do she and the rest of the Government appreciate that there is no control whatsoever of parish or town council precepts? They can raise any rate they like, rate

capping or not, and the district councils have to bill for that. Unless the Government take some form of action shortly, every town and parish council in the country is liable to fall into the hands of a Bernie Grant, a Hatton or a Livingstone, and thereby create absolute mayhem for the Government.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about the potential expenditure of parish councils. I believe that that matter is under discussion and will be part of my right hon. Friend's Green Paper.

Mr. Boyes: Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), may I ask what proposals the Government have for ensuring that district councils are not penalised for such expenditure by parish councils, for example those in my area, where the parish councils might spend a total of over £1 million? In future years, will the Minister consider informing district councils of the amount allowed in GREA for parish council precepts?

Mrs. Rumbold: The most effective way of ensuring that parish councils keep down their expenditure can be drawn to the attention of the electorate at the time of an election. I suggest that the ballot box is the most effective way of controlling that expenditure.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that she is aware of the great weight of responsible opinion in my suburban constituency that is hostile to having a framework of parish councils imposed upon it?

Mrs. Rumbold: I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Sports Council

7. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the future development of sports funded by the council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I meet regularly the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss issues relating to the development of sports. We last met one week ago.

Mr. Pendry: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, will he discuss the considerable financial loss to sport when the Greater London council and metropolitan counties are abolished? How will he attempt to explain to the chairman how the miserly £5 million grant from the Government to the Sports Council can meet the requirements of sporting projects currently financed by those authorities, especially when the Sports Council estimates a shortfall of £8 million, plus 23 staff, and the Central Council of Physical Recreation estimates a shortfall of as much as £30 million?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman and the House will be aware that recently the Sports Council grant was increased to £37 million from £30·6 million, which is the biggest increase that has ever been given to the Sports Council. It represents an increase of 150 per cent. since the Government came into power. The money that the Sports Council holds is in its hands to disburse. I remind the hon. Gentleman that district and borough councils make the greatest contribution to sport, not the Sports Council.

Mr. John Carlisle: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, will he make it clear that the visit to South Africa by 12 women cricketers on holiday was in no way on the instruction of the Women's Cricket Association, so the Women's Cricket Association was wrong to ban——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will see that the question is about sports funded by the Sports Council.

Mr. Carlisle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The threat that is now being made, that the Sports Council's grant may be withdrawn from the Women's Cricket Association because of that visit is spurious and should not have been made, because the grant will still go ahead despite the

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend said that the ladies were in South Africa on holiday. If they happen to play cricket while they are there I have no control over that, nor does the Sports Council. The Government entirely support the Gleneagles agreement and all governing bodies are well aware of that.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minister aware of the growing anger of Members of Parliament from rugby league playing areas about the attitude of the rugby union authorities to amateur rugby league players? Will he make it clear to the chairman of the Sports Council that no further taxpayers' money will be made available to the rugby union authorities unless they drop the particularly obnoxious form of apartheid that they practice?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that the Sports Council is doing all it can to bring about conciliation between the British Amateur Rugby League Association and the Rugby Football Union. I have no locus in the matter. It is entirely a matter for the Sports Council, as it is also entirely a matter for the Sports Council as to how it distributes its funds.

Sir Paul Hawkins: Rather than pay an increased grant to the Sports Council, would it not be better to give that money to the shire counties and let them spend it on what they wish?

Mr. Tracey: The money that local authorities get for sports purposes is included within the local environmental services grant. Expenditure on sport and recreation in local authorities is running at over £700 million a year. The Sports Council grant is for specific purposes. I have no hesitation in saying that both the Sports Council and local authorities are disbursing their funds correctly.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: So that the Sports Council may be clear about how it is to spend the extra money, will the Minister confirm that the Government regard the British Amateur Rugby League Association—many young men in my constituency play that game—as a bona fide amateur organisation?

Mr. Tracey: I am sure that the British Amateur Rugby League Association is an amateur body.

Mr. Tony Banks: Like the Government Front Bench.

Tillingham Hall Development (Inquiry)

8. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the public inquiry with regard to the proposed Tillingham Hall development to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The public inquiry is due to start on 18 March. As the case is currently before the Secretary of State, it would not be appropriate for me to make a statement at present.

Mr. Proctor: In view of the widespread interest in the proposed Tillingham Hall development in the green belt at Maldon in my constituency, and the widespread opposition to it throughout the constituency, will my hon. Friend give an assurance that the delay between the end of the public inquiry and the ministerial decision on the appeal will be kept to a minimum?

Mr. Tracey: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Cunningham: Is the Minister aware that the Government appear to be creating the impression that they do not care about the maintenance of the green belt? Do the Government support developers' proposals for a ring of private enterprise new towns around London in the green belt? Does not the Government's White Paper, published last year, reinforce the view that they want to see an erosion of the green belt by proposing that simplified planning zone powers should be given to private developers? May I make it clear to the Minister, the Department and the House that the Labour party is totally opposed to the creeping erosion of green belt policy?

Mr. Tracey: This is the first time that we have heard from the hon. Gentleman this afternoon, but I was not aware that he had been asleep for the last few months. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear in a speech to the House-Builders Federation that the Government are firmly committed to the green belt and the conservation of the countryside. In an Adjournment debate in the House on 19 December I also made it clear that the Government are committed to that policy. I cannot pass judgment on individual applications until there is an application or an appeal.

Voluntary and Charitable Organisations (Funding)

9. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received since his appointment as Secretary of State about funding of those voluntary and charitable organisations which are presently supported by the metropolitan councils.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): At least 23.

Mr. Roberts: Is the Minister aware that the chaos which the Opposition predicted would follow the abolition proposals for the metropolitan counties is now beginning to develop, especially in the voluntary sector? Why have the Government changed their policy? Why are they now refusing to allow transitional grants to be given to voluntary organisations which operate wholly or for the most part in one district area? Lots of voluntary organisations are not being funded, they cannot get funds from district councils, and their future is threatened.

Sir George Young; There has been no change of policy. We have always made it clear that transitional grant was aimed at local schemes funded by the metropolitan counties, and not countywide schemes. Under section 48 we have given local authorities powers to set up countywide schemes, and it is for them to decide whether such schemes are needed.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that far too many voluntary bodies funded by the metropolitan counties depended not on voluntary giving but on money from rates and taxes? Will he encourage local authorities and the Government, if it is within his right so to do, to look carefully at bodies that receive money from ratepayers and taxpayers to see how many people doing voluntary work are paid for it?

Sir George Young: Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree with what my hon. Friend says. We have made it clear that transitional grant will not be available for certain voluntary organisations currently funded by the metropolitan counties. If local councils wish to go ahead and fund with ratepayers' money, they must be held accountable for that at the next election.

Mr. John Fraser: Is the Minister aware that many local, voluntary and charitable groups face sudden and tragic extinction as a result of the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC? In the GLC area only a quarter of the money that was available from the GLC is now available by way of transitional grant. The problem is illustrated by that mecca of municipal meanness, Wandsworth, which even if it wanted to help all the voluntary and charitable groups in its area, now finds itself overspent under section 137. Will the Minister take the opportunity presented by the Local Government Bill to amend the law to do some justice to voluntary and charitable organisations?

Sir George Young: In an earlier exchange my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government dealt with the issue in section 137. We are discussing it with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and it is under review. It is not the case that transitional grant was ever meant to cover the totality of GLC giving. It is extra governmental assistance on top of the resources of London, which are still available after abolition. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will share my pleasure at the fact that there is now progress towards a collective scheme in London that will involve a substantial sum of money.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

10. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest or sites about to be so designated have been damaged or destroyed since the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Nature Conservancy Council has advised me that since the Act was introduced just over 500 sites have been damaged. In most cases the damage was relatively minor and short-term. That can be compared to more than 5,000 sites of special scientific interest which the Nature Conservancy Council has identified.

Mr. Wainwright: Is the Secretary of State aware that some of the worse cases of organised vandalism against scientific knowledge have been perpetrated by public statutory bodies? Will he now review the working of this part of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in order more effectively to restrain public bodies from their destructive intentions?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will give me details of specific cases I shall personally investigate them, because I am as concerned as he is about the loss of and damage to these sites.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that sites of special scientific interest will continue to be under threat until notification is completed? Although the Nature Conservancy Council has been greatly helped by the substantial extra funds provided by the Government, will my right hon. Friend tell us when notification will be completed?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. The chairman has said in his report that he hopes that the process of notification of the sites to all owners will be completed this year. He will be helped in that by the considerable extra funding that we have provided for the NCC this year — an extra £9·4 million. That is a substantial increase, which follows a 25 per cent. increase last year, and is money well spent.

Mr. Hardy: Does the right hon. Gentleman share our hopes that the loss of such valuable sites, which are extremely important parts of our natural heritage, will soon end? If that is achieved, will it not be largely due to the amending legislation introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)? Is it not rather a pity that the Government sought to take all the credit for that advance?

Mr. Baker: I would not give the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) all the credit, but the amendment that he helped to put on the statute book last year certainly helped. However, the essence of this is the resources which the Government will make available. It is the resources which will save the sites. We have put our money where our environmental mouth is.

Home Ownership

11. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he is taking to promote owner-occupation in the inner cities.

Mr. John Patten: A lot. Let me give some examples. We are assisting new private house building in inner cities through the urban development grant. We are financing housing association development for home ownership, with an exphasis on the inner cities. We are urging local authorities to sell their empty housing for home ownership, perhaps after renovation. We are bringing more wasted urban land into use by giving derelict land grant for land reclamation and pressing the sale of vacant public land. My Department's urban housing renewal unit is helping authorities to bring run down council housing back into use for owner-occupiers.

Mr. Spencer: Does my hon. Friend agree that we cannot promote the welfare of the inner cities unless we promote owner-occupation there? Does he agree that city councils such as Leicester, which makes no provision for local home ownership, and which this year sold only enough land to the private sector to build four houses, are not showing much faith in the inner cities?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I agree entirely with my hon. and learned Friend. It is critical for a good social mix in the inner cities for there to be a mixed set of tenures, including owner-occupation. It is sad that councils such as Leicester should take the negative attitude that they are doing.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Minister agree that the greatest deterrent to home ownership in the inner cities is the extremely high level of mortgage interest rates, which are currently at risk of going even higher? What representation has he made to his right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister about the impact of any increase in the level of general interest rates on mortgages?

Mr. Patten: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman at all. The reason why so little owner-occupation is being promoted in so many inner city areas is the stupid intransigence of so many Labour authorities which refuse to make use of the opportunities available to them and refuse to co-operate, in the way that good Labour authorities such as Salford and Oldham do, with the private sector and the Government.

Mr. Steen: Will my hon. Friend consider using some of the additional money that he has made available for the inner cities to reduce the number of houses in public ownership? Does he agree that one of the best ways of doing that would be by switching the weekly rental payments for houses, maisonettes and flats to a mortgage repayment? In that way, public ownership could be switched to private ownership at a stroke.

Mr. Patten: Yes, that is an interesting idea and we shall consider it.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is all very well for well-heeled Tory Ministers to talk about owner-occupation, but what advice can be offered to the people of Newham, for example, in public sector housing, 90 per cent. of whom cannot afford a deposit for a mortgage, while the London Docklands Development Corporation is building luxury houses and flats at £50,000 and £60,000 a go? What good are they to the people of Newham?

Mr. Patten: The Department's urban housing renewal unit now has a budget of £50 million for the coming financial year to make it possible for councils such as Newham to co-operate in bringing mixed forms of tenure back into the inner cities. There is a need to promote sensible debate about the need for a better social mix in the inner city, which partly, but not wholly, involves the introduction of owner-occupation. I believe that Labour and Liberal Members of Parliament agree with that.

Mr. Lyell: Bearing in mind the large amount of empty property in the ownership of local authorities over years and years, is it not clear now that urging is not enough? Will my hon. Friend seriously consider bringing in legislation to require local authorities, whose domestic property has been empty for more than one year, to put it immediately upon the open market?

Mr. Patten: It is a scandal. My hon. and learned Friend is right. If we look at the areas where there is the highest homelessness and the most rate rebates, we find them in councils controlled by the Labour party in London. We may have to take radical action. Last July we distributed a circular giving councils the opportunity to do more to bring back into use empty property in their ownership. If they do not do that, we shall have to think again.

Mr. Alton: Given that high unemployment makes it virtually impossible for many people in the inner cities to become owner-occupiers, does the Minister agree that

housing co-operatives are a good way of promoting more ownership in inner cities? If so, what extra funds and personnel will be made available to pursue that objective?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I think that the hon. Gentleman is right. The housing co-operative movement is important. It is a tragedy that councils have sometimes put barriers in the way of housing co-operatives getting going in various city areas. I hope that when we debate the Housing and Planning Bill we shall have a chance to talk about such ideas.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that only 4,500 council houses and, surprisingly, seven council flats have been sold in the city of Leicester? Will he promote and speed the sale of all council houses and make it clear that the new arrangements for the sale of council flats should be distributed to all tenants? Is he further aware that there are now about 10,000 empty properties in the county of Leicestershire?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend will not have long to wait, I hope, for the publication of the Housing and Planning Bill, which will contain our proposals for increasing the rate of sale of flats. I am appalled to learn from him of the substantial number of empty properties in Leicestershire. I am equally appalled by the substantial land holdings that so many inner city authorities have which could be used to bring housing back into the inner cities and lead to a housing-led regeneration of some of our inner city areas.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the Government's policies have ravaged the housing and construction programmes of the city of Leicester in the public and private sectors? Is he further aware that there is no point in having land available for building if no one has the money to buy houses and if the people who have bought them are unemployed and cannot pay the mortgage? Why is he not doing anything to help the owner-occupiers of Smith houses in my constituency, who cannot have them put right because, to no small extent, of the two Tory MPs who represent the city?

Mr. Patten: I am rather confused. It was only a few weeks ago that the hon. and learned Gentleman was praising me for the action that I had taken over Smith houses in Leicester. I am sorry that he seems to have changed his tune. The trouble with city councils such as Leicester is that they do not seem to have the imagination to promote a multiplicity of forms of tenure—home ownership, housing associations, housing co-operatives and building for special needs.

Mr. John Fraser: If the Minister wants to help poorer owner-occupiers, why has his Government brought about a position where virtually every city authority, Labour and Conservative-controlled, has had to cut repair and improvement grants, which are the best way to help the rotting privately owned housing stock in our cities?

Mr. Patten: During the life of this Parliament we have already spent about £2·5 billion on improvement grants. We are spending about £500 million a year. That expenditure helps to diversify tenure in the inner cities. If one talks to tenants as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir. G. Young) did today on the Doddington estate in the constituency of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubbs), one finds that tenants wish to see their estates privatised and home ownership brought into those areas.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

12. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the urban housing renewal unit; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The urban housing renewal unit is making excellent progress in helping local authorities implement a range of imaginative solutions to the problems of their rundown estates. The unit is concentrating its efforts on the 69 authorities with the worst problems, and has already visited 43 of those, offering detailed advice and assistance tailored to individual estates. A further 19 visits are planned over the next three months.

Mr. Galley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful reply. The principles underlying the urban housing renewal unit are excellent. He will be aware, no doubt, of the delicate negotiations that are often necessary to establish a partnership between the public and private sectors to assist priority estates, such as the Abbey park estate in my constituency. Can he assure the House that early decisions will be taken, so that private developers will not be discouraged by bureaucratic delay or inadequate public sector contributions to the overall scheme, and so that the tenants at Abbey park and elsewhere can benefit sooner rather than later?

Sir George Young: As my hon. Friend knows, I have written to him in response to his recent letter. I am very keen for the sort of initiative that has been described to go ahead. I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly about the council's application for a community refurbishment scheme on the Abbey park estate.

Mr. Rooker: Can the Minister tell us whether the renewal unit will be giving help and advice to the landlords who have the biggest percentage of their housing stock empty, central Government, at 6·8 per cent?

Sir George Young: As the hon. Member knows perfectly well, the urban housing renewal unit is aimed at helping local authorities. There is a separate range of intitiatives taking place in central Government to reduce the number of vacancies in central Government stocks.

Local Authorities (Planning)

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take action to reinforce the ability of local authorities to control the planning environment in their own areas.

Mr. Tracey: In general, local authorities have, under the planning Acts, adequate powers to control and influence development where it is necessary in the public interest.

Mr. Adley: Would that were so. Is my hon. Friend aware that both Christchurch and Wimbourne district councils in my constituency are near despair at their inability to control the planning environment in their own areas and that the Department's presumption in favour of the big developers, often outsiders, whose protestations of the public interest are greeted with hollow laughter in my constituency, is strongly opposed? Is he aware that in the south-east of the county the face of Dorset is being changed, quite contrary to the wishes of the people there and of the elected councils?

Mr. Tracey: We are very well aware of the strong feelings of my hon. Friend. I seek to reassure him by telling him that only one in 25 planning applications is the subject of an appeal, and that, of appeals only about one third are successful. In determining appeals the Secretary of State is required, as is the planning authority at application stage, to have regard to the development plan, together with other material considerations.

Local Authority Public Services

15. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of privatisation of local authority public services.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government remain disappointed that so few authorities have seen fit to expose their services to competition. Opportunities for increased efficiency, and savings for ratepayers, are clearly being lost.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my hon. Friend agree that Labour's opposition to the privatisation of services is a reflection of its attitude that the public are there, not to be served, but as an endless source of cash for local authority workers?

Mrs. Rumbold: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is sad that more Labour-controlled authorities have not taken the opportunity, on behalf of their ratepayers, to contract out their services, since there would be undoubted savings for their ratepayers by so doing.

Capital Applications

16. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the level of capital applications made for 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received a number of letters about those capital allocations for which my right hon. Friend's Department is responsible.

Mr. Freeson: Does the Minister recall that during the past six years there has been a reduction of gross capital expenditure—which includes capital receipts—from just over £5,000 million to a current figure of about £2,500 million a year, a reduction of 50 per cent. in gross capital expenditure available? Is he further aware that in the past two years alone there has been a reduction of £1,000 million in real terms? How is it possible for local authorities to undertake repair, construction and other capital schemes, by themselves or jointly with the private sector, if there is a constant reduction in the capital available to them for housing purposes?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have to judge the balance between public and private investment. The restraint on public investment, which of course causes problems for those public authorities, is part of the picture that has led us to have overall record investment, including public and private, in the economy at present.

Home Ownership

18. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the objectives of his Department's home ownership policy; how is he monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The objective of my Department's home ownership policy is to enable more people to own their own homes, as the overwhelming majority wish. The measure of its effectiveness is the increase of more than two million in the number of owner-occupied homes in Britain since we took office in 1979. In that time, Government policies have directly achieved the sale of more than 800,000 public sector dwellings to sitting tenants.

Mr. Thurnham: If home ownership is brought within the reach of more people, does that not enable local authorities to concentrate resources on those in greatest need?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is quite right. If we can bring home ownership within the reach of those on the waiting list or those who are already local authority tenants, local authorities can concentrate their resources on those in need whom the private sector cannot help.

Mr. Dubs: What about the people on the waiting list who cannot afford to buy their own homes? Will the Minister comment on the policies of local authorities, including Wandsworth council, which are selling off many empty council properties to people who are not on the waiting list, thus saying to people who are homeless, badly housed, overcrowded and living in tower blocks "You have no chance of better housing in your lifetime"?

Sir George Young: I spent the morning in the hon. Member's constituency of Battersea. The threat to security of tenure is not to the tenant, but to the hon. Gentleman, as a result of the imaginative policies pursued by the local authority. When estates are privatised and flats are sold, they are offered in the first instance to those on the waiting list or to those who are already in local authority accommodation, who have the benefit of discounts. In general, those are the people who buy privatised property.

Standing Committee (Casting Vote)

3.31 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter that arose in Standing Committee this morning. The Fourth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments sat this morning to consider the Local Government Reorganisation (Transitional Provisions) Order 1985, which deals with transitional powers as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council at the end of March.

At the end of the debate, when the Question was put that the instrument be considered by the Committee, there was a tie of seven votes for the Government and seven votes for the Opposition. The Chairman of the Committee cast his casting vote with the Government. A perusal of "Erskine May" does not appear to reveal any precedent to suggest that it is appropriate for a casting vote to be used in that way. I make no criticism of the Chairman. However, I understand from the advice that I have taken since then, that such a case is extremely rare. I ask your guidance about whether it would be appropriate in future cases of a tie to follow the precedent that allows the matter, if the Government permit, to be raised again on the Floor of the House, rather than to be defeated by the casting vote, which precludes further debate.

Mr. Speaker: I have no responsibility for what goes on in Standing Committees. That is not a matter for me.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): On a point of order——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was on the Committee——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not call the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: But this is on the same point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not care. I did not call the hon. Member.

Cabinet Minutes

3.33 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The country is agog as speculation continues in newspapers and on the radio about the naming of civil servants. Will the Leader of the House make a statement about how the Government intend to handle the matter, which is causing grave concern? It should not be possible for civil servants to be named in such a way, and for no discussion to take place in the House on the crucial matter of the Cabinet Secretary's inquiry in to the leak.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have had no notification from the Government that they intend to make a statement on the matter today.

3.34 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Arising out of column 1153 of *Hansard* of 15 January 1986, could we have some explanation whether Miss Colette Bowe consulted the Solicitor-General or the people in the Royal Courts of Justice before giving information to the Press Association?

Mr. Speaker: I know nothing about that matter. I have not had a chance to look up column 1153, but I do not think that the matter is for me.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there no way that the procedures of the House can accommodate the present position? It is being widely reported that a senior civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry has been given immunity from prosecution. That was reported last night on the radio, and was the first news item today. Yet no statement is to be made to the House by either the Prime Minister or the Attorney-General. With respect, it is an abuse that when such matters take place and are widely reported Ministers give the House no information of any sort about them. Therefore, some arrangement should be made so that we can have a statement later today. We should not have to wait until tomorrow. We should have a statement later today, either from the Prime Minister or the Attorney-General.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that you have agreed that it is part of the duty of the House to protect people who are in the Government service and who, by virtue of their office, cannot speak for themselves publicly. You will also be aware, not least from the proceedings that we have just heard, that strong rumours are circulating about the identity of a person who may or may not have been responsible for leaking the letter from the Solicitor-General's office. Because of the duty, which we must in all honour discharge, it is important that we have a conclusive statement from that Government. If the rumours are inaccurate, unjust and irreparable damage may be done to that person's career. On the other hand, if those rumours are accurate, there will plainly be implications relating to the orders given to such an individual which will have wide application for the conduct of the order of the House. I hope that you can prevail on the authorities concerned so that we have a full and frank statement to clarify the matter.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am advised that all the procedures associated with the inquiry concerning the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter have not been completed. Meanwhile, I suggest that the question of a Government statement should be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Winnick: For today.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. Member.

Mr. Skinner: You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that last week we made many requests for statements on the Westland affair. The Tory Front Bench told us that there was nothing to worry about and that everything was in order. As a result of that, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) had to demand that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry come to the House later. We are going through the same routine again this week. Today we have almost a replica of what happened then. Because some hon. Members accused the Government of a cover-up, we managed, belatedly, to get the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the Dispatch Box and, finally, to have a debate. At the weekend there was another cover-up, when Mr. Lygo and the rest of them were bought off.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: You are placed in an invidious position, Mr. Speaker, because the Government are refusing to make a proper statement. As a result, we are asking for a private notice question so that we can draw some truth from the Government. Apparently that is not to be granted, so we are back to square one. We shall demand the truth from this tawdry Government because they have covered it up from the beginning, and the truth will out.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am deeply grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about my position, and I feel it strongly.

Mr. Kinnock: On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House has heard what the Leader of the House had to say. He and I and the House are at one in respecting the efficiency of the usual channels. However, I hope that the Leader of the House will acknowledge that, of its very nature, this matter will not, and cannot, be resolved through the usual channels, and that there must be an agreement on the procedure for dealing with it. Ultimately, this is a matter that must be settled in the House of Commons by a statement detailing the Government's views and actions.

Dr. Owen: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be reasonable for the Leader of the House to say that a statement will be made to the House today? We want to hear that statement today, not tomorrow.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Yes, Mr. Speaker. The day before yesterday, I raised a point of order, on which you ruled yesterday. You ruled in my absence because I was, unfortunately, in a Select Committee.

In your ruling, you said that the passage in question in the Cabinet minutes, which I did not bring to the Chamber on that occasion, described what happened at a meeting on 17 October last between the Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not now going to challenge my ruling.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Your ruling, Mr. Speaker, was most reasonably based on all the facts and information that were placed before you by those whom you consulted. I put it you, Mr. Speaker, that there is one document which you did not see and which you were not allowed to see, and that is the document that I have here. It is that section of the Cabinet minutes that precisely concerns the point of order.

I have not been given the opportunity to —*[Interruption.]* The minute says:

"Sir John said that he was well aware of the Government's preference for a European minority shareholding in Westland, and attached weight to that preference".

The minute continues:

"The Secretary of State noted what Sir John said. He said a European minority shareholding would invoke the commercial and political interests of the Government".

The quote by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the Dispatch Box was from that minute. I have underlined on the minute that passage from which he quoted. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to "the Government's preference for a European minority shareholding in Westland."

He then

"said that a European minority shareholding was in both the commercial and political interests of the Government."

We therefore have a direct quote. We do not have a paraphrase.

In light of the fact that I have this document in my possession, I ask, Mr. Speaker, whether you would once again look at your ruling yesterday, because you did not have this information available to you at that time. If you did so, you would know the implications if a full statement and the minute were made available to the House. The eyes of hon. Members would be opened in a way that the Select Committee has not been able to do.

Mr. Speaker: I ruled against the background of the information that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) brought to my attention. I have no authority to send for the Cabinet minutes, and I have no knowledge of them. My ruling stands.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): May I refer to the previous point of order, which we have not satisfactorily resolved? Another hon. Member referred, I think improperly, to matters concerning private notice questions. What the Leader of the House said a few minutes ago is what we have all been advised privately —that the inquiries are not yet complete. Surely the Leader of the House should be made to say that, if these inquiries are completed today, they should be reported to the House today. It would be intolerable if we read in tomorrow's papers leaks of a leaks inquiry.

Later—

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. We are aware of the precedent that, if a Minister quotes from a document, the whole document should be placed

[Mr. John Morris]

before the House, If, however, a Minister paraphrases a document, the same considerations do not apply. How can you, and hon. Members, reach conclusions on these matters unless the original quotation is before us? How do you reach your conclusions, while taking account of the precedent that the whole document should be laid before the House?

New considerations now arise. As I understand it—I may be wrong—the quotation is now in the possession of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington. It would appear that it is on exactly the same lines as the material——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Word for word.

Mr. Morris: I stand corrected—it agrees word for word with the words that the Secretary of State used in the House. It seems that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was quoting from a document. That is unanswerable. I find it difficult in those circumstances to understand how a different conclusion could be reached.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the House will not seek to draw the Chair into what is, after all, a political argument. I ruled yesterday on the evidence that was brought before me by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)——

Mr. John Morris *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no authority to send for Cabinet documents. That is not within my responsibility. I ruled on the matter yesterday and I reaffirm that that ruling stands.

Mr. John Morris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With respect to you, Mr. Speaker—the last thing that I would wish would be to draw you into any conflict involving this matter—I think that the House is entitled to know whether the rule still stands. If a Minister quotes, inadvertently or deliberately, from a Cabinet paper, Cabinet minute or any other paper, does the rule still stand? That is the point that I seek to make.

Mr. Speaker: The rule was repeated by the hon. Member for Workington yesterday when he read it out in full. I can also read it out in full, if the Clerk finds it in time. The rule is perfectly plain. If there is a direct quotation, it is necessary to lay the document; if there is a paraphrase, that is not necessary. I ruled yesterday on the evidence before me that there was a paraphrase, and that ruling stands.

Mr. Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that last Thursday some confusion was caused because of an inadvertent misunderstanding that could have arisen in response to the matter as it was then raised by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). The Chair can be placed in an invidious position because a Minister can quote from an official document to render authority to a particular statement, and in between the time that it is used in the House and it finds itself in *Hansard*, the Minister, for political reasons, can change the status of the quotation simply by removing the quotation marks and saying that it is a paraphrase of what took place.

It will be obvious to you, Mr. Speaker, that a problem arises when you are in the position of ruling that a document is not an official document that has been precisely quoted to the House when in fact it is, and that has not been made obvious to you by the decision of a Minister to ensure that you are not acquainted with that fact.

We are not seeking your involvement, Mr. Speaker, in political contention between the two sides of the House. We wish to remove the possibility of your involvement in that contention by ensuring that, where there is an exact match of words between an official document and the words used in the House by a Minister, the normal rule is followed and the document becomes the property of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can say any more than I have. I have no knowledge of what goes on in Cabinet and I have no knowledge of Cabinet minutes. I always understood that Cabinet minutes were entirely secret. It is not possible for me to know whether Ministers are quoting from Cabinet minutes. I could not possibly know that.

Dr. Owen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has made a serious statement and he now has documentary proof of a Cabinet Sub-Committee. If the hon. Gentleman gives the document to you, Mr. Speaker, and you find that he is accurate in what he said and that the words do coincide, surely you are then entitled to ask the Government whether it is an official document. If it is an official document, surely the normal rules of the House should apply and it should be placed in the Library.

Mr. John Morris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The short point is this. If this is a direct quotation, should not the Government table the document?

Mr. Speaker: It would be up to the Government to decide whether to do that. There is no point in my keeping on repeating that I am not party to what goes on in Cabinet. I have no idea whether the Secretary of State was using words in a Cabinet minute and my judgment, on the evidence placed before me, was that his words were a paraphrase.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the whole House understands the reason for your ruling yesterday. It was made, to use your own phrase, on the "basis of the evidence laid before me". My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is now laying fresh evidence before you. On the basis of the evidence that was laid before you yesterday, your original ruling could stand, but on the basis of the fresh evidence you are in a position to make a fresh ruling.

Mr. Speaker: That is perfectly reasonable. If the hon. Member for Workington were to submit that to me, I should have an opportunity to look into it, but I am not prepared to rule on it now.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that I shall give you a copy.

Mr. Skinner: That is right.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall also lay it on the Table. You say, Mr. Speaker, that you took the decision on the evidence that was placed before you. However, prior to that, you also said that you were unable to consult the Cabinet minutes. I am wondering what evidence has been placed before you that allows you to arrive at that decision.

Mr. Speaker: The evidence that the hon. Gentleman gave me.

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I, with great respect, suggest that the issue is not a matter between the Government and the Opposition. It is a matter as to whether there are two classes of Members: those who are subject to the rules that are laid down by the Government and every other hon. Member. When you were elected Speaker you laid claim to the ancient privileges of the House, one of which is that the most favourable construction should be put upon all our proceedings. If it is clear that the Government are operating under different rules which exempt them from the rules of the House, that is a matter for the House and for you. It is not a matter of inter-party controversy.

Mr. Speaker: The point I was seeking to make was that I am fully aware that this is a matter of high political controversy. What is disturbing is that Mr. Speaker is being drawn into some of these arguments. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Order. I am perfectly prepared, and it is absolutely right that I should be, to discharge my duties fully and fearlessly, and I shall so do, but I hope that the House will not draw me into what is, after all, a political argument.

Mr. John Morris: This is not a political argument. This is a matter for the House of Commons as a whole. According to "Erskine May", the rule on page 433 says:

"A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table."

There are two considerations. First, we wish to have your guidance, Mr. Speaker, upon how this rule may be put into effect. Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has handed you a document that purports to be the source of the quotation, and in exactly the same terms. Will you now be good enough to give us guidance on giving effect to the rule? Since the matter may need further time for consideration, perhaps you could do so later today or tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's key point purports to be that I shall need to look into this matter.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, is it helpful?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, exceptionally helpful, as far as you are concerned. You are well aware that, from the very beginning, this has been a matter between the Opposition and the Government. You have been caught in the middle. It has been revealed today that what purports to be a Cabinet document has been referred to and laid on the Table. If it is valid, the whole of that Cabinet document must be laid on the Table. There is a problem, which you spotted earlier: how do we manage to find out whether the document of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is correct? I put it to you that it would not be the first time that the House has set up a Committee to examine the validity of a document. When you consider this matter today in order to report back to the House, I suggest that you must consider setting up a Committee to test the validity of my hon. Friend's document so that the whole of the Cabinet document may be laid on the Table, when more of the truth will emerge. I put it to you that that would be the sensible way forward. It would ensure that you are not caught in the middle of a politically charged argument between an Opposition and a Government who are trying to evade the truth and their responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps one day he will be in a position to exercise the heavy responsibilities that I have.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I do believe that you have been somewhat misled, Mr. Speaker. In this exchange, everybody, including yourself, has referred to the document being a Cabinet minute. However, it is clear, even from the remarks of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, that this is not a Cabinet minute. It is a minute by his private secretary about a meeting the Secretary of State held with the industrialist Sir John Cuckney. It is exactly the same as the minute which has already been released by the Government about a meeting the Secretary of State had with Sir Raymond Lygo.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that there is much profit in continuing this, as I do not know, and I shall have to look into it.

Privilege

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I asked your advice on a matter relating to your authority. I asked whether you would agree to place in the Library the document "Questions of Procedure"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the right hon. Member proceeds too far, may I say that I do not think he has yet received my letter on this matter.

Mr. Benn: I have received it.

Mr. Speaker: As the right hon. Member knows, the document involves a matter of privilege. I dealt with it in the normal way. It would not be in order for the right hon. Member to refer to it.

Mr. Benn: In that case, may I refer to what you said yesterday, Mr. Speaker? You said to me that advice was available elsewhere on the document's status and on the coverage for privilege afforded to the document and to me.

I have now sought that advice. I have decided that, in view of the restrictions listed in the document by successive Prime Ministers, which place other Members of the House who are or who have ever been Ministers, under restriction, it is in the interests of the House that all hon. Members should have access to it and that it should not be restricted to those hon. Members who now serve on the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service. I am therefore ready to supply a copy of the document to any hon. Member who wishes to have it. I hereby formally claim privilege both for the document and for myself in providing it to other hon. Members as a proceeding in Parliament. I have not and shall not supply copies to any person who is not a Member.

I have sought advice also on the situation that would arise if, this afternoon, the Sub-Committee decides at any stage to go into secret session during my evidence. If that occurs, I shall, for the same reason, ask leave to withdraw forthwith.

Mr. Speaker: Any action that the right hon. Member takes will be entirely on his own responsibility. As the right hon. Member has raised this matter, I say to him that I have no authority to permit any private Member to place any document in the Library.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was one of those who received this document, and I read it carefully. On one occasion, I was informed from Moscow that I could not appear on a television programme. I was informed also that I could not write my weekly column for the *Walton Times*. Incidentally, I ignored that advice. May I ask why you, Mr. Speaker, as the custodian of the interests of hon. Members, cannot ask for such a document to be brought before the House? This would enable hon. Members who could be Ministers in the future and able to obtain such documents to be acquainted with the sort of information they are expected to swallow by the Government of the time, whether they like it or not, even though those hon. Members are elected by the people. I ask you to consider your decision on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I do not need to consider my decision. The principle is that the Speaker cannot authorise the laying of any document in the Library. If he did so, the document would be under the protection of the Speaker. That is not my responsibility. Right hon. and hon. Members must do what they think fit. This is a matter for them, not me.

Standing Charges (Abolition)

4.1 pm

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish standing charges for gas, electricity, water and telephone services for pensioners and persons in receipt of certain state benefits.

Many attempts have been made to bring to the attention of the House the need to help the poorest in Britain who are wrongly charged by the utilities by the imposition of standing charges on their accounts. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has brought forward a number of Bills on this issue and many right hon. and hon. Members have tried to bring relief to the poorer sections of our community by abolishing standing charges. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that standing charges which are imposed by the utilities should not be imposed on the accounts of pensioners or other unfortunate persons in receipt of certain state benefits.

Standing charges are imposed on people like a straightforward tax. The poor pay the same as the rich, but this cannot be right. Why should a pensioner in my constituency, living in a house similar to my own, pay the same standing charge? It is wrong, and immoral. I am sure that all hon. Members can see the wrong in this. If we study the percentages of income paid out in standing charges, it is only a small percentage in my case but an unacceptable percentage for a pensioner. In a country that is proud of the fact that the rich look after their more unfortunate brothers and sisters and carry a heavier burden of tax, it is right that those in a position to shoulder the heavier burden should do so. Standing charges and other fixed charges should not be imposed on those people who suffer hardship.

There are many examples of this unjust method of charging. Let me give an example. A pensioner aged 80, who received a low-user rebate which has now been discontinued, had two meters. One meter was for the outside lights so that he could see the ground in the dark. In September 1985 he used one unit on the outside meter at a cost of 5·32p. His fixed charge was £6·65, but for the total of one unit this old-age pensioner had to pay £6·70. He also had to pay another fixed charge for the meter inside the house. Thus we have a pensioner, living at one address, having to pay two fixed charges. This is intolerable and wrong. The average bill for a house is about £60, yet the standing charge is the same as that of the pensioner. No one can justify this imposition of charges on the poor.

Standing charges have not always been with us. There was no standing charge for water in general before 1976. State utilities can manage without standing charges. All the Bill seeks to do is to relieve the poorer sections of our community of this burden. There are two area water authorities that do not have standing charges—Severn-Trent and Wessex water authorities.

There has been a large increase in some standing charges. In 1979 standing charges for gas in the Severn region were levelled at £2·16p. They are now £9·90p. That is a 300 per cent. increase since 1979. An old-age pensioner whose account is £30 has a standing charge of 30 per cent. but an ordinary householder who uses more gas, has plenty of money and whose account is £100 has a standing charge of only 10 per cent. It cannot be right to ask old people to pay a higher percentage than the rich person who lives down the road.

A great deal of revenue is received from standing charges. The amount of revenue from the standing charges paid by pensioners is as follows: gas in Great Britain as a whole, £150 million; electricity in England and Wales, £135 million; water in England and Wales, £65 million. I do not say that the utilities do not need this money—although some do not. However, they are taking it from the poorest in the nation. That is the crime. If this House means to look after its citizens, it should do a Robin Hood and give to the poor, not take away.

The purpose of the Bill is to help those in need and to relieve them of a financial burden so as to enable those who form the poorer sections of our nation to lead better and fuller lives. If life is in pursuit of felicity, let us accept the Bill and bring some happiness into the lives of others. I hope that the Bill will receive the unanimous support of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Michael Welsh, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Terry Patchett, Mr. Kevin Barron, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Alec Woodall and Mr. Roy Mason.

STANDING CHARGES (ABOLITION)

Mr. Michael Welsh accordingly presented a Bill to abolish standing charges for gas, electricity, water and telephone services for pensioners and persons in receipt of certain state benefits: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 62.]

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

'Nothing in this Act shall prevent the publication of material or any other action, by a local authority in exercise of its functions under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985'.—*[Mr. Straw.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.10 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I hope that the new clause is not controversial and that it will be supported even by Liberal and Social Democratic party Members. They voted in support of the Bill receiving a Second Reading, although the Association of Liberal Councillors opposes it. There is some division there and we are not sure what they will do this evening. I hope that they are able to support the new clause and that the Minister will. It would enable the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to take precedence in law over this Bill if it is enacted.

The Access to Information Bill was introduced by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and had all-party support. It started life in 1980 when we considered the Local Government, Planning and Land Bill, to which I tabled amendments, which enshrined most of what the access to information Act provided. This is probably the first time——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I understand that his name is not attached to the new clause. Perhaps the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would move the motion formally.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Roberts: I shall not start again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, it was in those debates in 1980 that the words, "Ken Livingstone" were probably first uttered in the Chamber. He was then a mere opposition councillor on the GLC and we were opposing the excesses of the Conservative-controlled GLC, under the leadership of Sir Horace Cutler, which was trying to keep information secret.

Opposition Members from London and I were able to reveal accusations of fraud in the GLC which had been covered up, but which could not have been covered up if the access to information Act had been in place. Indeed, I believe that the Act is so significant that it would probably have prevented the web of corruption surrounding the Poulson affair.

We now have this rather nasty little Bill which might destroy at a stroke all the good work done by the hon. Member for Hornchurch and others. It defines publicity as "any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public". That definition will include an enormous amount of material. Making documents available, as required by the access to information Act, would probably constitute publication as defined in the Bill. It seems clear that that is what the Government intend.

4.15 pm

In Committee the Government published an outline of a code of practice to be issued under clause 4, which included a distinction between paid and unpaid publicity. Included among the latter were council and committee reports, consultation documents, press releases, press conference statements and media interviews. If the Bill is not amended, the intentions of the access to information Act will be frustrated. The Bill will take precedence over that Act and a council will not be able to make committee reports and background papers available if they appear "to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

A secretive council could use the Bill as a loophole to get around the access to information Act and refuse to release documents, on the ground that they are or might be political. The council would make subjective decisions about what was political, and it could suppress information to which Parliament rightly wanted the public and the press to have access. An open and conscientious council could face serious problems. If it is to fulfil the requirements of the access to information Act to release minutes, reports and papers, it will have to censor them to avoid falling foul of the Bill. This is a censorship Bill of the worst kind.

The problem extends to background papers and research documents. If a research exercise shows that Government policy has increased homelessness — any research into homelessness is bound to prove that as an academic fact rather than as a political opinion—or if increased home ownership is shown to be the result of Government policy, which is probably unlikely, it could be interpreted as capable of reasonably being regarded as likely to affect public support for a political party. The fact that the research was properly conducted, honest, true, informative rather than persuasive, and conducted by people who are not necessarily members of a political party would not matter—it would still fall foul of the Bill. The council would then be faced with a choice between refusing to make the paper available to the public, which would fly in the face of the access to information Act and leave the press and the public without the underpinning of a policy, and censoring the research to make it acceptable, which cannot be acceptable in a democracy.

The new clause would subordinate the Bill to the access to information Act, thus preserving the openness and accountability of local government. I could quote the hon. Member for Hornchurch when he introduced his Bill, but I shall not do so. Rather, I shall appeal to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the new clause as a means of ensuring that an Act of Parliament that has all-party support is not destroyed or undermined by a censorship Bill which, far from extending and developing freedom of information and getting the public involved, will control, constrain and censor local government.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is expected of me to say something about the new clause. The hon. Member

for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and I dealt with aspects of this matter at various stages of what became the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. I have tabled an amendment, which we are to consider later, which addresses itself to issues similar to those discussed by the hon. Member for Bootle, so I shall not detain the House for long now.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it quite clear why the Government propose to resist the new clause, if they do. If the Government do not accept the new clause, many people of all parties will be worried by the possibility even of the release of agenda items and minutes which are thought to be freely and openly available under the access to information Act being restricted by the Bill. In fairness, I know from correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister of State that the Government do not intend that. I am sure that my hon. Friend will underline that view, just as I am sure he accepts that our anxiety is legitimate. The access to information Act is important. It was a small step along a route to which we shall, I hope, join other Acts. I do not wish to see its effects watered down.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I suppose one of the reasons why the Government have come out with the code of conduct in the Bill is that for the past five years they have been getting away with blue murder. They have overreached themselves. The Prime Minister has run the Cabinet and dominated it in an autocratic fashion, and got her own way, so that if anybody murmured anything to her that she did not like she kicked him out and replaced him with somebody suitably wet—wet in the sense that he will bend the knee to her. As a result of that background and environment, the right hon. Lady felt pretty safe in saying that she would go one step further and tell local councillors to keep their mouths shut. She does not want people spending money to speak against the Government, and she feels that if she can control the Cabinet, she will ensure that she can control County hall.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In the case of the Greater London council, the Prime Minister shut its mouth by chopping off its head.

Mr. Skinner: That is all part of the scenario that led up to the Bill. My hon. Friend is right. Getting rid of the GLC and the metropolitan councils was all part of the right hon. Lady's strategy of chopping away a little bit more from the freedom of the country and the individual. This is yet more trampling on civil liberties. With each year that has gone by the Prime Minister, with her toadying Ministers, has been able to encroach a little further on individual freedoms in local government.

Is there any wonder that in the autumn and winter of 1985 the same Prime Minister has been able to tell another toady that she has put into the Department of the Environment, "This time you will stop them from opening their mouths. I am fed up with having anti-Tory propaganda from the local authorities." It has been suggested that all this is being done to curb local government expenditure, but that is nonsense. The Government use that principle to kid the public. It is a scandal that, following a cut in rate support grant from 62 to 46 per cent. this financial year, local authorities are being threatened and have been stopped from objecting to such cuts. The domineering Prime Minister is carrying out what almost seem like Fascist tendencies to stop her opponents from telling the truth.

The real scandal is that when the Bill received a Second Reading only a few weeks ago we saw the appalling sight of the Liberals—the so-called defenders of freedom and liberty — walk into the Tory Government Lobby and vote to curb the natural desires of local authorities, and Liberal councillors, to say their party piece. What a black day that was for the Liberals and the SDP. I sit on this Bench and hear all the stories, and I know that the truth was that the Liberals' so-called friends in the SDP told them what to do. *[Interruption.]* This tame Liberal—the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)—who is trying to heckle——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am not tame.

Mr. Skinner: —did what he was told to do and, like Manuel, followed Basil into the Lobby. They should be ashamed of themselves. There is another one here, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), trying to heckle me. They are supposed to be quiet, yet they accuse me of heckling.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Get on with it.

Mr. Skinner: They went to Hebden bridge last week and told these fairy stories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to the subject of the new clause.

Mr. Skinner: It is about freedom, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will tell you another thing. If the Prime Minister was in power for long enough, she would shut your mouth as well. That is how far she would be prepared to go. Some people are laughing in the Strangers' Gallery—to which we should not refer. Instead, I tell hon. Members that the Prime Minister knows no bounds when it comes to getting her own way. If ever there was an example of where this Tory Government have gone a little too far, it is in saying to local authorities, "We shall stop your from speaking out." All the surveys have shown that on this issue the Government have gone too far.

Some people from a local authority came to see me today because they were concerned about the Bill. I told them that if the so-called code of conduct went through, when it had the force of law they would not be able to speak about this matter. Some other people from Derbyshire county council spoke to me at 2.30 pm in Committee Room 9. They had come down to complain about poverty in Derbyshire. I told them that when the Bill becomes law, the Prime Minister will have gagged councils. I gave them some advice in the name of freedom and civil liberty. I told them to arrange another meeting on poverty and the disabled, and that if they came down we would meet them. I told them that it was their duty to ignore the code of conduct and dare to challenge the Tory Government, because they should not be allowed to get away with it. I hope that every local authority member will not take a blind bit of notice of what happens today. They have a duty to speak up for all those old people and the disabled for whom they are trying to provide services.

What has happened today is not much different from what happened on the days last week when we discussed Westland plc. The principle is autocracy and a

[Mr. Skinner]

domineering Prime Minister gagging people and trying to shut up opponents. The Tory Government have been doing it for six years, and I hope that sufficient Tory Members will walk into the Lobby against the Bill.

I know that the Liberals have changed their minds. They have been told in no uncertain terms what to do today by the Liberal councillors. I hope that everybody who values freedom, including the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who introduced the access to information Bill, will stop this vile process of trying to prevent local authorities from speaking out on behalf of the people who gave them a mandate to speak.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Obviously, my alliance colleagues are doing quite well to merit such a large section of the speech made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We can always tell how well we are doing, because the better we do, the longer the hon. Gentleman goes on about us.

I shall speak specifically about the new clause, which is more than the hon. Member for Bolsover did. I do so as the third of the triumvirate that helped to get the Local Government (Access to Information) Act on the statute book. The other two are the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who tried three years ago, and the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who succeeded a year ago after my attempt two years before. The massive effort and support put into that Act by local authorities to make town halls accountable — something that the Government always seek to make councils do—would be thwarted if in any way the Act's provisions, even in the smallest particular, were counteracted by the Bill.

The Government should unequivocally say that they entirely accept the new clause. They must accept that they may have been ambiguous at best—if it were worse, they would not admit it—in making it appear that there would be a conflict and that the Bill would restrict publicity of documents and the like and might be contrary to that Act.

Access to information will be extended to local authorities on 1 April. The Government intend the Bill to be on the statute book before that because there are other clauses of the Bill that relate to that date. It is vital that the Minister who is to reply to the debate should clearly say that the Government will accept a new clause and that there will be overriding support in favour of public access to information on what takes place in town halls, irrespective of any other clauses in the Bill.

4.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is ironic that the first Bill introduced to the House by the Prime Minister when she was a private Member was a Bill to increase access by the press to local authority meetings. It seems that power genuinely corrupts because the Prime Minister is now anxious to restrict access to information being put out by local authorities to the people they represent. One can assume that it is the holding of office that has caused the enormous change in her attitude.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was correct in his analysis of the Government's feeling and philosophy about the Bill. I wish he had been on the Committee because he could have enlivened some of the sittings. My hon. Friend might be interested to know that the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, who is sitting languidly at the Dispatch Box, had difficulty with his own party on a number of issues. All the extreme elements of the Conservative Back Benches in Committee were trying to make this draconian Bill worse than it already is.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling) *rose*——

Mr. Banks: One of those Back Benchers is rising now. The Minister's problems came from the hostile and ugly Right wing that now occupies many ranks in the Conservative party. I shall give way to the hostile and ugly Member.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is posing as the champion of freedom of access to information. Will he tell us how often he spoke against the practices of the Greater London council where the Labour group is driving more and more decision-making behind closed doors and into private sub-committees dominated by the Labour party?

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman must know that all decisions in local government are subject to the scrutiny of a full council meeting. Therefore, there is complete openness in local government.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh) *rose*——

Mr. Banks: There is far more openness in local government than in central Government. We have just seen an example of the way in which Ministers can keep things quiet and deny information to the House when the House actually needs that information. That is the sort of Government we are dealing with. The Government want to be secretive all the time. They want to fiddle the books and cook the figures. We are dealing with a Government of petty crooks.

Mr. Holt: I realise that the hon. Gentleman has limited experience in local government. If he had as much experience as I have, he would know that the GLC and many other local authorities delegate full powers to sub-committees and even lower bodies to spend vast sums of money. None of the decisions is subsequently ratified and such decisions are often taken on the word of a chairman.

Mr. Banks: I agree that the hon. Gentleman is older than I am. I do not know how many years he has been in local government, but it is conceivably longer than I have been.

Mr. Holt: Twenty-one years.

Mr. Banks: Congratulations. I have spent 16 years in local government, and I am the chairman of the GLC. I can modestly claim to know a little about what goes on in local government. I suspect I know more than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: Is my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) aware that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) does not have much time for local government because he runs a local bookmakers?

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want something to appear in *Hansard* that should not be there. I though I heard the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) say that he is dealing with a Government of petty crooks. I realise that he has some

experience in that area—he must have with the GLC—but I do not think that it is right to use such terms in the House to describe my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, even though we may criticise them from time to time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I deprecate extravagant language, but a general accusation of that sort is just in order.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), with his constant interruptions and lecturing to the Chair, is the last person who would seek to mislead the House or tell lies. However, before he makes statements about what I do, he should check, because I do not run any betting shops.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a perfect illustration of the fact that we should return to the subject of the new clause.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has got the wrong odds.

The Bill defines publicity as

"any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public".

An enormous amount of material is included under that definition. It seems unbelievable that council and committee reports, consultation documents, press releases, press conference statements, media interviews, and so on, should be caught up in the codes of practice. I cannot believe that that is really what the Minister wants to happen. If he does, it is an absolute disgrace that the Government, having put local government in an economic straitjacket, now want to stuff a gag in its mouth.

We in local government have great pride in the openness of the system. No other system is subject to so much public and press scrutiny. I must add that no other system is subject to so much vile abuse from Tory Back Benchers and Ministers. The GLC has been subject to a great deal of vile abuse from the media hacks of Fleet street and the neanderthals on the Back Benches of the Conservative party. There is an example of that in the *Daily Express* today. The quotation refers to the full GLC meeting, which I chaired:

"Red Ken Livingstone was slammed last night for planning to give away more than £100 million to 'loony Left' groups before the Greater London Council is scrapped."

That is an outrageous lie. I do not know the pervert who wrote that. All I can say is that he was either stupid or drunk. Conceivably, he was both. That is the sort of thing that local councils, particularly the GLC, have to put up with. We are open in everything that we do and have no reason to feel guilty or concerned about accusations made by the Conservative party that we are secretive. All matters decided in the GLC eventually go to a full council meeting. That is where they can be challenged and voted on.

I cannot believe that the Minister is not prepared to accept this new clause. If he does not accept it, he will have struck a blow against accountability and democracy in local government.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I want to comment on some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) when my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was unavoidably out of the Chamber. The hon. Member for Bootle drew the attention of the House to the question whether I and my colleagues would vote in a particular way on Report and Third Reading. It is perfectly proper to give a Bill a Second Reading on the basis that one would want it to go to Committee to be examined clause by clause and line by line to see if one can support it on Third Reading. If the hon. Member for Bootle looks at the Committee record, I do not think he will find a single Division in which I and my hon. Friends were not in the same Lobby as the Labour Members. We were entirely consistent in our voting in Committee.

In Committee, it was interesting to see whether the Government would be found in the same Lobby as us when they were opposing their own rebels, which happened on several occasions. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) here. He is the only one of those rebels who fought throughout the Committee who is here. Those Conservative Members made legitimate points about the Bill. One might have expected to see the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) here to continue that fight today.

Mr. Straw: In one respect, the Bill is being marginally improved. Having voted for the Bill on Second Reading on the basis that they would judge whether the Bill was improved, now that the Bill has been improved, will the Liberals vote for or against the Bill on Third Reading?

Mr. Meadowcroft: That is a very good question. There are many other good questions — [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the answer?] Wait a minute. The House is so impatient to hear that it often does not get the answer.

The answer is that many other improvements to the Bill were proposed in Committee, which we tried to get through. However, we failed. There are also various amendments on the Amendments Paper for discussion on Report. All of us take these matters seriously, and at the end of the Report stage we shall all consider whether the Bill should be given a Third Reading.

I should like to deal with the substance of the new clause. The issue is important, and reflects the dilemma posed by the Bill. On the one hand, we have the permanent purple patch oration of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who went into a diatribe about the attacks on local government perpetrated by the Government. The fact is that this restrictive Bill is now before the House and has been fought through Committee precisely because of the abuses in local government. Every accusation that the hon. Member for Bolsover brings against the Government for their actions towards local government one could level at Labour-controlled local authorities because of their actions in restricting free speech and manipulating and abusing the systems of local government, against the wishes of the minorities on those councils.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Gentleman said that, after he and his colleagues had heard the debates on Report, they would make up their mind whether to support the Bill on Third Reading. Is he speaking for Liberal Members here in the Chamber or for the alliance? Will they tell Social Democratic party Members what they intend to do, or are they making up their own minds?

Mr. Meadowcroft: The demands made on Second Reading by representatives of the alliance were set out

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

carefully, and can be read in *Hansard*. We shall consult our colleagues in both parties, and there is no secret about that.

Let me return to the substance of the new clause, which is crucial to the debate. We have a particular difficulty, because we are outside the dogfight. Liberal Members and those in the Liberal party throughout the country wish to enhance the powers of local government, but we do not want to see the abuses that we have seen in local government in recent years. Those abuses are getting worse, more devious and more manipulative. Therefore, one wants to try to curb such abuses. When we look at the Bill and the amendments on Report, we must ask whether those abuses will carry on. We must ask: can the Bill fulfil its intention? Will the abuses that the Bill wants to attack be prevented? Will the things that the Government do not intend to stop be stopped by the Bill? That is the dilemma. The new clause illustrates that dilemma.

The hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) got his Local Government (Access to Information) Bill through Parliament. Labour members in local authorities who want to abuse their position and the control that they have will be able to get round the Bill simply by putting into council documents, which may be subject to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, things that they want to put out as propaganda. Therefore, the Government are in a dilemma. They can see that there is a loophole if they make the Bill subservient to the access to information Act. The Government have never referred to that point. They have not said whether the things that they want to stop will be stopped by the Bill, or whether the things that they do not want to stop will be allowed.

4.45 pm

I hope that the Minister will try to deal with the problem of whether it is possible to get around the intentions of the Bill by things becoming available through the access to information Act which otherwise would not have been available.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): It is important that a comment is made after the speech by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). He must recognise that when such a Bill is before the House, one must vote against it. Even after all the Committee sittings, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has fully appreciated that the Bill suppresses fundamental liberties, as has been said by many hon. Members. I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate, but I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The Bill suppresses the right of elected councils to communicate legitimately with their electorate.

There may be the odd abuse, but no abuses have been brought to my attention yet. There has never been any question of the Labour party being in favour of councils using money to support Labour party candidates or promote Labour party issues. The evidence of the Labour party to the Widdicombe report is clear——

Mr. Simon Hughes: Except that the report is in favour of the proposal.

Mr. Strang: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman read the evidence. The Widdicombe report was opposed by the Labour party, and the Bill goes further than that report. I am referring to the Labour party's original official evidence. I do not want to go over the matter again, because we went over it time and again in Committee.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I take seriously what the hon. Gentleman says about the Bill striking at people's fundamental freedoms. If those freedoms and the conventions that sustain them have been abused time and again by those who are supposed to protect them in local government, it poses a great problem to the legislative Chamber, which must consider whether it should try to tighten up on those freedoms to avoid such abuses. The question is whether the Bill does that. Does the new clause help? The hon. Gentleman does not help his case by suggesting that all is sweetness and light in Labour local authorities, because it is not.

Mr. Strang: I should like to think that all Labour authorities were perfect, but I would not claim it. I do not want to be drawn again on the matter. Legislation is already on the statute book which has a bearing on these matters. It limits the right of local councils to spend money on what they want.

I am glad to see the Under-Secretary for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), in the Chamber because there was no Minister from the Scottish Office in Committee. For that reason, there was a tendency for many people in Scotland, certainly the media, to overlook the significance of the Bill for Scottish people and elected Scottish councils. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the councils all made representations.

Major rights that have been taken for granted by the councils are now to be removed. I shall give two examples. The Under-Secretary's regional council, which is controlled by the Conservative party, supported by its allies in the alliance, put through every door in Edinburgh a leaflet explaining the implications of the Government's Transport Act and saying what damage it would do to our local bus services. Such actions will be suppressed under the Bill.

We have a major campaign in the north of Scotland about Dounreay. My view is clear, but whatever view one takes on the development of civil nuclear power in Dounreay, it is of enormous importance to the people. Surely, in a pluralist democracy the councils should be allowed legitimately to communicate with their electors and with the wider Scottish community to express their attitude to that development.

The island councils must be allowed to campaign on issues that are important to them. One tends to think of Shetland and Orkney as being part of Scotland, but they have a different history and culture. Shetland has its own legislation governing the development of oil and the Shetland island council must be able to put to its people its views on important matters.

The new clause takes us into a new area. It is all about the availability of information to the people. I have been speaking about Scotland because I was conscious of the fact that I was the only Scottish Opposition Member on the Committee but, of course, the Bill applies to the whole of the United Kingdom. We have always taken it for granted that councils should be able to communicate freely and to campaign on issues such as poverty and unemployment.

We know what the Government are doing. Government documents are becoming more and more biased. It makes

me sad when I see some of the documents that are produced by civil servants in the name of the Government. I quoted a civil defence document in Committee and will not quote it again; it was about civil defence and the farmer —a grotesque political statement which had nothing to do with an objective view of the issue.

Such use of the Government machine for propaganda purposes is likely to increase under our authoritarian Prime Minister in the run-up to the election. At the same time, the Greater London council produced an excellent document outlining the implications of a nuclear attack on London. It was an objective statement produced by objective scientists. It was not a peace movement document. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is laughing about it. I think he will find that even the Home Office and the experts from whom the Government seek advice recognise that that was simply a print of a speech made by a Home Office civil servant, which the council made more widely available to the people of London.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend is correct. The document to which he paid credit was based entirely on Government publications and statements, and nothing else.

Mr. Strang: That is why the Bill is such an outrage. Later, we may go into the details which were referred to in Committee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Strang: I said I would give way once, and I am not giving way again.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Member gave way twice.

Mr. Strang: I gave way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) because I was referring specifically to London and he is a GLC member. That was the exception.

There can be no fudging about the Bill. It is a brutal, authoritarian measure which will suppress the fundamental rights of elected councils to communicate legitimately with their electorate, with the Government and with the wider community.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I was not on the Committee, but we have to consider the fact that many councils in areas of high unemployment have a difficult task in putting to the people problems arising from the activities of central Government, whether it be a Tory Government or a Labour Government. Like many other hon. Members, I served on a local authority for many years. A long time ago we issued leaflets and communicated with the press; councils employed press officers to help in that task. That policy was not challenged until recently.

If a council is under Socialist control — I am not talking about the far left or the right but just about a council controlled by the Labour party — invariably it faces a hostile local press similar to the national press, which leans towards the establishment, of which the Conservative party is part. Therefore, it is important that a reasonable case should be presented to the electorate; I emphasise that it should be a reasonable case.

In the north-east, a reasonable case has been presented on shipbuilding, on transport, on the rights to claim social security benefit and on the way to claim rent rebate or rates allowance. All that will cease if the Bill has its full impact. Any reasonable person—I hope the Under-Secretary of State will be reasonable — who reads the Bill will recognise that we will be subjected to a form of tyranny because the public will not be told the facts about the problems they face, as seen by their elected representatives. That is why I feel so strongly about the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I think I understand why the new clause has been tabled. I am less certain that I understand some of the more colourful contributions in its support. I shall try to deal with some of the points that have been raised.

I think the new clause has been put down because there is general concern that material that is published by local authorities to do with the workings of their committees and of their members might unwittingly be caught by the Bill. It is my clear understanding that what the Bill is attempting to do, and I hope will do, is to prevent local authorities from publishing any material in whole or in part which appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for a political party.

We are talking here about something slightly different in the context of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 that was so aptly and eloquently introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) last year. Many hon. Members will know that not only was it welcomed by the House as a whole but that I played a small but interested part in supporting it. So there is no possibility that I could stand at the Dispatch Box and not understand the fears that are encapsulated in the new clause.

I do not believe that the Bill says what Opposition Members believe it says. Perhaps a misunderstanding has arisen because of the wording of an outline code of practice which is available to hon. Members in the Library but which was also circulated before Christmas to all hon. Members who were serving on the Committee. It included a paragraph about unpaid publicity, including council and committee reports, consultation documents, etcetera. It went on to include press releases, press conference statements and media interviews. This outline of the code of practice was intended to be no more than an outline, and it will be subjected to a considerable amount of consultation, much of which is already being undertaken.

Within the existing document there are some phrases which could quite rightly be caught by clause 2 of the Local Government Bill which I trust will shortly become an Act. They may well fall into the category of being reasonably regarded as likely to affect public support for a political party—the sort of thing described by my hon. Friends where some council leaders and chairmen of committees have gone out following a meeting and have issued overtly political press releases. That sort of thing is undesirable and is not part and parcel of the proper workings of local government.

Mr. Tony Banks: I find it strange that the Minister should be surprised that people in local government, elected councillors, act politically. Politics are not confined to this House. Is the Minister's mind open to the removal from that outline or draft code of the reference to council committee reports, consultation documents, press releases and press conference statements?

Mrs. Rumbold: My mind is always open to reasonable suggestions from any hon. Member.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: I should like to continue.

When we are talking about this section of the code of practice, I am certain that we are talking about matters which came within the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. These provide for public access to council meetings and to meetings of committees and sub-committees. There is a definite move towards openness in local government. These provisions allow public access to the agendas, reports and minutes of all meetings—publications which fall well outside the remit of this Bill.

The 1985 Act will open to public inspection background papers on reports of council meetings, sub-committee and committee meetings, and all those papers which, in the opinion of the officers of any local authority, it would be right to disclose as matters of interest to the general public who require such papers to ascertain whether certain matters of interest to them are being dealt with openly and freely by their local council. I hope that that goes a long way to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch.

I should like to pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). There must be a clear understanding about the provisions of the Bill that relate to the public availability of agendas and the general proceedings of a local authority. All matters that relate to the functions of local government and which are proper processes for local government are put on paper and will be available to the general public.

As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, many local authority members are quite clearly associated with political parties. It is a different matter if a member or leader of a local authority deliberately uses money from his authority to make political points and if he issues press releases that are of an overt political nature. That would rightly be caught by the provisions of the Bill, and that is the purpose for which the Bill has been brought forward.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that the ordinary man and woman in the street, on reading an account of what she has said, will ask why it is that a Minister of this Government can be transported free of charge from one oak panelled room to the next to make overtly political speeches on behalf of the Conservative party? Ministers of the Crown do that every day in this country and abroad, but an elected representative of a local authority, who just happens to be a member of the Labour party, cannot speak up for his constituents and make a political speech. There are double standards—one standard for a Minister of the Crown and one for the local authority representative. It is a scandal.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Member would be better advised to stick——

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Lady does not like it, does she?

Mrs. Rumbold: I love it. The hon. Gentleman would be better advised to stick to his accounts of Fawlty Towers and John Cleese and Basil Fawlty than to try to pick me up on something about which it is clear he knows absolutely nothing.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister not realise that a press release or council document which might be circulated to a large number of people is the sort of document which a parish council would circulate in pursuance of its contention that the closure of a railway station, or a DHSS office, or something of that kind, would be detrimental to its area? It is difficult to avoid the fear that such a publication might be construed as tending to reduce support for a political party, the one that happens to be in power, whether it is the Conservative party, the Labour party or the alliance, or whatever. There is real anxiety at that level of local government, where party politics plays a very small part. A purely local campaign conducted by a parish council on behalf of its residents might be caught by these definitions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The matters to which the hon. Gentleman refers will come up for discussion when we debate functions. He will find some responses to which he will be interested to listen.

There has been a suggestion that there is such a thing as unpaid publicity; that is, where a local authority can find ways to say that publicity that was coming out from it had not incurred the direct transfer of cash, but that funds had been provided seemingly indirectly. That would also be caught by the Bill if it were information coming from the local authority itself, because the local authority would either directly or indirectly be funding that publicity.

I reiterate that it is only overtly political publicity that will be caught by the provisions of the Bill. All truly straightforward publicity on matters that are dealt with legitimately by local authorities, and all the papers that relate to local authorities, to which access by the public is available and which are not anything other than straightforwardly informative, will be outside the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Garrett: The Minister is quite properly reciting what shall and what shall not be. If she believes in the fundamental liberties, does she not see that there is now a move for the first time towards some form of censorship, something that we have not had since the 1939-45 war? Some faceless person will decide how that form of censorship will operate within the guidelines that the Minister is suggesting. Is it not a dangerous step to suppress a fundamental liberty? It is that which is causing me concern, and I hope that it is causing the Government concern.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, although I am not sure whether I agree with his fears. There are no words in the Bill which will prevent proper and honest information being given by a local authority to its electorate, provided that it is not of an overtly political nature. There is no reason why such an authority should be overtly political, and there is no reason why any information should not be couched in perfectly reasonable terms and accepted as such by the general public.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister is more capable than most of expressing extreme policies in the most reasonable language. As a Chelsea supporter, I must say that there is much about her that commends itself to me. She probably learnt her language down at the shed end. In view of what she has just said, would the GLC's welfare benefit project, which produced 150,000 responses and about £11·5

million of unclaimed benefit out of the £100 million that the Government estimate is lost in London alone each year, be caught by the Bill?

Mrs. Rumbold: That would depend on the way in which the GLC's benefit fund was set up, and on the way in which those provisions were related to the public. I am not sure that it would, but it is possible. It would depend on how those provisions were couched.

It would be far fetched for the House to assume that the new clause is necessary. The Bill is worded clearly enough, and I therefore ask the House to resist the new clause.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I should like to seek the leave of the House to respond briefly. We are not happy with the Minister's explanation. She said that the new clause is unnecessary but she did not say that it would do any harm. We think that it is necessary, so perhaps it should be included just to make sure that the assurances that we have been given are enacted. There are many examples of assurances given by Ministers, but things often turn out differently, which is what we fear in this legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked whether the GLC's welfare rights campaign would be caught by the legislation. The Bill says that if something is not the function of a local authority, that authority cannot campaign on it. It does not have to be political, overtly or otherwise. If it is not an authority's function, even though it is to the benefit of the people whom the authority serves as an elected body, it cannot campaign on the issue.

There is nothing overtly political in monitoring the police, but only a police authority can spend money on monitoring the police. In the same way, money cannot be spent on welfare rights if that is the function of another body. Therefore, matters that are not overtly political are caught by the legislation.

What is overtly political in the minds of one group of people is not overtly political in the minds of another. I do not think that campaigning on peace and nuclear-free zones is overtly political; it is reasonable common sense. But there are hon. Members who think that it is overtly political. However, to recruit unemployed people in my constituency to the Territorial Army, as the Sefton council does, is overtly political. But that might not be caught by this legislation because it is all a matter of subjectivity.

Once we start legislating for censorship and trying to define what is and what is not political, what someone can and cannot say or can and cannot publish, one is on the slippery slope towards making local democracy and local government in Britain operate in the way that it had to operate in Franco's Fascist Spain and the way that it is forced to operate today in Jaruzelski's Poland.

Mr. Holt: Is what is important not whether the hon. Gentleman and his party campaign on something but who pays for that campaigning and whether the money comes out of public funds?

5.15 pm

Mr. Roberts: The ratepayers of Sefton pay for the recruitment campaign for the Territorial Army. The ratepayers of Sefton and other local authority areas pay for the Conservative council's campaigns in favour of the sale of council houses. They are overtly political campaigns. I always remember the Prime Minister's maiden speech in 1960, when she said:

> "The public has the right, in the first instance, to know what its elected representatives are doing." — [*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1350.]

That means publicity and expenditure.

The Liberals have not made it clear whether they are in favour of the legislation. The truth is that they are against it but the Social Democratic party is in favour of it. That is because they are hooked on the same prejudices as the Tory party. What are now radical Left-wing Labour councils were previously controlled by Right-wing Social Democrats. We have thrown them all out in places such as Islington. In Liverpool the Liberals are in alliance with a group of people who were on the right of the Labour party whom they are supposed to have fought for years. It is those Social Democrats, who ran councils such as Islington, Manchester, Liverpool and elsewhere—Right-wing Labour people—with whom the Liberals are now in alliance. They do not like the new policies of the new radical Labour councils. I remember the Liberals criticising junketing in Manchester — one lot boozes while the other pays—and now that the council has got rid of all the junketing, it is being criticised for getting rid of the traditions of Manchester.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): I was under the impression that the Opposition Front Bench did not much care for the policies of the Liverpool council either.

Mr. Roberts: I have not mentioned the policies of the Liverpool council. I mentioned——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are straying a long way from the new clause.

Mr. Roberts: The Opposition regret that the Government have not accepted the new clause. We regret the Government's policy of local government cuts and their enforcement. We regret their privatisation policies. If democratically elected councils do not want privatisation, it is enforced. Then the Government chose to abolish those councils that happen to be strong and Labour—the metropolitan county councils and the GLC. Now we have a policy of censorship in local government — the policy of telling democratically elected local councils, whether Labour, Conservative or Liberal, how they can and cannot spend the revenue that they raise locally, what they can and cannot say and can and cannot campaign on. In other words, honest debate and opposition have no place in the elective dictatorship of the Prime Minister's Government.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 2

PROHIBITION OF POLITICAL PUBLICITY

Mr. Straw: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 15, leave out 'publish' and insert
'incur expenditure on the publication of.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 17, in clause 4, page 3, line 24, leave out 'local authority publicity' and insert
'the incurring of expenditure on publicity by local authorities'.

No. 22, in clause 6, page 4, line 30, after 'to', insert 'the incurring of expenditure on.'

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said that the crucial issue in the Bill was, who pays? The question whether ratepayers' money should be used to pay for political propaganda is a foil for the good intentions of the Bill.

The Bill does not just seek to control so-called political propaganda on the rates. It also seeks to control, as can be seen clearly from the outline draft code, what councillors may say and think in committees when no cost is imposed upon ratepayers.

The amendments are intended to give the Government an opportunity to bring the Bill into line with what they say is its purpose. An examination of previous debates on the Bill will show that the hon. Lady the Under-Secretary put forward what was, in a sense, a pioneering ten-minute rule Bill before the measure. She said on 16 May 1984:

"The only restraint that I wish to impose on the section is on using money raised through taxes and rates for party political purposes."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. 370.]

That was the mischief that the hon. Lady was aiming at, and she has acknowledged it.

The Prime Minister used similar words during the debate on the Loyal Address on 6 November 1985:

"We are therefore introducing this Session a Bill along the lines proposed by the independent Widdicombe Committee to ban the use of ratepayers' money to finance political propaganda."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 23-4.]

When the Secretary of State moved the Second Reading of the Bill on 18 November 1985, he said:

"The Widdicombe inquiry recognised that it was implicit in the present law that local authorities should not spend public money on party political matters, but it recommended that that implicit prohibition should be given statutory effect. The Government agree with that view."—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 42.]

If the Bill only gave effect to what Ministers have said it should, there would not be much argument between the parties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) said, in its evidence to the Widdicombe inquiry the Labour party, no more and no less than any other political party, believed that party political propaganda should not be paid for out of ratepayers' money.

The Bill goes wider than that. The crucial trigger to enable the Government to use the Bill to censor and gag opponents is contained within clause 2, the first line of which states:

"A local authority shall not publish any material".

That reveals the true intentions of the Government. The Opposition amendment seeks to delete "publish" and insert words which mean that local authorities should not incur any expenditure in publishing material. According to the Government, that is the mischief that they are seeking to deal with.

It is time that the Government faced up to the massive opposition which the Bill, as presently drafted, has run into from members of Conservative groups. The Association of District Councils, which is Conservative-dominated, opposes the Bill in exactly the same terms as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): The chief officers.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member has mentioned chief officers, but I am talking about councillors such as Councillor John Morgan, who is a Conservative councillor and who opposes the Bill. Councillor Tony Hart, the Conservative leader of Kent county council, wrote to the Secretary of State on 30 December to say that he was very worried about the contents of the Bill. Mr. Hart kindly sent us a copy of the letter in which he states:

"It is imperative that the Bill as drawn up should be amended in order to avoid new controls which would be imprecise and possibly raise major problems of definition."

Mr. Hart went on to say that the council appreciates that the task of finding words that will stop abuse but permit ordinary good practice to continue would not be easy.

In Mr. Hart's judgment, all good practice would be banned by the Bill. Those careful words from Conservative councillors show the deepest misgivings, which are made worse by the publication of the draft code of practice. The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, which is not political, believes that the Bill as drafted is unacceptable and will, in its words,

"prove a recipe for extensive litigation."

There has already been considerable discussion about double standards. As long as the Bill remains in its present form, with a restriction on publishing rather than on incurring expenditure, the Government will not only be charged with, but will be guilty of, double standards.

I wrote to the Prime Minister on 7 January to ask her how she had the gall to allow a draft code of practice to be published which seeks to gag councillors not when they incur expenditure but gratuitously when they speak. I asked how the Prime Minister could do that, when the Cabinet Office's own code of guidance for Ministers and Government press officers, while it deals with so-called unpaid written publicity—we accept that it is bound to incur some expenditure when it is written—in no sense deals with what Ministers and Government press officers say at press conferences. It is now notorious that if the code was in operation and the Government injunctions on local authorities applied to central Government, Mr. Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minster's chief press officer, and many other press officers would have been contravening the code daily.

Mr. Tony Banks: Paid for by the taxpayer.

Mr. Straw: As my hon. Friend rightly says, paid for by the taxpayer.

The code prohibits comments that are not objective. Comments should not be over-simplified or personalised, should at no stage be seen as politically controversial and should not directly attack the policies or opinions of other political parties or groups.

It would seem that these days Government press officers are not particularly bothered about attacking other political parties, but they are interested in attacking other political groups—their so-called ministerial colleagues. Not a day does by without one ministerial press officer—at the behest of a Minister, as the press officers do not act on their own account—using the lobby system and their freedom under central Government conventions to attack another Minister. That happens not merely on the subject of Westland, but on other matters.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) for drawing my attention to a matter which exposes the Government's double standards. Bradford city council has written to all the Labour and Conservative Members who represent that great city to express its deep anxiety about the Bill's implications on the council's day-to-day work of

representing the electorate. That representation has the support of councillors from all parts of the political spectrum. Councillors are worried that their day-to-day work will be affected. They mention representations about poor railway services. If they raise that matter to the level of controversy, the councillors would be inhibited by the code.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West has also drawn my attention to the intentions of the local authority in the Under-Secretary's constituency. The Government are seeking to gag political opponents. Right-wing Conservative councils, such as Merton council in the Under-Secretary's constituency, are seeking to gag their staff. I have, courtesy of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West, a copy of an extraordinary code of conduct about communications with the media by which not only are council chief officers to be gagged but cleaners, caretakers and teachers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am anxous to hear the debate. The hon. Gentleman should address the House and not turn his back on the Chair.

Mr. Straw: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I caught it from the Secretary of State for the Environment the other night.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend does not have to worry about his back.

5.30 pm

Mr. Straw: That is right.

The code of conduct says:

"No person employed by the Authority in any capacity or for any period should make to the media any communication in which there is an indication that he or she is an employee of the Authority without explicit written permission from the individual's Chief Officer."

That is just for starters. The Under-Secretary sheds crocodile tears in her anxiety about free speech, so let us see what she has done to oppose her authority which is gagging its employees.

The Government, no more and no less, seek to snuff out opposition. The Bill is not about controlling expenditure. Were it so, the Government would accept the amendments.

I come now to the interesting matter of the Liberals, and their squirming and worming as they decide during the debate—as if its outcome were not plain—how they will vote.

It is important to remind the House how the Liberal Members sought to vote in favour of the Bill when it came before the House on 18 November 1985. The reasons that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) gave should go down in the history books. He was explaining to the House why Liberal Members would vote in favour of the Bill. They were going to vote in favour of the Bill—I quote directly—because clauses 2(1)*(b)* and 3(1) and 4 are appalling and extreme. They would vote in favour of the Bill because clause 4 is horrendous and because it is arbitrary. They would vote in favour of the Bill because clause 2(3)——

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is not quoting. That is a paraphrase.

Mr. Straw: It is not a paraphrase. The deputy leader of the Liberal party says that it is a paraphrase. It is not.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The House spends an increasing amount of time referring to documents and arguing whether the words used are a quotation or a paraphrase. If we are assiduous, we will all have the relevant columns of *Hansard*. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not mislead the House by suggesting that those were expressed as the reasons why we would vote in favour of the Bill on Second Reading. On the contrary, those were our objections to the Bill which we wanted dealt with during the Bill's passage if we were to sustain our support for it. Elsewhere, as I shall quote if the hon. Gentleman does not, we gave our reasons for supporting the Bill on Second Reading. It is elsewhere. It is not in that part of *Hansard*.

Mr. Straw: Was I paraphrasing or making it up? Would I make up what is patent on the face of the *Official Report*?

I have searched for any positive reasons why the Liberals are in favour of the Bill. If one takes the view that a Bill is appalling, extreme, horrendous, arbitrary and dangerous, then the brain's normal processes might lead one to vote against the Bill, but I am not a Liberal and I do not know how they work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) said, rather generously, that the matter arose because the Liberals were on one side and the members of the SDP were on the other. That is not true. Part of the parliamentary Liberal party voted in favour of the Bill, but those Members are opposed by all the Liberal councillors in the Association of County Councils who have been in the van in opposing the Bill. Councillor Tony Greaves, of Hebden Bridge, who runs the bunker at Hebden Bridge —*[Interruption.]* We know more about Councillor Tony Greaves than the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mrs. Hughes) does. Councillor Greaves agrees with us more often than he agrees with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. Councillor Greaves is on Lancashire county council and we keep track of his voting record.

In a Lancashire county council debate, Councillor Tony Greaves, the leading Liberal councillor—it does not lie in the mouths of any Liberal Members who are worried about their reselection to deny this—backed the Labour group's resolution not just against what the Government are doing but against the more moderate recommendations contained in the majority Widdicombe report.

There was one revealing passage in the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, if I can turn it up.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman has not prepared his speech.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman says that I have not prepared my speech. I have, but I have inadvertently pulled out the flag that I had marking the pearls that came from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hughes: It might give the hon. Gentleman a moment to find his place if I were to remind him about the unanimity that there appeared to be and that he admitted in Committee on 10 December when I asked him whether the Labour party was then taking a view consistent with the evidence that it gave to the Widdicombe inquiry. He said:

"Pity about the question, but the answer is yes. My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) seems worried, but there is no need. In its evidence, which was approved by its national executive committee, the Labour party stated that it had always agreed that ratepayers' money should

[Mr. Hughes]

not be used for explicit party political purposes, for example, in support of named candidates or in support of a Labour group or of a Conservative group. Information money should properly be used to support and explain the policy of the authority as a whole". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 10 December 1985; c. 157.]

That view and the alliance view were consistent. The Labour party, however, did not vote consistently when the matter came to the House, whereas the alliance did.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The intervention had little, if anything, to do with the amendment.

Mr. Straw: To return to the amendment, it relates to the fact that the Bill goes much wider than the Widdicombe report.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Yes.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman said, "Yes." We opposed the Bill on Second Reading because it goes much wider than even the majority Widdicombe report. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has given me the opportunity to find the other things that he said in Committee. He said:

"Without stretching your patience too far, Miss Fookes, I shall say for the record"—

the hon. Gentleman did not stretch only the Chairman's patience, but that is by the way—

"I shall say for the record that the parliamentary parties here"—

that is, the Liberals and the SDP—

"believe that party political advertising on the rates should be prohibited, as Widdicombe suggested. That view is not shared by our council group, which is an autonomous body within the party." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 10 December 1985; c. 159.]

Liberal councillors apparently believe that it is OK to spend ratepayers' money on party political propaganda, because those are the words that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey used. We know that the Liberals are—I was going to say fair-minded, but that would be too generous——

Mr. Meadowcroft: Electorally progressive.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman has now confused me. As he has proved that the Liberal party is in favour of propaganda on the rates, which I remember him saying he was against, my conclusion is that he should vote with us in the Lobby tonight.

Mr. Straw: No, the answer is that the Minister must vote with us in the Lobby.

Mr. Hill: Let us all go into the same Lobby.

Mr. Straw: That may happen. This group of amendments is intended to bring the Bill into line with the recommendations of the Widdicombe report and with what Ministers said was its main purpose.

Mr. Tony Banks: I support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). As he said, if the Government seriously want to do what they say they want to do, they will accept these amendments.

The amendments give me the opportunity of drawing to the attention of the House once again the total hypocrisy of the Government's position on publicity and information. If it is put out by the Conservative party in government, by definition it is information. If it is put out by Labour-controlled local authorities, it is, according to the Government, propaganda. That is the attitude of the Government to all matters — one of hypocrisy and double standards.

Let us take as an example the enormous amount of taxpayers' money spent by the Government on putting out their propaganda through various Government Departments, which the Government describe as information. Some of the press and publicity departments are enormous and their budgets are going up all the time. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) tells me that the Government now spend £23 million on publicity. We would call it propaganda, for that is what it is. It is pushing the policies which the Government espouse. Labour Members find those policies objectionable, divisive and clearly aimed at trying to sustain the Conservative party in power.

If a local authority tries to tell the truth about central Government policies, that is branded as propaganda. All I can say is that when the Government stop telling lies about local government, local government will stop telling the truth about the impact of the policies of central Government.

The questions that I put down recently to various Ministers about the money spent in their Departments on press publicity show that the amount spent by the Government doubled between 1984-85 and 1985-86. It is difficult to get the complete figure, which is running at over £10 million in 1985-86 — this is Government propaganda paid for by the taxpayer—because, despite my asking the Minister of Defence on 6 December to state the amount of money spent by his Department on propaganda, I am still awaiting a reply, although it has been promised to me in frequent telephone conversations with the Minister's office. I can only assume that once again he is trying to cook the books, as we know the Secretary of State for Defence has been so ready to do.

Let us look at some of the percentage increases in Government Departments over the period 1984-85 to 1985-86. They show that the Department of Employment's publicity budget increased by no less than 300 per cent. in that period, while the Welsh Office increased its spending by over 250 per cent. in twelve months.

All this, we maintain, is propaganda put out by the Government and paid for by the taxpayer. If the Government aim to restrict the local authorities' ability to start telling the truth, they should do something to limit their own capacity to tell lies at the expense of the taxpayer.

Mr. Meadowcroft: This amendment is not particularly significant, despite the efforts of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to make it so. It seeks to temper the Bill, and to that extent it is valuable, but it seems to us to pose a quite arbitrary and unsustainable distinction between the work of a local authority and that which can be divided out as separate expenditure. If an attempt were made to separate out the particular expenditure, that in itself would introduce a dangerous element into the whole debate, because it would mean that a local authority which was seeking to undermine the conventions and to abuse its rights as a local authority could have a separate fund and say, "Ah well, because it did not come out of that it is part of the generality of local government and so does not fall foul of the Act."

There is no part of local government on which expenditure is not incurred. If staff are employed on a particular part of local government work, expenditure is clearly incurred. No work is carried out without staff time. The amendment, therefore, seems to impose a highly artificial and arbitrary distinction between paying for and being part of the generality of local authority work. I hope that the amendment will be withdrawn.

5.45 pm

Mrs. Rumbold: Amendment No. 1 seeks to substitute the words

"incur expenditure on the publication of"

for the word "publish" in the first line of clause 2(1). As the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) has just said, the substitution would to some extent be rather spurious for the intention of the Bill and, indeed, for its actual operation. It would muddy the waters.

I know that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has written to the Prime Minister, and I also know that a letter is on its way to him, which I am sure he will read with immense interest.

Mr. Straw: Has the hon. Lady a copy of it?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am afraid not. I am sure that it will be published immediately.

To support his arguments for this particular amendment, the hon. Member for Blackburn lined up nearly everybody of whom he could think—all the local authority leaders of all political persuasions. He told the House that nearly everybody on the Government Benches and on the Opposition Benches would be persuaded to support not the Bill, but the amendment. He said that these people had written in large numbers. It is perfectly true, because we have all had letters from local authority associations and others expressing concern.

I suspect that much of the concern has been expressed partly because of the contents of the outline of a code of practice which said that publicity would include

"paid publicity, including paid advertising in the press, on radio and television, leaflets, campaigns, exhibitions, etc."

Much of the alarm has been aroused by local authority members who have perhaps been advised by their officers that this would be exceedingly difficult for local authorities to carry out and might entail a great deal of expenditure, and many other things that are somewhat alarmist.

I remember the Local Government (Access to Information) Bill which, we now assert firmly, has wide support throughout the country. I have to tell the House that the wide support consisted of an absolute barrage of letters from local authorities, and especially from their officers, telling me and, I am sure, all my colleagues that the Bill would be exceedingly detrimental and would incur such massive expenditure that local authorities would need a greatly increased block grant from the Government in order to cope with it. Yet, now that it is on the statute book, it appears widely accepted as a splendid piece of legislation, which it is.

I must refute the hon. Gentleman's argument that, simply because there appears at the moment to be opposition, that is a good reason for the Government to accept his amendment. His amendment adds nothing to the sense of the Bill. I feel that, were it to be accepted, it would be nothing——

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady says that she objects not to what councillors say, but to councils spending ratepayers' money on party political propaganda. Why, then, is the Bill not addressing itself to that and that alone?

Mrs. Rumbold: That is exactly what the Bill addresses itself to. Publishing will incur expenditure of ratepayers' money. Publishing in any form is likely to incur some expenditure, however indirectly, of ratepayers' money. For that reason, I believe that the Bill is perfectly adequate. I especially support the Bill. As the hon. Member for Blackburn pointed out, I introduced a modest ten-minute Bill on the matter, which suggests that I anticipated that the Government would ultimately, and sensibly, introduce a Bill of this type. I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Straw: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 16, leave out

'can reasonably be regarded as likely to'

and insert 'it is probable will'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 6, in page 2, line 28, leave out 'can reasonably be regarded as'

and insert

'it is probable that it is'.

Mr. Straw: In one sense this is a technical matter, but it is also important. Clause 2(1) is the trigger for the rest of the Bill. The tests established in the clause are the key tests of the Bill. Clause 2(1) states:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for —

(a) a political party".

There are two legs to the test. We have argued about the principle of the Bill, but within the context of the principle I understand why the Government have introduced the test whether material

"appears to be designed to affect . . . public support".

That test is objective, but from a relatively objective test we move to one that is worrying and potentially wide-ranging in its scope. The test whether material

"can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party"

could open a Pandora's box. Anything that a local authority does could be classed as being

"reasonably . . . likely to affect, public support for . . . a political party".

Yesterday I went to Southampton to launch the Labour party's higher education charter. I was in the foyer of the city hall of that great city when I noticed that the council had shown great initiative. The council is seeking to do something about potholes, holes in the road, and broken lamp posts. The council has issued postcards, which are plain business reply postcards on one side with "oops" on the other side. The postcard states:

"A Post Card from you means action from us. Please fill in using BLOCK CAPITALS."

It asks for details of the repairs that are needed, such as for potholes in footpaths, missing road nameplates and broken street lights. That is sensible action for a local authority to take. I am sure that the Minister acknowledges that there is no party political intent. Authorities must have a system of recording complaints, and it is better to receive them in that form rather than on scraps of paper resulting

[Mr. Straw]

in dissatisfied ratepayers. That action has been taken by a Labour-controlled council, but it was not designed for political purposes. If the campaign is successful, it could be taken as being

"reasonably . . . likely to affect, public support for . . . a political party".

If a council does something good, that is likely to affect public support for the party. If the council does something bad, that could equally be

"reasonably regarded as likely to affect, public support for . . . a political party".

I am grateful to the Minister for answering my correspondence in detail about how the courts would seek to interprete the test. In his letter, the Minister states:

"In essence it is a test of remoteness just as in negligence liability lies in respect of all damage which is reasonably foreseeable."

That took me back 20 years to the endless hours that I spent in my tort lectures. However, I am not reassured. Many of us who are lawyers are not reassured by the Minister's assertion that the test is one of remoteness. I do not believe that remoteness would be an issue. Of course, local authorities could do something that could be so remote from political support that the action would be out of court. But, in the case of the Southampton postcard, the question of remoteness does not arise. The council is directly responsible for the postcard. If the council does well out of the campaign, it will gain political support, so remoteness is not an issue.

The man on the Clapham omnibus could reasonably believe that, although the council did not intend to affect political support, its action could reasonably be regarded as likely to affect political support. In this context, reasonableness is a wider-ranging test and is not of the Wednesbury type, which, in administrative law, is a test of unreasonableness where public authorities are allowed a wide discretion to be reasonable and the courts intervene only when they have been unreasonable.

We seek to substitute the test with one of probability, which is a concept well known to the courts. Although it does not depart from what the Government wish to achieve, it provides a more objective and fairer test than that in the Bill.

We understand the problems of drafting legislation, but it is the duty of the House to improve legislation when we violently object to its purpose. I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment in that light.

Mr. Simon Hughes: As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, in Committee we had a substantial debate on terminology. The debate had a political layer and a legal layer. The Committee accepted that the wording in the Bill implies a reasonableness test. That allows for the maximum possible interpretation by the courts of what they could interfere with or intervene in.

The reasonableness test has been established in many cases following the Wednesbury case, to which the hon. Member for Blackburn referred. The Wednesbury case asserted that reasonableness could be tested by whether someone could reasonably act in a certain way. It is not a balancing exercise, but an evaluation of an action, giving the benefit of the doubt to the person making the decision to act.

In Committee we considered that the test in the Bill would extend a principle of administrative law to a new area, which could involve an enormous amount of litigation. Local authorities would be uncertain about the practical reality of what would appear to be a catch-all phrase. Because of the opinion expressed in Committee, the Minister said that he would ask his officials to reconsider the phrase.

Clearly, no Government amendment suggests a better definition. The Minister accepted that definition was difficult. Several amendments were tabled, of which two have been selected, in an attempt to give effect specifically to the Widdicombe committee's recommendations. Paragraph 229 of its report states:

"An express prohibition of expenditure calculated to advance the interests of a political party could well have a moderating effect on the scale and style of campaigns."

That wording is not legalistic.

6 pm

If the Government are unwilling to accept the amendment, one of the problems will be that, instead of there being on the face of the literature a sign of its likely effect, there will be a much wider definition. The Widdicombe committee intends that we put into statute what possibly already exists in the common law. I hope the House will accept that that will not happen if the clause passes into legislation unamended.

The danger is that this is the sort of argument that can detain people in the High Court for hours, if not days, because it revolves around substantive and important traditional matters of legal definition. I hope that the Government will reconsider the matter, because of its practical implications. Even if they have not yet found a precise substitute which is closer to Widdicombe's recommendations, they have the benefit of advice which they did not have in Committee.

All hon. Members will have received a joint statement by the three local authority associations—the county, district and metropolitan councils—which specifically comments on the present state of play. It states:

"Widdicombe appreciated the difficulties of translating this statutory prohibition into legislation. The question is what is the best test of whether publicity is 'party political'? Clause 2 seeks to apply tests of intent . . . and effect. We believe this is fundamentally wrong, unworkable in practice and would lead to prohibitions well beyond the Widdicombe recommendation."

The paragraph entitled "A Lawyer's Paradise" states:

"Widdicombe . . . stated that 'We wish to avoid new controls that will be imprecise, or raise major definitional problems, and are aware that it is easier to identify a problem than to encapsulate that problem in a legislative formula."

The councils' response to that Widdicombe quotation was:

"Clause 2 is so imprecise, with so many words and expressions needing subjective evaluation, that it looks like a charter for extensive litigation."

The amendments seek to replace the test of reasonableness, as the county councils' objective assessment has evaluated it, with a test of probability. Will the Government admit that they have not yet done what they said they intended to do when they began legislating, which is to implement the Widdicombe recommendations?

Although there has been much mirth periodically at the expense of this position, I must repeat that from the outset we in the alliance have stood full square behind the Widdicombe majority report. We said that we thought it right to legislate for Widdicombe's recommended prohibition. We also said that we needed a definition that would go that far and no further. When the legal and political opinion of groups representing all political

parties, all groupings of political parties, and all the major groupings and societies of officers in local government, with all their years of experience, is that the clause, if it is unamended, will result in uncertainty, excessively wide interpretation of its original intention, and endless litigation, it must still be unacceptable.

I hope the Minister will say that, although he could not get his officials to come up with a satisfactory amendment, he recognises, as he did previously, that it is necessary to re-amend the clause, and that the selected amendments, at least one of which was tabled by my hon. Friends and myself, are at least a better stab at the objectives of Widdicombe than is the Government's definition. It is a matter of both political and legal judgment, and of the Government's honesty with the electorate in doing what they said they would do. I hope that the Government will concede that right and that justice, and that the best solution to the difficult legal problems is on the side of the amendments. I hope that the Minister will accept them and say that they are better than what we started with.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is interesting to hear a lawyer warning the Government about the dangers wihin the Bill rather than licking his lips at the thought of the fat fees that he and his colleagues in the legal profession will undoubtedly demand from local authorities and others if the Bill is enacted without amendment.

The Widdicombe inquiry, which was aware of the advantages of local authority publicity, recommended that "there should be an express statutory prohibition of local authority publicity of a party political nature."

All hon. Members will agree with that statement because it is unexceptionable. It does not propose a new restriction on local government, because at present the publication of party political material would contradict central principles of administrative law. It would be either improper or irrelevant, so there is no need for this further strengthening.

We accept that the Government intend to improve the Bill by proposing an amendment which deletes the reference to

"a body, cause or campaign identified with, or likely to be . . . identified with, a political party."

However, there is no real change to the heart of clause 2(1) or the Bill. The crucial phrase refers to banning

"material which . . . can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

That inflicts a test of such severity that it goes well beyond a statutory declaration of existing law.

The amendments that we have tabled seek to redress the balance in clause 2(1) and (2)*(b)*, so that material would be banned only if it were probable that it would affect political support. Even if the amendments are accepted, the Bill will represent a lawyers' paradise.

The existing tests will almost certainly prevent local authorities from issuing publicity about proposed Government legislation, provided that the legislation has been the subject of political disagreement between any two parties. It is extremely difficult to think of recent legislation which has not been extremely controversial.

The type of publicity that local authorities have circulated, which draws attention to the impact of Government legislation on their local communities, was explicitly defended in the Widdicombe report as a proper and fitting use of public money. The Government's motive for introducing the clause in its present form could well be to avoid the effects of having an informed public, which is what we have said throughout.

The Government are out to gag local authorities to prevent them from telling the truth about the impact of Government policy. The Government say that we live in a free society where information is available, but I do not accept that. Our society is relatively free compared with many others, but if our democracy is based on the freedom of soft pornographers, such as Murdoch, to print the trash, filth and daily lies in *The Sun* and, increasingly, in *The Times*, and the sort of stuff that we read in the *Daily Star* and *Daily Express*, it is extremely shallowly based. We do not live in a society where access to information is unhindered and free. This is one of the most closed societies in Europe. We live in a society where information is filtered through either the Government or their agents in Fleet street—the puppet Tory press of Fleet street — so local authorities are attempting to redress the information imbalance.

The Bill will prohibit an authority from publicising a rates cut, or a decrease or an increase—if that were ever to happen—in its HIP allocation. The effects of these policies on Labour local authority services would be open to challenge, as would a Conservative council that issued information to promote council house sales or selective education.

As long as I am a Member, I shall refer to the Greater London council as it exists and when it has passed on, temporarily. The GLC is involved in a range of publicity campaigns drawing attention to certain benefits aimed at improving the environment or the lot of Londoners. There have been campaigns aimed also at drawing the attention of Londoners to the effects of Government policies. The "Fares Fair" policy, which was so popular with Londoners, would not be allowed to operate under the Bill because it was controversial. A Conservative group need only object to the policies and the GLC, once again, would be dragged into the courts.

The welfare benefits project would be banned because the Greater London council is not a welfare social services authority. The GLC would be prevented from mounting a campaign drawing to the attention of tens of thousands of Londoners the social security benefits that they are entitled to claim, but are not claiming. The Government have told us that about £100 million a year goes unclaimed in benefits in London. The GLC's welfare benefits project has each year enabled about £11·5 million of that unclaimed money to be put into the hands of some of the poorest people in our community who so desperately need it.

Streetwise Kids, civil defence, advertising of concerts and the cultural activities at the Royal Festival hall and programmes drawing attention to the evils of pavement parking and the need for strategic planning are all campaigns with an element of controversy, because they are opposed by the Government or by the opposition within the council. These campaigns would fall foul of the Bill, particularly this clause. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who, I understand, has given up his legal practice, has warned us it will be a bonanza for lawyers. In his profession, many people are waiting to ring up the pound signs on the tills. This will mean a real killing for lawyers at the expense of

[Mr. Tony Banks]

taxpayers and ratepayers. If the Minister is serious about ensuring that the Bill does not provide a lawyers' paradise, he should accept the amendments.

Mr. Beith: I should like to address to the Minister the question that I addressed to him in the context of the words that the amendment seeks to alter. The clause refers to

"material which . . . appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

How can the normal activities of any parish council not be so regarded? It is in the nature of the activities of parish councils to write letters, publicise grievances and circulate material, all of which is designed to affect the activities of other bodies, because they have so few powers and responsibilities of their own. Therefore, they criticise what other people do. The consequence of that is not so much the fear of other parts of the Bill and of other amendments, but the anxiety that they will become attached to a cause that is identified with a particular political party. Often, the cause will be supported by several political parties. They appear to be staunch critics of the Government of the day or perhaps of the political party that controls another local authority in whose area they are situated. It may be a Conservative county council—if there are any left in future years—or the party in power at Westminster that is criticised. One way or another, they will finish up criticising a political party which is in power merely because of the grievance they raise.

If the Alnwick town council raises, as it has done on several occasions in the past two years, the subject of the inadequate number of police on the beat in the town and the rise in crime, it will appear to some reasonable people to be casting doubt on the effectiveness of the Government's declared policy on law and order and crime reduction. I consider myself to be a reasonable man, and I do not think it is an unreasonable conclusion that that might affect the political support for the party that forms the Government.

6.15 pm

Another parish council may complain about the reduction in railway services from Chathill or Widdington, or some other station in my constituency. It may be regarded by a reasonable person as casting doubt on the commitment of the Government of the day to our railway system, which other people rightly question.

It seems to me almost impossible for parish councils to carry out their normal activity of speaking up for the needs of their areas without appearing to be acting in a way that may reasonably be regarded as likely to affect public support for the political party that forms the Government of the day, or controls the local authority that provides the services about which they are speaking. It is in that context that I am worried about the words in the Bill. I am sympathetic to the idea that they might be amended. I hope that, although the same issue comes up in other areas, the Minister will discuss its relevance in this context as well.

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): I am in some difficulty, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the context in which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) moved the amendment, but I can foresee problems over the situation that is already portrayed on television—an advertisement by Preston designed to attract additional investment into the Preston area. That is a very good thing, of course, because investment is likely to attract more jobs and make various other improvements in the local economy.

When one looks at that advertisement, and at advertisements of the kind that other authorities might put out, it seems to me that they will have, and I certainly will have, some difficulty. This is probably purely a matter for lawyers to debate, and the rest of us might as well keep silent. The clause states:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support".

If the amendment were accepted, the clause would read:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect, or it is probable will affect, public support".

I accept that my hon. Friend, a highly intelligent barrister, must know the difference between those two sentences, but I am damned if I understand the difference between them. I am anxious to ensure that local authorities are not deprived of the opportunity to disseminate informative material to the people in their areas, because in my view that is a fundamental responsibility of local authorities.

We have argued about education, as I said in Committee. We have sought to inform people about education in our areas. The amendment will not help a local authority to decide, because it will not be able to publish any material that "it is probable will" rather than that it

"can reasonably be regarded as likely to"

affect public support.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Thorne: I understand that I am to receive the advice of a legal expert.

Mr. Hughes: I can only suggest what I think is the agreed answer. There is concern about the clause as it stands because only one or two people need to take that view and the material will be outlawed. With the probability test, the general view of as many people as one would wish to consider must be assessed. Therefore, the view of one or two people could be enough to force what we are talking about into the category of illegality. If the measure is changed, the general view of the population will have to be weighed up. I think that that will have a much safer outcome.

Mr. Thorne: Having heard that, all I can say is, God protect us from the lawyers. The clause does not suggest in any form that, on the one hand, we are selecting the views of a minority of people, and, on the other hand, that a majority might make their wishes clear on particular issues. I do not know how a lawyer can reach that conclusion. Are we talking purely about semantics?

Something in these words baffles a mere Back Bencher like me. The clause states:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support".

Can you help, Mr. Speaker? Where does the clause refer to the opinion of a few people rather than to that of a large number of people? You, too, are baffled, and I am not surprised. However, we have the legal experts with us, and they have found a remedy. I hope that the Government can provide a more sensible solution—I say this with due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn—than I have heard so far.

Mr. Waldegrave: The debate began in its usual way with the alarmist tendency of the Labour party led, on this occasion, by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who made a moderate and understated speech. He said that democracy in local government and civilisation, and so on, were at an end—a speech familiar to all those who participate in these debates. I face the slightly deflating task of saying that I fear that nothing so exciting is afoot. I want to tread rather quietly, because I may get into trouble with some of my hon. Friends if I say too much.

The Government have to steer a middle course. They have to outlaw the worst abuses, although they know that certain actions, of which many Conservative Members disapprove, will still be legal under the Bill's definitions. I shall briefly go a little wider than the amendment, which is the heart of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) gave an example of something that he claimed might be excluded. By no sensible construction of the Bill would that be excluded. I want to give a slightly more major example of something which I believe will be totally legal under the Bill. Bristol has the misfortune to have a Labour council. At most weekends I work to rectify that by trying to remove that council. Not many hon. Members would describe Bristol city council as a very Right-wing Labour council. It includes some pretty radical members. The council has produced an annual report which some of my colleagues in Bristol, who are working to get rid of the council, would say was glossy and unnecessarily expensive. They would like its presentation to be different and for different policies to be presented. I can find nothing in that report that the Bill would prohibit. It is a perfectly good account by a council trying to take various measures for its area and people. Of course, it does refer to some of the wrong things—in my party's view—that the council wants to do.

The report was produced by Mr. Robertson. He did not describe himself as the "Labour leader of Socialist Bristol" or similar nonsense—he described himself properly as the leader of Bristol city council. Mr. Robertson described the various measures that he would have liked to undertake had the Government not prevented him from doing so. For example, he would have liked to spend more capital, but Government restrictions on capital expenditure, which I have defended in the House, stopped him from doing so.

I find nothing in the document that would be outlawed by the Bill or would in any way be unacceptable under its provisions. It is well within the traditions of the type of local government supported by all hon. Members who support local government. That is not to say that I do not want to get rid of the city council as soon as possible and replace it with a proper Conservative council. This would save ratepayers' money. It would result in a different balance of policies. I must make it clear that we are not in the business of trying to prevent the type of activity described by the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) —for example, where a sensible council is trying to attract inward investment. Of course we are not trying to prevent that, and the Bill does not do so.

The annual report could have done what the Militant Tendency council did in Liverpool — use banner headlines saying, "Socialist council in Liverpool", and make party political attacks on the Liberal party, and party political attacks on the Conservative party. That would rightly be put in jeopardy by the Bill.

Mr. Beith: In so far as the document refers to the disappointment of the leader of Bristol city council at the various things that he has not been able to do because of Government constraints, might it not lead — however objective and calm its tone—a reasonable Bristol citizen away from supporting the Conservative party, which is the Government to whom reference is made in that very objective way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall come to the legal argument why that is wholly fanciful. I think that someone who did not know the politics of the area would not know the council's policy after reading the document all the way through. I have no doubt that that would cause great offence to some of the wild boys in the Labour party. They would think, "What a waste. This fellow Robertson has put out an objective document which has not infuriated the opposition parties and shown what a splendid Socialist he is."

I shall not go too far in praising Mr. Robertson, because I am trying to get him out of office as soon as I can. Indeed, I pay tribute to Mr. Robertson and his senior officers, who are exceedingly good and responsible persons. Those officers have advised Mr. Robertson how to put his case fairly without coming within 100 miles of the jeopardy of the Bill or of breaking the traditional conventions.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Under-Secretary of State has received a letter from Bradford city council, where the Conservatives are the largest group, but are not in control. That council has passed a resolution against the principles of the Bill. The letter was prepared after extensive consultation. It cites a number of campaigns conducted by the council in the past year or so which it claims would be within the terms of the Bill. Will the hon. Gentleman give a specific assurance that the campaigns to which the letter refers would not come within the Bill's provisions? Will he give a clear and categorical assurance to Conservative councillors and others in Bradford who are extremely worried about the Bill's provisions?

6.30 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received letters from a number of Conservative councils, including the Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea, to which I pay rates, as I do in Bristol. I have received letters from Bradford and other authorities. It would be wrong for me to try to become even more of an amateur lawyer than the ex-lawyer from the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), and to give free counsel's opinion on particular campaigns. I have brought with me one example of the sort of material that will be perfectly all right on any sensible interpretation of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) seeks on every clause to raise the issue of parishes. In due course we shall come to the appropriate clause and be able to deal with the issue. I hope that I shall be encouraging to some extent when we do so.

I shall explain why I do not think that the amendments are right, in as steady and clear a way as I can. I shall start with the Liberal amendment, No. 25, which reads:

"or calculated to advance the interests of".

That is unclear and seriously defective in two respects. In the first instance—I thought that I had persuaded even

[Mr. Waldegrave]

some Opposition Members to accept this argument in Committee—it is no good merely inserting the words "advance the interests of a political party". Some of the most damaging party political material that is put out by a council might be knocking copy that is directed to another party.

The modern advertising industry is becoming better and better at producing knocking copy. Many Members will remember the excellent advertisement for the deux chevaux Citroen, which claimed that it was faster than a Porsche. We were told that a deux chevaux travelling at 60 mph could overtake a Porsche being driven at 55 mph. Given that the advertising industry is becoming better and better at producing knocking copy, "advance" would be an inappropriate word. I suggest that "calculated" is an intention word. It is a word which draws in the assessment or intention of the council in a complicated and obscure way involving words that are not familiar to the law. I do not think that that amendment is worth considering.

I turn to the amendments of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), Nos. 2 and 6. First, let us remind ourselves of what we are doing. It makes me nervous in one sense, but encouraged in another, to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has entered the Chamber at a time when I am talking about the law. I shall be nervous to do so in front of him, but——

Mr. Stan Thorne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Minister has told the House that he is replying to the Liberal amendment. We are not discussing a Liberal amendment. Instead, we are discussing amendments Nos. 2 and 6, neither of which has been submitted by the Liberal party.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg the pardon of the House. I thought that before responding to the two amendments of the hon. Member for Blackburn I would take up some other aspects of the issues that they raise. This is an important debate and I think that it would be unfair to the Liberal party if I were not to mention the amendment that it has put before us.

Mr. Thorne: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is saying that he does not want to be unfair to the Liberal party. In fact, he is being unfair to you, Mr. Speaker, as you have selected amendments Nos. 2 and 6 in this instance and no others.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct. The Minister, like everyone else, must address himself to the amendments. It is reasonable, however, for him to answer the questions that have been asked by Liberal Members during the course of the debate.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I shall address myself to the amendments of the hon. Member for Blackburn in everything that I have to say from now on.

Clause 2(1) prohibits a local authority from publishing any material which

"in whole or in part appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—*(a)* a political party".

This test is applied to the nature of the material that is published, and that factor must be central to our approach. The test should not be applied to the motive of the local authority. The test is not whether the authority intended to affect public support; nor is it the effect of the material which is the consideration of whether it does affect public support. Nothing has been said this afternoon that has caused me to think that we were wrong in our judgment. It would be impossible to introduce a test that involved the measuring of motive and effect. A local authority might have a number of different motives and intentions. It is often impossible to prove effect, although great books have been written on why it is that certain shifts in voting patterns have occurred in particular elections.

The tests that are set out in clause 2(1)*(a)* and *(b)* are objective tests that are justiciable. The courts will have to form a judgment on the nature of the material, in the light of all the circumstances of the case. The test in paragraph *(a)* is directed to the nature of the material to determine whether it was intended to have an effect on public support. That test has been at the centre of our approach. In other words, it is whether it can be inferred from the nature of the material that it was produced for a party political purpose. The words that are at the centre of the amendment——

Mr. Beith: The Minister has imported into his paraphrase of the words in the clause the very concept of intention which he said previously was inappropriate and could not be worked into the clause. He has used the words "intended to" in his description of the contents of the clause. It is clear that intention is not featured in the clause.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. The court would have to judge and estimate whether the material could reasonably be regarded as likely to affect public support. It would not be necessary to consider the intention of the council at the moment that the material was produced. It is the material itself that will have to be judged. I think that that test provides the only hope of going forward.

The next crucial passage is:

"can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support".

The policy is that local authorities should be responsible for the ordinary consequences of their actions, especially when they produce publicity. It is a difficult and important area. The test remains an objective one that is addressed to the nature of the material, and that is considered in the light of its likely consequences. I apologise to the hon. Member for Blackburn for going through the argument slowly, but it is important to have it set out clearly on the record.

The hon. Member for Blackburn suggests that we substitute

"it is probable that it is"

for

"can reasonably be regarded as",

and that is still an objective test. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he introduced the amendment. It is not a wrecking amendment or a stupid amendment. He is trying genuinely to improve the Bill, and I am trying to argue why the amendment should not succeed. Amendment No. 6 provides an objective test that is based on the nature of the material, but turns on probable consequences rather than on likely consequences.

It is at this point that we part company. We part on the intention behind what we are trying to do, and not on the law. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman's test is a narrower one than that which has been put forward by the

Government. We are debating whether it is probable that less material will be caught on the basis of its probable consequences than is likely to be caught on the basis of its likely consequences. There is a dispute between us about the width of the coverage and the capacity to win a case in court. We have considered whether the proposed narrowing would be in order, and we do not believe that it would.

The hon. Member for Blackburn is right about reasonableness — a concept which I introduced in Committee in the wrong place. The administrative law concept has no direct relevance in determining whether material can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect public support. The purpose behind the "can reasonably be regarded" qualification is to prevent a contravention, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, when the possibility of its affecting public support is too fanciful or too remote. The hon. Member for Preston and others have been trying to alarm us on that ground. They have chosen rightly to test what we are doing. In effect, they have asked, "What if one or two people produce a story that something is bound to have an effect on support for a political party?" That would not be sufficient in court. That level of remoteness will not do.

The question whether material can "reasonably be regarded" is one which local authorities will have no difficulty in answering. I do not make that assertion lightly, because such judgments are made every day. Every day local authorities use the power in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which is headed

"Subsidiary powers of local authorities".

That power gives statutory force to the common law doctrine of ultra vires. The courts have held that a corporation does things for which there is express or implied authority and whatever is reasonably incidental to them. That is using exactly the same sense of "reasonable" as that which is used in the Bill. It is a concept of reasonableness with which the law is very familiar and I do not believe that it will have any difficulty in applying it. During this debate and subsequently it may be sensible to make absolutely clear the sort of legal judgments on which the Bill has been based to still some of the anxieties that have been expressed.

I hope that I have given reassurance on the legal meaning of the provisions in the clause, although I must acknowledge that, like the hon. Member for Preston, I am not a lawyer. I hope that I have been able to reassure my hon. Friends that we shall not narrow the test in the way that the hon. Member for Blackburn suggests. That would involve too much narrowing, and on that ground there is a dispute between us on policy. If the amendments are pressed to a Division, I shall have to ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose them.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: As this is the Report stage, hon. Members can make only one speech. The hon. Member therefore cannot speak again.

Mr. Hughes: An hon. Member can speak again if he has the leave of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member have the leave of the House?

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 255.

Division No. 43] **[6.40 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin.

Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I am sorry to raise this matter again, but I have just been notified — I do not know whether the information is

correct but I am told that it is—the Prime Minister is giving an extensive briefing to the Lobby regarding the matter on which we asked for a statement today. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, hold no responsibility for statements, but is it right that, when we have asked for a statement to be given to the House regarding the Westland affair which has been widely reported in the press, the Prime Minister should give a briefing to the Lobby at 7.15? The House has not been given any information. If the argument from No. 10 is that there will be a statement from the Prime Minister—which is likely to be the case—it will mean that we shall have a statement after the Lobby has been notified at 7.15 today. The briefing will be widely reported on radio and television and it will appear in tomorrow morning's newspapers. That is quite wrong. The Prime Minister is yet again showing her contempt for this House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not seek an opinion from me on these matters other than to say, and I repeat yet again, that I believe it is always right that this House should have first information on these matters.

Mr. Winnick: On a further point of order. Is it possible for you at least to let No. 10 know what you have just said? The briefing is due to take place in 20 minutes. I ask that the Prime Minister should come to the House before she briefs the Lobby.

Mr. Speaker: That is not my function. I cannot do that, but perhaps there are others who can.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

It may or may not be that the Prime Minister is briefing the press. The truth is that there is to be a briefing at No. 10 on these important issues. The point that my hon. Friend has raised, with which you have agreed, is that this House is being treated rather shabbily. Things are happening behind our backs. We are all anxious to have clarification and certainty on these matters. We are not being given that opportunity; others are.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): There has been much criticism of an impending briefing. That criticism might be wholly misplaced because the briefing may be a background briefing. Opposition Members may laugh, but they are not entitled to make assumptions about the nature of the briefing. If the briefing is simply a background briefing, there can be nothing objectionable about it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Briefings go on every day. I have no knowledge what the briefing is about.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

In view of what the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has just said, I am more alarmed than I was before. Earlier today we pressed the Leader of the House for a statement, if possible, this evening. As you will know, the House is abuzz with rumours—that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has been to see the Prime Minister, and that the Law Officers have issued an ultimatum concerning their own position unless certain actions are taken by the Prime Minister. In the circumstances, I do not think we can wait until tomorrow. We need a statement tonight.

Mr. Speaker: I know nothing of these matters.

Mr. Beith: Mr. Speaker, now that the Leader of the House is present—he came in while the exchanges were taking place—is it possible to give him an opportunity to clarify the situation? It cannot be satisfactory to you or to Members of the House that the intimation that a statement is to be made tomorrow by the Prime Minister should be gained from tapes or Ceefax, which is how I gained the information a few moments ago. In the circumstances, it would be better if the Leader of the House could tell us whether, in view of the information that is to be given to the press, the statement might be brought forward and made later tonight.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Earlier this afternoon I said that the question of a statement would be a matter for consideration through the usual channels. That is exactly how the matter stands, and I have nothing to add to what I said this afternoon.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 18, leave out from 'party' to end of line 20.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 33, in page 2, leave out lines 19 and 20 and insert—

'*(b)* a body whose purpose is to promote a political party'.

Those who were in Committee on the Bill will know that one of the principal debates was on the worries of some voluntary organisations. These worries were outlined to me when I met Mr. Peter Jay of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and some of his officials. They respected the Government's right to seek to undertake a policy of limiting the use of ratepayers' money for party political purposes. They argued that, inadvertently, we might have made great difficulties for some of the voluntary organisations which by tradition have had some support from some local authorities. This is a serious matter, and I acknowledged this in Committee.

We have given a commitment to try to meet this problem. It is difficult to differentiate between the legitimate anxieties of the legitimate voluntary organisations and the way some local authorities have sought to set up bogus or front organisations through which to carry out party political activities at the expense of the ratepayer.

After discussions with the NCVO and others, and having reconsidered the matter internally, we changed the original wording of clause 2(1)*(b)* so that it read:

"a body whose purpose is to promote a political party".

That was to make it quite explicit that we were not trying to prevent organisations that might occasionally put forward views that coincided with the interests of a political party, but that we were concerned with those involved with party political campaigning. That original amendment was welcomed as a step in the right direction by some others who were worried, including, to some extent, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). The amendment was welcomed, for example, by the National Association of Local Councils, which wrote on 8 January to an official in my Department. I shall of course make the letter available to anybody who is interested to see it. It said:

"The undertaking given by Mr. Waldegrave in his speech to the Standing Committee to look again at Clause 2(1)*(b)* of the Bill meets this Association's points on Clause 2 of the Bill. If the Bill were amended in some such way as the form of words indicated by Mr. Waldegrave I believe that the difficulties we foresaw for parish and community councils on Clause 2 of the Bill would disappear."

7 pm

I have thought about this matter further. It is never wise to stand too firmly on the drafting ideas that one produces quickly in Committee to try to meet an anxiety—these matters should be considered coolly. I have concluded that it would be better law, clearer and would in no way diminish the real purpose of the law if we removed clause 2(1)*(b)* altogether. We have here a Morton's fork. Either clause 2(1)*(b)* has substance, in which case I am advised that the courts will be likely to construe it as delimiting rather than widening the effect of clause 2(1)*(a)*, or it has not. It is possible that clause 2(1) would be construed in such a way as to give some effect to clause 2(1)*(b)* but there is a danger that, to give effect to clause 2(1)*(a)*, they would have to take a narrower view of clause 2(1)*(a)* if real meaning is attached to clause 2(1)*(b)*. If, however, clause 2(1)*(b)* does not bite, it does not bite and the legislation would be cleaner without it.

After thinking about the matter very carefully, I have concluded that it helps some of the anxieties and makes cleaner and clearer law to delete clause 2(1)*(b)*. I shall ignore the argument about the rubric of clause 2(1), for which I had hoped to persuade some that we had a strong case, but without clause 2(1)*(b)*, it would read:

"A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designated to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

I know that some of my hon. Friends are worried about front organisations. I draw their attention to clause 2(3), which states clearly that local authorities cannot do party political things or fund anyone else to do what they cannot do themselves. I have had legal advice which I greatly respect on this matter and I am assured that the intention that we are carrying through here is carried through by the combination of the new clause 2(1) with 2(3).

I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their support of my newly formulated 2(1)*(b)*, in one sense because I drafted it, but the danger is that we shall thereby narrow the Bill as there will be tremendous arguments in the courts about what the purpose of a body is. It is much clearer to leave the intention of the Bill on the face of the Bill by deleting clause 2(1)*(b)*, the result of which is to remove any hint of narrowing such as I have mentioned. Clause 2(1)*(a)* will then have its full and natural scope. We are left with a clear statement of general principle, which I argue is better law.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to amendment No. 33, which another eight of my hon. Friends who were members of the Committee support. I was also grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for explaining the change with regard to clause 2(1)*(b)*, but I am still puzzled. In Committee, on 12 December, he said:

"The definition in clause 2(1)*(b)* goes too wide although it was not intended to do so. I do not have an amendment to put to the Committee, I have only a form of words."

The form of words is that which appears as amendment No. 33. In justification to the original clause 2(1)*(b)*—

"a body whose purpose is to promote a political party"—

my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"That aims more directly and with a more effective shaft at the front organisation, which although it may be disguised as a general research committee for housing in the wider world or whatever, is an organisation for the promotion of the Liberal party, the Labour party or the Conservative party. It is an important matter to get right and I hope that some of the worries that were voiced this evening have been dissolved."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 12 December 1985; c. 275-76.]

I agree that it is extremely important that we get this right. There is a danger that, far from the clause being weakened by the inclusion of an alternative clause 2(1)*(b)*, which is what amendment No. 33 would be, it would be weakened by not having anything at all. If, for example, a housing organisation called the Stirling housing action group was set up in my constituency, funded by the local authority, established by the chairman and officers of the local Labour party and explicitly determined to promote the policies of the Labour party and to highlight what they believed to be the deficiencies of Government policy, I would find it much easier to argue in court that their literature was designed to affect, or could reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for a body whose purpose was to promote a political party than I would find it to argue that such a body could be reasonably regarded as likely to affect public support for a political party.

In the former case I have only to demonstrate the act of putting leaflets through letter boxes or campaigning, as it can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect support for that organisation, the aim of which is to promote a political party. I would find it much more difficult to argue that putting leaflets through letter boxes could reasonably be regarded as affecting support for the Conservative party because support for the Conservative party would be determined by a range of issues—perhaps divisions in the party or other issues that have nothing whatever to do with housing. Support for the organisation, however, can be readily determined and measured.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that there was a safety net in the form of clause 2(3) which says that a local authority cannot fund organisations that would produce such material, so we have no worries in that respect. I freely confess that I am no lawyer. Clause 2(3) says:

"A local authority shall not give financial or other assistance to a person for the publication of material which the authority are prohibited by this section from publishing themselves."

By removing clause 2(1)*(b)*, we remove the prohibition on local authorities from supporting material that is published by such bodies and organisations. Should it not be the other way round? Does not removal of paragraph *(b)* make it easier for the local authority to fund such an organisation, by allowing the local authority to argue that the Stirling housing action group is publishing material that is designed to better the conditions of housing in Stirling? It is not publishing material that

"can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party"

because that is a much wider argument. Therefore, the council could argue that it was entitled to give financial or other assistance.

Is there not at least an argument—I appreciate that one could equally argue in the opposite direction—that without clause 2(1)*(b)* it will be easier for local authorities to fund such organisations and, with only clause 2(1)*(a)*, it will be harder to stop these front organisations from campaigning in the way with which we are familiar?

I followed the Committee proceedings carefully and I understand the difficulties of framing such legislation. However, it seems rather odd that we should have started with the view that it was essential to have clause 2(1)*(b)* as it was drafted, although rightly the Committee

recognised that it might have caught one or two others, and that my hon. Friend the Minister should have suggested to the Committee an alternative to clause 2(1)*(b)*, but we now find that it was not necessary to have any clause 2(1)*(b)*. That is a remarkable change in position.

My hon. Friend the Minister told the House that voluntary bodies and other organisations gave some support to the alternative to clause 2(1)*(b)*, which forms the text of my amendment No. 33. I can understand why, because it meets most of the points made by those voluntary organisations. My hon. Friend said that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had expressed some support. I do not have the *Official Report* of the Committee, but no doubt the hon. Member for Blackburn can answer for himself. However, I seem to recall him arguing in Committee that the alternative suggestion on clause 2(1)*(b)* was better but not good enough and that it would still limit activity.

I use the hon. Member for Blackburn as my supporter because, if he thought that clause 2(1)*(b)* as it was redrafted and as it now forms the text of my amendment would have an effect, that makes my case more eloquently than I can. My hon. Friend argued that he had the support of the Opposition, but, on my recollection of the debate, that is not correct.

I appreciate the considerable worries about the way in which the modern Labour party, the new Left, will use every conceivable loophole and breach every conceivable convention in local government to further its political ends. Therefore, it is essential that we do not operate on the basis of good faith from the Labour party in local government, but recognise it as a reason for closing every avenue. For the life of me, Morton's fork and the legal arguments notwithstanding, I cannot see that amendment No. 33 would weaken the effect of clause 2(1)*(a)*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Of the two options, I welcome the Minister's rather than that of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). The House will recollect that, as has been correctly said, the Minister's first stab at redrafting in the heat of the debate is what has now appeared in amendment No. 33. The view expressed by my colleague and me on behalf of the Liberal party, by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the voluntary sections and others was that clause 2(1)*(b)* was one of the most dangerous and most undesirable parts of the Bill.

7.15 pm

I applaud the Minister for confirming that it is better not to have clause 2(1)*(b)* than to have a variety of it. That improves the Bill. The Minister has received representations about this, although the amendment was tabled only yesterday, and organisations have had only 24 hours in which to respond. Therefore, he will be aware that the amendment does not meet all the concerns of the voluntary bodies but it is a move in the right direction. It takes out one of my four major concerns about the Bill and returns us to the principle that we are dealing with party political influence and not with the influence of organisations around the periphery of political and electoral processes.

I hope, as thousands outside do, that this will be the first of several such important steps to get the Bill right before it becomes law. I fear that it may not be.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). We have taken as our reference point in tabling the amendment the proceedings in Committee and the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister there. I am referring to the seventh sitting of the Committee on Thursday, 12 December, part I, cols. 275 and 276. The Committee acknowledged that the Minister was in some difficulty with regard to the scope of the original wording of the clause, and there was discussion from both sides of the Committee. I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Minister both in Committee and today that he felt that he was not bound by the words that he was drafting on the spot. Nevertheless, he went on to say that whatever happened, although he was not committed to the words of the amendment exactly, he would not move away from their "intent or common-sense meaning". He was referring to the words of amendment No. 33.

My hon. Friend went on to say that he felt that the amendment which he had drafted on his feet, or perhaps with some legal advice beforehand—and which we have picked up in amendment No. 33—

"aims more directly and with a more effective shaft at the front organisation, which although it may be disguised as a general research committee for housing in the wider world or whatever, is an organisation for the promotion of the Liberal party, the Labour party or the Conservative party. It is an important matter to get right and I hope that some of the worries that were voiced this evening have been dissolved."

Conservative Members were anxious about the whole series of debates about the amendments before my hon. Friend the Minister made his speech. He dissolved our worries by his alternative suggestion, and he said that he hoped that the Opposition would withdraw their series of amendments

"on the assurance of the form of words that I have given today". — [*Official Report*, Standing Committee A, 12 December 1985; c. 275-6.]

That form of words has now been withdrawn completely. Somewhere along the line my hon. Friend—I impute to him the best of motives—has considered, with his legal advisers, whether, whatever the form of improved words for clause 2(1)*(b)*, the effect would be better if it were taken out altogether. He has concluded that we would still be able to trap the organisations about which we are all concerned if that happened.

I asked the Minister to go back to the original Bill as drafted. Some legal adviser wrote clause 2(1)*(a)*, but decided that it would not capture some of the front organisations that the Government and the Minister are concerned about and that we needed the additional form of words for clause 2(1)*(b)*.

Mr. Robert Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): How does the hon. Gentleman know that that is what was said?

Mr. Brown: I think that it is unlikely that words are thrown into a Bill for the sake of it. Someone considers the policy objective of the Government. Parliamentary draftsmen recognise that the Government want to deal with local authorities using public funds and ratepayers' money to promote political parties as well as with front organisations that also support political parties. One presumes that the legal advisers, having that policy objective before them, considered clause 2(1)*(a)* and decided that it was not strong enough, and that there must be an extra form of words. In Committee the Minister recognised the arguments from hon. Members and in letters from outside bodies, saying that clause 2(1)*(b)* was too wide and was trapping organisations that he did not

[Mr. Brown]

intend to trap. After taking legal advice, he returned to the drawing board and considered an alternative form of words, which I find acceptable.

Mr. Wareing: I know that the Government are not known for conceding to outside opinion, but could it not be that on this occasion, because of the agitation of voluntary organisations which considered that clause to be too sweeping, the Minister responded positively to that pressure? That could be the reason why he wants to withdraw the subsection.

Mr. Brown: Yes, of course. In Committee my hon. Friend talked about a campaign which his wife was associated with. He said:

"It would be odd if the Bill's provisions meant that if her campaign was successful she would have to desist from any further activity. I doubt whether she could convince the Labour party or the Liberal party on such a sensible matter and if she convinced only the Government she might be in danger".

The definition of clause 2(1)*(b)* is too wide, although that was not intended. The Minister accepted the point of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and the representations that were made at the time of the Committee. He then said:

"I do not have an amendment to put to the Committee. I have only a form of words. Although I have discussed it with my legal advisers, I want to make sure that it is correct. I am not committed to these words exactly."

That implies that some form of words would be brought before us, not a complete removal of the words. The Minister went on to say:

"I will not move away from their intent or common-sense meaning." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 12 December 1985, c. 275.]

A complete withdrawal of clause 2(1)*(b)* without an alternative form of words means that the Minister is moving away from their common-sense meaning. For those reasons, I support the amendment.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I also support amendment No. 33, and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for selecting it, notwithstanding the fact that it is starred. In Committee, on 12 December 1985, the Minister clearly analysed the problems with which the Committee had to deal. He said:

"I shall recap the tripartite structure of the argument against the abuses that we believe exist. First, we had to stop local authorities publishing material that might affect a political party —clause 2(1)*(a)*. Secondly—clause 2(3)—we had to stop local authorities giving money to other bodies to do what the councils were not allowed to do themselves. Thirdly, we had to prevent an intermediate phenomenon: a publication in support of—or, presumably to damage — what might be called in common sense language a front organisation that may dress itself up as a campaigning organisation, but is not one. Such an organisation may trade on the high prestige of a great voluntary organisation, but is not one itself."

By supporting the removal of clause 2(1)*(b)* the Government are going back on dealing with two of the three problems. We shall not deal effectively with the problem of the front organisations, which everybody has agreed must be dealt with. I do not think anyone is in any doubt about how far Socialist-controlled local authorities are prepared to go to bend the law and avoid the legal consequences, but perhaps I can quote from the *Southern Evening Echo* regarding what happened in Southampton city council:

"Southampton city council is to spend £200"—

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): £200?

Mr. Chope: Every penny counts in Southampton.

"Southampton city council is to spend £200 on publicising the fact that it wants to raise £200."

The council is banned from directly donating money to the War on Want Women in Nicaragua Appeal. The article states that

"it may only incur expenses for people living in its own area. It had wanted the £200 to buy recycled paper for the appeal.

Now it has found a way round the ban. £200 will instead be spent on publicising the fact that a container is to be sited in the Civic Centre entrance hall for the collection of writing materials to send to the impoverished Latin American country."

That is an example of the way in which local authorities under Socialist control will go to any lengths to spend ratepayers' money on their particular pet causes instead of leaving ratepayers to decide whether they want to make donations to such causes.

When dealing with some of the other concerns expressed in Committee, the Minister, in column 290, said that the

"proxy, indirect organisations such as those so cleverly advised by Lord Gifford, are dealt with in the Bill."

He also said:

"Any conference designed for party political ends, however indirectly supported by the local authority, is covered by the Bill."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 12 December 1985; c. 274-90.]

I hope that the Minister will assure us that those two areas will still be covered by the Bill.

I should like to cite one example. If *Southampton Now*, which is a monthly magazine published at ratepayers' expense in Southampton publicising the work of the city council, was to include a full page — not an advertisement—setting out something about Militant or CND, it would not be a party political advertisement in the sense mentioned in clause 2(1)*(a)*. In my opinion, it would be an advertisement that would be

"likely to affect public support for . . . a body, cause or campaign . . . likely to be . . . identified with, a political party."

Mr. Michie: Which one is CND identified with?

Mr. Chope: Most people would identify CND with the Labour party and the Communist party. I know of no Conservative Member who supports CND.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): There is only one Member of Parliament on the national council of CND, to my knowledge, and he is a member of the Liberal party.

Mr. Chope: I am prepared to discuss whether the Liberal party supports CND outside the Chamber but I shall confine my assertions to the Labour party and the Communist party.

Mr. Michie: I want to ensure that the hon. Gentleman gets it all in perspective. I take part in CND marches and, although I try to avoid it, I occasionally see a Tory group against the bomb. I assume that is not part of the Labour party.

Mr. Chope: In these issues it is very dangerous to believe all the slogans that one sees. Perhaps members of the Labour party or of the Communist party will carry banners saying that they are members of the Conservative party campaigning against nuclear disarmament. That has happened in the past.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to assure us that the front organisations will be dealt with as effectively by the Government amendment as they would have been before.

7.30 pm

Mr. Straw: Coming from Wandsworth, I think that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) is the last person in the House who is entitled to lecture Labour authorities on their conduct. Having looked carefully at the publicity by Southampton city council and compared it with the stuff that Wandsworth puts out at ratepayers' expense, I believe that Southampton is closer to established convention than ever Wandsworth is. The hon. Gentleman and Ministers know that Conservative Wandsworth daily breaks the conventions, using ratepayers' money. The hon. Gentleman has not once had the decency to acknowledge that that has been going on or to criticise his local authority. If ever a man practised double standards, it is the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman gave ludicrous examples, such as what he said about Militant. It defies imagination, particularly in view of what has happened in Southampton, but if Militant were to take space in *Southampton Now*, of course that would come within the ambit of clause 2, as amended.

As for CND, as my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said, it is not associated with a political party. Its members are drawn from people in a number of political parties, and from people in no political party. Whether or not the hon. Gentleman agrees with CND, it is a gross slur on that organisation to suggest that it is a party political body.

I should like to deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) because, unusually, he prayed in aid what I said in Committee. Serious concern was expressed by many voluntary organisations about the likely effect of clause 2(1) *(b)*, which they believed was unintended and gratuitous, and arose from the concern of Ministers to hit front organisations. I do not necessarily agree with that, but I accept that that is a legitimate concern in the context of the Bill. The wording that was used went much wider than that.

I remind the hon. Member for Stirling that the National Council for Voluntary Organisations can hardly be held up as a front organisation for anybody. Its patron is Her Majesty the Queen, its president is Sir John Hedley Greenborough KBE, its chairman is Peter Jay and its honorary treasurer is Randal Haigh. It represents a wide range of voluntary organisations, almost all of which—not even covertly—have no party political association.

Those of us who were members of the Committee know what happened. Many people, including Conservatives and the NCVO, made representations. I am not so vain as to believe that it was hon. Members' representations that made the difference — it was the representations of voluntary organisations outside. The Minister finally accepted that the Bill was likely to have an unintended effect.

The hon. Member for Stirling said that we regarded the wording originally proposed by the Minister in Committee as better than the wording in the Bill. That is true. Like the Minister and other hon. Members, we needed time to look at the Bill. Everybody made that point in Committee. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations wrote to me on 21 January, saying:

"our legal advice is that the form of amendment proposed by William Waldegrave before Christmas in Committee would not be sufficient to overcome our concerns."

The NCVO said that, having looked carefully at the effect of the clause.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I remind the hon. Gentleman of what he said in Committee when my hon. Friend the Minister proposed as his alternative to clause 2(1)*(b)* the text that is now amendment No. 33:

"I am grateful to the Minister for taking on board the representations from the NCVO and for being so concerned about the matter. In the light of what the Minister has said, I beg to ask leave to withdraw amendment No. 17". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 12 December 1985; c. 275.]

The hon. Gentleman was satisfied with the amendment as it then was and prayed in aid the NVCO. Why is he now changing his position? If my hon. Friend the Minister is right—he argues that amendment No. 33 would weaken the Bill—why is the hon. Gentleman, as a Member of the Opposition, not supporting my amendment, as his purpose in Committee was to try to weaken the Bill?

Mr. Straw: If the hon. Gentleman survives in his seat, one day he will be in opposition. I wish him all the best when he achieves that happy position. There are many benefits of opposition, not unalloyed. When the hon. Gentleman is in opposition, he will appreciate the tactics that any Opposition have to adopt. There is no great secret. He has only to compare our amendments with the Minister's. We considered the Minister's amendment to be an improvement, but it did not meet our objections. I do not think that there is an enormous difference between what the Minister said he was thinking of in Committee and what he has now proposed. I am surprised that the matter has caused so much argument. I believe that it is better to leave the subsection out altogether because it will remove the dubiety.

I reassure the hon. Member for Stirling, if he still has any worries, that we still regard the Bill as wholly objectionable. We have been trying to explain our objections. The clause covers anything that is published instead of expenditure, and includes words such as

"or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect".

The clause will severely and gratuitously affect local authorities, which is why Conservative authorities, not the madmen in Wandsworth but decent Conservative leaders——

Mr. Chope: One of my regrets is that I could not fulfil the obligation of representing my constituents in Southampton, Itchen as well as continuing to look after my council ward in Wandsworth. I have not been a councillor in Wandsworth for the best part of three years, but I still pay my rates there as I do in Southampton. I regard Wandsworth council as one of the very best in the country.

Mr. Straw: I wish I had not given way. I have not learnt anything. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to complain about my description of Wandsworth councillors as madmen, but he did not demur from that at all.

This is a thoroughly objectionable Bill. It will put decent Conservative authorities, such as Kent, led by councillor Tony Hart, in a straitjacket, whether clause 2(1)*(b)* is included or not. We shall continue to object to it. Conservative Members express genuine concern about front organisations. If they read subsection (3), they will see that there is no possibility of a front organisation getting away with funding by the back door to do things that the local authority is prohibited from doing. Under the Bill local authorities will be prohibited from carrying out a great deal of publicity. No front organisation or even bona fide voluntary organisation will be allowed to do anything.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the argument which has been put forward, that if the Government were to accept amendment No. 33, which I tabled, it would seriously weaken the Bill? If he accepts that, why does he not support it? Or does he, like me, think that if amendment No. 33 were accepted it would strengthen the Bill?

Mr. Straw: Faced with that choice, we prefer amendment No. 4. In Committee we were faced with a different choice.

Mr. Waldegrave: If we had introduced the doubt which, on having taken further advice, I believe our proposed amendment produced, it might in some circumstances have strengthened the Bill, but I was advised that in other circumstances it might have weakened it. That was the nature of the doubt. It would have meant much more complex legal arguments. I was advised that some real and imaginary cases might be construed as weakening the Bill. It was for the removal of doubt both ways that we took this course.

Mr. Straw: I accept entirely the point the Minister is making. Our view in Committee was that the amendment, which is now amendment No. 33, would modify the Bill and bring it closer to its original purpose. Having been presented with the choice today, our view is that the effect of amendment No. 4 is to bring the Bill much closer to its original stated purpose. Since there is also legal doubt about the effect of amendment No. 33, it seems sensible, when faced with that choice—in politics one has to choose—that our choice should be amendment No. 4.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I apologise for not being present at the beginning of the debate, but I was at a meeting of the Select Committee on Defence, which is conducting a very important inquiry.

I support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). The Bill, if amended as my hon. Friend the Minister suggests, will not stop political publicity by local authorities, which is its purpose as set out in the long title. The Bill will merely ban councils from publishing material which is

"designed to affect . . . public support for . . . a political party".

Therefore, publicity which is not designed "to affect . . . support" will not be stopped. What constitutes a political party is undefined by the Bill. Would a single-issue campaign fighting an election, for instance, the Campaign to Abolish the GLC, which has fought GLC elections in the past, be regarded as a political party?

Even unamended by the Minister, the Bill is too weak. It merely bans councils from publishing material which is

"designed to affect . . . public support for . . . a political party".

Groups like CND, whose campaign claims not to support a political party, could still receive money. The Minister's amendment will ensure that the Bill will not prevent councils giving grants to bodies which conduct campaigns and publish propaganda, even though within the terms of clause 2(1) they may not be political parties as such.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Can my hon. Friend give me guidance on whether a group such as Broad Left, which by its very nature comprises the adherence of a number of political parties, such as the Communist party, the International Marxist Workers' League, the Labour party and so on, could be given money by a local authority and get away with it?

7.45 pm

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend has made a fair point, which leads me straight on to my next point. Of course the Broad Left may be supported.

I have today obtained a leaked document from the GLC. You will be glad to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the GLC leaks even more than do certain Government Departments. The note is headed:

"Note of the Voluntary Sector Forward Funding Sub-Group held on Friday 10 January 1986 at 2.30 pm in Room 136."

Ms. Valerie Wise was in the chair. The minutes, which I am willing to show to other hon. Members, detail the GLC's plan to spend millions of pounds of public money which should rightfully be returned to ratepayers on abolition of the GLC. The minutes show that the money will be given to "umbrella" groups. We learn that there are to be 400 arts grants, 150 ethnic minority committee grants, 53 women's committee grants, and 11 extra staff are to be drafted into the arts department to write reports. Those are all Left-wing groups.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman has experience, limited though it may be, of the GLC, because he was a member at one time. It is not worthy of him to dismiss that device as a means of funding Left-wing groups. The fact is that after the abolition of the GLC a large number of arts groups and voluntary organisations, many of which he would support, will go to the wall because they will not have money to fund them. This is a practical way of trying to preserve them. It is not to propagate the views of the Labour party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The debate is getting a little wide. Remarks must be related to political parties.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful for the intervention of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I shall deal with his remarks in a moment.

The minutes to which I was referring explain how the wording of reports is to be fiddled to bring the section 137 element of the grants down below the limit at which the Secretary of State needs to be consulted. How much is involved? My information is that it is about £70 million, although Valerie Wise says that it will be £25 million. A senior GLC officer, questioned by the Campaign Against Council Corruption, was unable to deny that the higher figure was incorrect. All we know is that the GLC has £200 million splashing about and that it intends to spend all of it before abolition.

What has that to do with clause 2(2)*(b)*? Many of the groups to be funded under the operation exist purely as propaganda fronts for the purpose of promoting political parties of the Left. I do not say that of all of them, but of many of them. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that the money is to go to respectable organisations to tide them over after abolition. Doubtless that is the case in some instances——

Mr. Tony Banks: In most.

Mr. Leigh: —but what of the others? What will the Institute of Race Relations, as one of the umbrella groups, do with the cash that it receives? To which other groups will it pass the money? I see that Tony Bunyon sits on the

GLC sub-group which is masterminding this massive handout. He is also a member of the editorial committee of the Institute of Race Relations, a Marxist think-tank linked to the Transnational Institute, itself an acolyte of the Soviet propaganda machine.

Millions of pounds are to be handed by the GLC to Left-wing campaigning or propaganda organisations. What is to prevent those organisations, for years after abolition, from using the cash for political publicity purposes whose only real aim is to support the political parties of the Left? Only the provisions of this slim Bill stand between the British public and the onslaught of a multi-million pound publicity blitz. I believe that the Bill will fail in its task. It should not be weakened. It should be strengthened.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): In an intervention, my hon. Friend the Minister said that amendment No. 33 would in some ways strengthen the Bill, but in other ways weaken it. I hope that he will take the opportunity to amplify what he meant by that remark and perhaps give examples of where the Bill will be strengthened and where it will be weakened. It is not beyond the wit of parliamentary draftsmen to ensure that the weaknesses are obliterated and the strengths left isolated.

I fear that by not enacting something in the terms of amendment No. 33 the Bill will be seriously weakened. It will leave a great gap in the law, which will allow all sorts of improper propaganda vehicles to be driven through it. My local authority, Southwark, will take every advantage of the freeway. Therefore, I add my voice briefly to urge the Minister to reconsider amendment No. 33. If the amendment is not passed, the Bill will be weakened and the ratepayers who might have expected some benefit from the Bill will be disappointed.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I support the views expressed by my hon. Friends. I am still not entirely clear about the Government's explanation of the amendment. Perhaps I might put to my hon. Friend the Minister a question that arises out of a speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) at our Committee's 10th sitting, at column 397. In his speech my hon. Friend revealed some quite incredible matters about my constituency. My hon. Friend told us that, following the good endeavours of the Campaign Against Council Corruption, Basildon district council responded to an advertisement in *Marxism Today* and decided to employ a PR company called Union Communications, at a cost to the ratepayers of £150,000. The Campaign Against Council Corruption wrote to the PR company and received the following response:

"You ask about Union Communications. Basically we are a small team of professional journalists, PR and design people who have come together to offer to trade unions and Labour local authorities a communications service that beats anything the Tories can lay their hands on. We believe we are succeeding. We have not worked as yet with any CLP's though we would be happy to do so except in so far as when we work for a local authority we invariably get involved with the CLP and help their own PR work. We have shown Basildon council, for instance, how to put 10 per cent. on the Labour vote. Inevitably the CLP was involved and we had to show them what to do."

What I and my constituents in Basildon are worried about, following the opening remarks of the Minister, is whether the Government amendment——

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I had forgotten about this organisation. Perhaps I could update the House on its latest antics. One of its directors was responsible for the advertisement that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, calling for 70 patriotic Scots to subscribe £1,000 to the Save Gartcosh Campaign. Obviously, Union Communications is helping the Labour party in Scotland rather than in Basildon now.

Mr. Amess: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks. Hon. Members will be aware that it was Union Communications that took those scurrilous advertisements in *The House Magazine* last year and printed letters by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment which were totally inaccurate. When the Minister is summing up, perhaps he would tell me whether the Government amendment will stop the sort of nonsense that my constituents in Basildon have to put up with.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate. Like my hon. Friend, I was in the meeting of the Select Committee on the Environment. — [AN HON. MEMBER: "About Westland?"] Many subjects are covered in the Select Committee on the Environment, but fortunately Westland is not yet one of them.

My hon. Friend the Minister should take note of what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) because he talked about precisely the situation that I would expect from the well organised network of Labour councils that exchange information and techniques. The Minister need only go back to our experience following the passage of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, to the direct Labour provisions, and to the convention called together by the various Socialist authorities opposed to that legislation. He should read the remarks made at the opening of that convention. I planned to obstruct the law in every possible way, and it set its finest legal minds the task of finding loopholes in the legislation. That is precisely what happened, and the Minister and his colleagues on the Front Bench had to come back to the House on two occasions to tighten up that legislation.

We will now experience precisely the same thing in terms of propaganda. Money will be handed out to front organisations and used for advertising to promote Left-wing causes. Various bodies, such as multi-party organisations of the Broad Left, will find a loophole in the legislation. As it stands, the legislation is far too weak to achieve the purposes which the Minister intends, and he will have to come back to the House to present more legislation. In the meantime, millions of pounds of ratepayers' money will be squandered in propping up the Labour party.

Mr. Waldegrave: The views of my hon. Friends, and in particular of my hon. Friends from the county constituencies, must be heard with respect, because they are largely in the front line of a lot of the abuses about which the House has been hearing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) said that Wandsworth council came into this matter. I think that it was George III who, when told that General Wolfe was mad, said, "I wish he would bite some of my other generals". If the councillors in Wandsworth are mad, I wish that they would bite some of our other councillors. If they did so, we would not need to spend a considerable amount of time arguing about savings in low-spending councils. I should like to see what would happen

[Mr. Waldegrave]

if the Wandsworth regime were to be imposed on some of the other allegedly low-spending councils, but I must not get into that argument.

The nature of the tightrope that we are walking has been made evident. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has to deal with an extremely odd council, a naively party political organisation in the way in which it presents itself. I suspect that a ratepayer could take it to court under the existing law in a case as blatant as that. Under the law that we are passing—*[Interruption.]* The matter of access to the courts worries my hon. Friends. We debated that in Committee. How the civil law works is a matter of real concern, but it is not a matter for this Bill.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) that if we pass legislation that is inherently doubtful and has a phrase in it which legal advisers say could be construed in several different ways, it might well be construed by a court to have a certain meaning. The courts are not allowed to read our debates; they have to look at the words in front of them. They may decide that Parliament must have meant, by putting in certain words, that there was some limitation on clause 2*(a)*. When I originally drafted the Bill, I did not believe that that is what those words meant, but I have been advised that in certain circumstances the words could mean that. In certain circumstances, they could have another meaning.

Inherently doubtful law is bad law, and we should avoid it. As we all know, in Committee and on Report, where one is trying to put a frontier in this new area, there are bound to be difficulties. It is difficult to write law in this matter. All the front organisations referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who opened the debate, will be more straightforwardly caught by clause 2(3), which says:

"A local authority shall not give financial or other assistance to a person"—

a person means a body or convention, a legal person—

"for the publication of material which the authority are prohibited by this section from publishing themselves."

The CND point is more difficult. Let us for a moment put aside CND. There are certainly Conservative pacifists. I do not want to get into an argument about CND, which in its leadership seems to be an organisation of the Left. It is possible to imagine a group of Conservative Quakers, for example, with pacifist views. If such an organisation, or one that was wholly non-party political, put forward views about defence, it would be wrong if it were funded by local authorities.

That is a matter of limiting the funding under the functions and comes later in the Bill, where we limit the spending. We have had some argument about this. We do not want to stop the poor little parish councils doing some sensible things, but it will limit the area of discretion of their spending on publicity to bring it much more closely into line with their functions. It would be wrong if a Labour Government came into power and abolished the nuclear deterrent. Such a Government would not do that, because the Labour party at that point would have changed its attitude about the matter. If at that time a Conservative council like Wandsworth mounted a campaign for the re-introduction of Trident, that would be wrong. It would be a wrong use of local government resources, by Conservatives or anybody else. That seems to be met, not so much in this part of the Bill, but by saying that that is stepping outside the proper functions of local authorities.

8 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said, not in an unpleasant way, that I had said that I would not depart from the words in the Bill, yet I had now abolished them. I defend myself by saying that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes know what was going on at that moment in Committee. I had shown a willingness to make a change, which caused the hon. Member for Blackburn to withdraw various amendments. I want to put it clearly on the record that I in no way intended to trick the hon. Gentleman into withdrawing his amendments and then return with a measure which went back to the original intention. That would have been dishonourable. I did not take that as meaning that if we could achieve the objective of removing the NCVO and still get the front organisations—which I am advised we have done—I would not find other ways of doing that.

My hon. Friend did not accuse me unkindly, but I can assure the House that I am aware that my hon. Friends would like me to go a great deal further in many respects. We cannot go a great deal further without catching all sorts of organisations that we do not want to catch, so we must find a compromise. I believe that we have found it, and I urge hon. Members to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Boyes: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 25, after 'party', insert

'save where such a person is a member of the authority publishing the material'.

This is a squalid Bill or, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said:

"In almost every respect, this is a wretched Bill." —[*Official Report*, 18 November; Vol. 87, c. 57.]

It is also an unnecessary Bill produced by a nervous but calculating and bitter group of people. The Government's policies have been exposed for what they are—cynical and destructive.

The Bill has been produced simply because local authorities have used legal, well established and acceptable means to defend themselves and the people whom they represent. They have scored important victories in convincing people of the merit of their arguments. Local authorities have done no more than explain to their electorate the consequences to their services of the Government's actions. Major campaigns have been mounted against rate capping and the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties.

In paragraph 221, Widdicombe says:

"Local Government has an important and well established voice on matters affecting its responsibilities. It is important at all times, but perhaps particularly in times of wide political differences, that our political system should accommodate the free expression of opposing views, and we have said that it is right for local authorities to be able to explain their view on controversial matters affecting them. In the recent context that includes issuing information about abolition and rate-capping."

In paragraph 235 Widdicombe says:

"Under its conventions, the government of the day is entitled to provide information about its proposed legislation and its likely effect; it seems to us only equitable that bodies affected, in this case local authorities, should have the right to provide information in reply. That way the public can be sure of being fully informed."

The Bill is particularly contemptible for a number of reasons but I shall mention two in particular. Local authorities have done no more than the Government do —in fact, the Government are often extremely party politically oriented in some of their publicity—except that the Government appear to have an unlimited budget for their spending on advertising.

The Government asked Mr. Widdicombe to chair an inquiry into local authority publicity and, after he had received a substantial amount of both written and oral evidence, spent hours of deliberation and analysis and produced an interim report. In another act of political spite and vindictiveness, the Department of the Environment has ignored many of his findings and gone way beyond them in the Bill. The Widdicombe report was clearly a big disappointment for the Government, but having given the inquiry team a task to carry out, it is a disgrace to go so far beyond its findings. I shall illustrate that most vividly.

Clause 2 identifies two points to which local authorities, and ultimately the courts, have to have special regard in deciding the legality of any publicity material. The first of those, subsubsection (2)*(a)*, states:

"particular regard shall be had to whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party".

I emphasise the words

"or to persons identified with a political party".

I want to examine what that means in reality and consider the difficulties that it will raise for both members and officers of local authorities.

I have served on two tiers of local government and I have been a senior officer on a third tier. I am quite aware that certain councillors are viewed as being particularly important both by their colleagues and by the citizens that they represent. For example, the mayor of Sunderland will be invited to literally hundreds of functions during his year in office. He will make an almost equal number of speeches, and because he is the proud holder of his position and representative of the council, he will want to praise its achievements and mention its problems. But, according to the Government, he had better not be quoted in a council publication. What nonsense.

What if the mayor is simply photographed outside a building—a house or a small factory unit—built by the local authority for the benefit of some of its electorate and then the photograph is reproduced in the local authority newsletter, magazine or whatever? That in itself will be an offence, yet I would argue that it is correct that such pictures should be published.

Other councillors, as well as mayors, play an important part on local authorities, either by the force of their personality or their position—for example, the leader of a council or the chairman of a major committee. When I was an assistant director of social services my department would be responsible for the building of a new resource. Under this Government building new resources, even essential ones, has become an historic event for many local authorities due to the cuts and penalties imposed on local authorities, but let us assume that a local authority has built a new resource and then got either a local councillor or the chairman of the social services committee to open it. Under the Bill it would be an offence to publish any picture of the building and the councillor opening it in the regular council publication. Having been elected by the electorate upon a Labour party ticket, such a councillor would be identified with a political party. But the electorate, as we all well know, would much prefer a picture with people on it than a building alone. If anyone doubts that such pictures are much more interesting to the electorate, they need only examine the pictures in any newspaper.

How would the courts deal with such a matter, particularly when another factor has to be taken into consideration? A person identified with a political party might be interpreted in the courts as someone so identified in the minds of the electorate. An example could be a councillor who gets substantial media coverage for his political views. What happens when that councillor gets publicity in his role as a councillor?

There is also the case of the hard-working, efficient councillor who has no inclination for publicity, who makes his points in such a way that they are not attractive to the press. Could that councillor carry out the odd official function and have his picture in the council newsletter without that being an offence? That shows how ludicrous and ridiculous the Bill is.

What will the position be on official reports and in particular the annual accounts of a local authority? Often the leader or appropriate chairperson will sign a foreword or an introduction to a report. That adds interest for the electorate and shows that that publication does not come from the bureaucrats but from the elected representatives. If David Blunkett from Sheffield council were to sign a report, would that be different from a report signed by the leader of a smaller council which did not make national headlines?

Many local authorities will face these contradictions and problems. That is why the lawyers are rubbing their hands with glee. So many cases will have to be tested in the courts. The Opposition amendment will clearly exclude references to council members while retaining the ban on knocking copy against national figures. We believe that Widdicombe intended that.

Mrs. Rumbold: First, rather cheekily for someone who has so recently come to the Dispatch Box, I congratulate the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on his first appearance there.

The Bill in no sense tries to stifle the right and proper work done by local or national politicians. It does not ignore the fact that local government has politicians in the same sense as Parliament. Therefore, when the Government examined the provisions, we took particular care on the nature of publicity and how and whether publicity should be prohibited. We examined the definitions of how and whether that would occur. We also looked at the content of the Bill. As I said earlier, the content of the publicity is the acid test of whether or not it will come within the Bill.

The examples mentioned by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington were effectively countered by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government when he showed how the Labour-controlled authority in his constituency could produce an annual report signed by the leader of Bristol city council. That report contained references to what the city council had achieved and mentioned in the accounts that the city council could not, because of Government contraints, carry out the policies that it would have preferred. My hon. Friend was not saying that those were not proper and sensible references to the local authority's work and its function.

[Mrs. Rumbold]

I can say without fear or favour that it is acceptable that a member of a local authority should have his name on a document — as the leader of Bristol council had — provided that he is not publishing material which could be interpreted under the Bill as designed to canvas support for a political party.

In the same way, I do not believe that, under the Bill, politicians in local government or in Parliament, when speaking on their own behalf, can be caught under the Bill. An individual member of a local authority might be caught under the Bill if he was speaking on behalf of the local authority in a material sense and was likely to be reported in published material making points that could be interpreted as politically persuasive.

On every test that can fairly be used on the Bill, the amendment is unnecessary. I therefore ask the House to reject it.

Amendment negatived.

8.15 pm

Mr. Squire: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 32, at end insert—

"(4) Nothing in this Act shall prohibit a local authority from publicising any provision service or facility made by the authority provided that—

(a) any such publicity shall refer only to the relevant provision service or facility as being policies of the authority itself and shall not describe them as the policies of any group or party that may make up the authority wholly or partly and,

(b) the authority takes all reasonable steps to ensure that any such publicity is presented in such a way as to promote the authority itself and not any political party. (5) Subject to the provisos in subsection (4) above a local authority may publicise any provision service or facility made by any other authority responsible for its area and the provisos in subsection (4) shall be construed accordingly.'.

We happy but small band of brothers and one sister have been sitting here for nearly five hours and have heard a succession of amendments whose starting point is the belief that the Bill as currently drawn is not sufficiently clear and will provide a veritable lawyers' paradise. As hon. Members know, the joint submission from the three local authority associations specifically says that clause 2 "is so imprecise, with so many words and expressions needing subjective evaluation, that it looks like a charter for extensive litigation."

I share those fears and the purpose of the amendment is to try to clarify the clause.

We will all be aware now that the overall aim of clause 2 is to stop councils spending ratepayers' money on party political propaganda, either directly or by front organisations. I fear that, as drafted, the clause will stop a number of other activities which hon. Members would want to continue.

For the benefit of my many hon. Friends present, I give the example of a Conservative council which may wish to encourage tenants to buy their houses under section 41 of the Housing Act 1980. Under that Act, councils are obliged to publish information explaining the right to buy in simple terms. The Bill would not prohibit that, but a council may decide upon an active policy of encouraging tenants to exercise their right to buy. Obviously such a policy could be effective only if it was publicised as a policy to encourage tenants to buy. Such a policy would be pointless if the tenants did not know about it. The council would have to publicise the policy and the publicity for the benefits of the right to buy or of owner-occupation might

"be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

That might happen under clause 2(1). The opposition might therefore be able to prevent publication of that policy.

If a Labour council adopted an extensive community grant giving policy — whether one agrees with that or not — that would be the policy of the council and the people's redress would, as ever, be via the ballot box. As long as the policy was in operation, the council might be prevented from publicising it. Yet as long as that was council policy, it is clearly preferable that it is publicised as such. It is preferable because the more the electorate know about such a policy, the better can they hold councillors accountable at the next election. If the policy is not publicised, that can only benefit those in the know. The only beneficiaries will be those organisations connected with the council or councillors. The public will not know of such a policy and will be unable to take advantage of it by applying for grant.

The Bill will have the opposite effect to what the Government intend. The front organisations, so to speak, will be aware of the policy, whereas the public will not. If a council has a policy, it is desirable that the public should be aware of it.

I give a further example—hon. Members will rapidly understand why I suggest it. Local government elections in London are due in May. A party—it does not matter which—may decide that if it wins the election it will promote an open government public participation policy which goes beyond the requirements of my Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. For example, it may wish to extend the Act to working parties or adopt Leeds standing order 65 which grants access to any document, not just agenda items, and it may wish to grant the public speaking and questioning rights. If the opposing party disagrees strongly, the issue becomes an election issue. If the party that wants to introduce such policies wins the election, it could introduce the policies, but could it publish them? If the Bill, as drafted, becomes law, I doubt it.

Clause 2(1) *(a)* prohibits the publication of any material which

"can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for—

(a) a political party".

The council would have an open government public participation policy that it could not publicise.

I have given those three examples. I shall not give more, although I am sure that other hon. Members could give further examples. The Bill catches things that it should not catch, and, I suspect, was never designed to catch.

The amendment would avoid that difficulty and allow councils to publicise their services and amenities without mentioning any political party. The publicity could say, for example, "Bromley council urges all tenants to take up their right to buy for the following reasons," or, "Lewisham council has a community grant scheme which we urge all local organisations to read carefully to see whether they are eligible." The council could use ratepayers' money to publicise only its policy. It would be up to the parties to use their time and money to point out

that those policies were the policies of a Labour or a Conservative-controlled council. That is the reasonable split for which we should be aiming in the legislation.

I shall deal briefly with my proposed new subsection (5). Anxiety has been expressed that a further consequence of the Bill as drafted is that it would prevent local authorities corporately, or their members individually, from commenting upon matters of legitimate public interest or promoting new methods on matters where the authority is not the responsible authority. Alcohol and drug abuse are examples that spring to mind. I can well understand that many local authorities might wish to play a considerable part in any campaign on those matters, to issue public comment and to assist the county council's policy. It is the county council which is responsible for health matters. The campaign would fail if district authorities were unable to take part in any such campaign.

Similarly, it might be difficult, under the Bill's present wording, for local authorities to promote crime prevention measures because responsibility for such matters does not lie with them. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has spoken to me on these subjects and I know that we agree about much of the Bill. If there is some drafting error in my amendment—like all hon. Members, I stand to have my drafting corrected—I hope that my hon. Friend will none the less accept the thrust of what I say and agree that it will be possible to pursue the matter in another place.

Mr. Straw: I beg to move, as an amendment to the proposed amendment, at end add—

'(6) Subsections (4) and (5) above apply to publicity material issued by a voluntary organisation where the publicity is issued—

(a) with the use of financial or other assistance given to the voluntary organisation by a local authority; and

(b) the publicity is issued in pursuance of the aims and objectives of the voluntary organisation.'.

The Opposition agree with almost everything that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) said. I hope that that does not undermine a fine career. He has always spoken up for local authorities and for freedom of speech. We congratulate him on the freedom award that he won recently. The hon. Gentleman made an important point. I hope that the Minister will treat it with the seriousness that it deserves, notwithstanding the fact that we support it.

The amendment brings voluntary organisations within the ambit of clause 2(4) and (5). We have spent considerable time discussing voluntary organisations, and I do not need to stress again their importance to local communities. They are legitimately funded by local authorities. We believe that local authorities should not be prohibited from publicising their services and that voluntary organisations should be included in that provision.

I hope that the Minister will treat the matter seriously and not say that the amendment is unnecessary. Ministers should realise that anxieties are felt on both sides of the political divide about the operation of the Bill as drafted. If the amendment were accepted, it would go a long way to removing those anxieties. If the Minister cannot accept the amendment, will she consider and raise the matter in another place?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I am interested in the Bill and I support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). I do not know what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will say. I hope that she will make some sympathetic noises in favour of the amendment. As with all amendments that come from the Back Benches, it is easy for Ministers to say that an amendment is not properly drafted. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch accepts that that possibility exists. If that is the case, my hon. Friend could obtain some help and perhaps have the matter dealt with in another place.

I favour the amendment because I believe that local government must publicise what it does, whichever party is in office, because if it is doing something good it is worth telling the public. One party may publicise an activity that it supports. I see no point in that support being hidden under a cloak. It is as well to tell the electorate about it. I also believe that it is fair to those who work on a programme that the electorate should know about it. If the activity is opposed by the other party, the fact that it has been publicised will mean that the opposition will also obtain some publicity.

I should hate to see anything in the Bill which would put a blanket over the ability of local authorities to inform electors and others in an area who are affected by local services. The Bill would then result in overkill.

Some people—not perhaps my hon. Friends on the Front Bench—might say that the trouble is that what we are out to stop is the publicising of the most crazy things that happen in local government from time to time and that have happened rather more frequently in the past year or two, where those in charge of councils go berserk, spend money on things that the public would never support, and do so without giving any advance notice of their intentions. To me, that is all the more reason why these plans should be publicised.

8.30 pm

I do not believe that publicity for crazy programmes of one sort or another is of benefit to whichever political party indulges in it. I have an idea that had we not done away with the GLC, the electors would have done away with it, simply because they were fed up with the publicising of so many crazy activities which had cost them money. They would have refused to support such nonsense any longer.

Even if the amendment is not exactly word perfect, we ought to accept the spirit of it. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make sympathetic noises in favour of it.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand and appreciate the concern that led my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) to put down the amendment. I would do him no injustice if I said that his concern sprang from a very real knowledge, acquired over many years, of work in local government and so arose from his practical experience and his anxiety to ensure that in bringing the Bill before the House we draw up legislation which does not inadvertently act contrary to good practice in local government. His intentions are good.

In moving the amendment, my hon. Friend gave a number of examples with which I should like to deal. He asked us to suppose that it was Government policy, as indeed it is, to allow council tenants to purchase their houses. How, he asked, would a local authority tell its electors that such a policy existed? What about the efforts made by the council to inform the electorate of tenants' rights to purchase council-owned property under a Government policy which the council itself had adopted? Provided that the information is couched in terms which are straightforwardly advisory and informative, setting out

[Mrs. Rumbold]

clearly the rights of individual tenants as dictated by Government policy and adopted by the local authority, and provided that that information contains nothing that is offensive under the Bill, it is absolutely right that those people should be informed of their rights. It would not be contrary to the intention of the Bill for the local authority to make available in libraries or elsewhere such information as part of its policy, and to use this way of informing the electorate of the rights of council tenants.

Mr. Squire: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has just said. My concern is that what she has said so far implies a whole series of decisions which will require a council ultimately to guess whether court action will follow. My amendment tries to lay down that, in broad terms, provided the authority makes no mention—in the particular example about housing — of being a Conservative authority, it ought to be able to proceed in the knowledge that it will not, in all probability, face that charge.

Mrs. Rumbold: I think I understand what my hon. Friend says. I do not believe that at present a local authority officer, when composing a notice giving tenants information about their rights, would do more than advise councillors that the best way of proceeding would be to give strictly factual information. At the present time, were a responsible local authority in charge, it is most unlikely that a responsible officer would do other than advise his council that it would be best to give such information in a strictly factual way and not embroider it with political adjectives or slogans.

It is only because some authorities litter such information with flowery political messages that the Bill has been introduced. I do not believe that, even under present local government legislation, we would have had to introduce this Bill if it were not that some authorities have taken liberties to the extent that we have seen.

Some time and care will have to be spent on preparing such information. Authorities which try to push information into the sphere of political propaganda will certainly and properly be advised by their officers that such action would be covered by this Bill when it is finally enacted, in the same way as officers have to advise councillors of their duty under the law in many other respects when they are taking decisions.

Another of my hon. Friend's examples related to local authority members campaigning in an election. One party may say that it intends to have open government within the authority, if it is elected, and that there will be freedom of access for the public. Members may make that part of their campaign. Perhaps the opposition has been foolish enough to tell the electors that if opposition councillors are elected they will do exactly the opposite—that there will be no freedom of access, that everything will be done in secret and that the electorate will have no further opportunity to say a word about policy. I put that in terms of the ridiculous.

Were the party which had campaigned on the freedom of access ticket to be subsequently elected, it would put that particular policy through the council. Its elected members would vote on it as council policy. Once it had been adopted as council policy, the council would have every right to put out information to its electorate, telling people that they were welcome to observe council meetings or to attend committee meetings on such and such a date, and if they wished to inform themselves about certain matters on the council's agenda, and so on, that information could be made available. These provisions already exist in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. People can purchase council minutes if they so wish or copies of any publications put out by the council. I do not believe that there is anything in the Bill to prevent those activities from being carried out. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch will accept my reassurances.

Subsection (5) of the amendment could extend local authority publicity powers and allow local authorities to produce persuasive or informative publicity about any service or facility provided by the local authority or, as my hon. Friend pointed out, if it were a district authority, by the county council authority. My hon. Friend gave the example of publicity about a campaign mounted by a county council's social services authority, giving information about how to counter drug abuse.

He asked whether it would be possible for the district council to assist with the distribution of such material. I believe that the material must be considered in the context of the way in which it is published, and my hon. Friend accepts that point. We would not wish to impose unreasonable restrictions on a local authority's information processes. There is a case for considering the scope of section 142, to see whether something could be done to accommodate the fear that is expressed in subsection (5) of the amendment. If that is possible, we will undertake to do so, but I would prefer not to accept the wording of my hon. Friend's amendment.

Having spoken at some length on that part of the amendment, I should like to welcome the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) for the thrust of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asked us to consider the amendment to the amendment. We have discussed at length the ability of voluntary organisations to publish material which is issued in pursuance of their aims and objectives. If such material is prohibited under clause 2, it should not be published at the ratepayers' expense. I do not believe that the amendment would enhance the Bill. I ask the House not to accept the amendment.

Mr. Squire: It is not my intention to delay the House long. There are many amendments ahead of us.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for her latter comments. I am glad that she will consider whether the thrust of my amendment could be introduced elsewhere. As her statement on the first part of the amendment could hardly been more clear cut, I can scarcely press for an opening there. I urge my hon. Friend to bear in mind that there are voices shouting alarm. I should be grateful if she would reconsider the matter.

Mrs. Rumbold *indicated assent.*

Mr. Squire: I am glad to see my hon. Friend nodding assent. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

8.45 pm

Mr. Boyes: I beg to move amendment No 12, in page 2, line 35 at end insert—

'*(aa)* in subsection (1) delete the words "on application".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 32, in page 3, line 4 leave out 'the authority' and insert

'local government and matters affecting an authority's services within its area'.

Mr. Boyes: I hope to detain the House only briefly. I am aware that there is an important debate to follow.

Section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 has basically two powers—a general publicity power, and the power on which I wish to concentrate my remarks, which is a more specific power under subsection (1). The amendment seeks to delete the words "on application" from subsection (1). Section 142(1) states:

"the services available within the area of the authority provided either by the authority or by other authorities or by government departments or by charities and other voluntary organisations, and other information as to local government matters affecting the area."

People must have access to such information "on application."

The Government are making a vital and fundamental change to section 142. Local authorities' general publicity is to be restricted to

"information relating to the functions of the authority"

instead of

"information on matters relating to local government."

This vital change will have serious repercussions for local authorities, which are attempting to carry out serious policies on behalf of the people they represent. I shall give two or three relevant examples of the services carried out by local authorities which would probably be curtailed by the change.

The clause is totally unacceptable. To invent a "Colemanballs", it is miles outside the intention of the Widdicombe report, which recommended that section 142 should be unchanged so that a local authority could continue to provide information on matters related to local government. By restricting publicity, clause 3 is directly opposed to the Widdicombe recommendations.

The Government's proposals are not only opposed by the Opposition and the local authorities, but they are contrary to the spirit of the Widdicombe report, paragraph 134 of which states that the role of local authorities

"goes further than the simple delivery of specific statutory services. Certainly we would not wish to take a narrow view. Local authorities can make a valuable contribution to the welfare of their area and to the development of national policies that are of direct consequence to their responsibilities."

Paragraph 221, which I have already quoted this evening, states:

"local government has an important and well established voice on matters affecting its responsibilities."

Publicity campaigns, including issuing press releases against Government policies, on important issues of grave concern to local authorities and to the welfare of inhabitants would be stopped by clause 3(1).

My constituency has very high unemployment. One person in three is out of work, and the local authority wants to encourage investment and the creation of jobs. However, as one of the functions of a local authority may not be to deal direct with economic development initiatives, there are genuine doubts whether publicity aimed at attracting industry and commerce to the area would be permitted.

Sunderland, Seaburn and Roker and other parts have important tourist attractions. One of my greatest pleasures is to get on a train on a Thursday night or Friday morning to get out of this place and back up to a more civilised, beautiful area. My colleagues in local authorities want to expand and extend their tourist industry. If it cannot be demonstrated that that is one of the authority's functions, what will be the consequences for it following the changes to section 142?

Dover district council opposes the Channel tunnel. Clearly that is not one of its functions, but I would defend its right to explain the environmental consequences of the tunnel for the area. Indeed, I would go further. The building of the Channel tunnel will have serious repercussions for industry in my area. An area of high unemployment may become one of even higher unemployment. The consequences of the change will mean that if authorities provide information, they will contravene the Bill when it becomes law.

Widdicombe made it clear that he wanted section 142 to be left unchanged. The Government, having asked him to consider publicity in local authorities, have found his report unacceptable, and have introduced a series of clauses well outside the spirit of the Widdicombe report.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My amendment is related to a long discussion that we had in Committee. It raises some important aspects with which we never got to grips. In Committee Conservative colleagues and I argued whether the word "conscience" was effective. We were worried that Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament literature and the Leeds booklet on nuclear-free zones would still be permissible under the council's provisions for an emergency planning committee, which is now renamed the peace and emergency planning committee. There is also a unit to go with it. Assuming that my hon. Friend the Minister is right in saying that such publicity would be prevented under the Bill, the clause, if it is not amended, could be too restrictive in many important ways. They have been brought to my attention by councils and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Regarding

"information relating to the functions of the authority",

what is the position of a district council that wishes to publish information, for example, on drugs? As the majority of our cities are in shire districts, could they publish information on matters such as homelessness, vandalism in the city, drug dependency, and alcohol abuse, which are not functions for non-metropolitan district councils? Fire hazards and safety matters are county matters. Could cities such as Leicester, Nottingham, Portsmouth and Southampton advertise anything about education or social services, which are county matters? So long as the words relate

"to the functions of the authority"

there is grave doubt whether such councils could proceed with some of their valuable campaigns.

I would not claim that my amendment was perfect, and my hon. Friend may say that it goes back too far to the original wording. If genuine local government functions are county functions by definition but operative at district level, the local government body concerned should be able to activate campaigns and publish information about those functions. The previous wording was

"local government matters affecting the area.",

That is broad brush, and includes almost anything that we consider in the House. I have tried to make my amendment more specific about matters that are operative within a district's area.

My amendment refers to

[Dr. Keith Hampson]

"matters affecting an authority's services within its area."

In Committee we did not discuss private legislation. Many councils have extended their functions by bringing to the House local private Acts. That needs to be examined. I hope that my hon. Friend can make the position clear regarding authorities that have powers under such Acts which enable them to provide services not covered by the general law—in other words, not within the scope of their normal functions.

Although I have always argued for the wording to be tough and tight to prevent publicity on CND matters and nuclear-free zones, I have become convinced that the clause may exclude some areas where services are involved which are not at present among the functions laid down by general legislation.

Mr. Simon Hughes I ask the Minister to look positively at both amendments. They deal with a substantial criticism of one of the new elements introduced by the Government. The points have been put simply, and I wish to reaffirm the strength of the view of those affected that there is no need to tamper with section 142 of the 1972 Act.

Amendment No. 12 provides the only method left to us to ensure that section 142 remains as close as possible to what it had been. As the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said, the purpose of section 142 is to make sure that publicity can be given to matters that are relevant to the administration of local government in any particular area. A good example is the statement on the Channel fixed link. Clearly, the Bill will have nothing to do with the powers of local district councils or the Kent county council, but there is substantial interest in it because it will affect the functions of all the county councils. What happens will affect transport and housing functions, and the like. I respect the honest intent behind both the amendments to find a way to meet some of the Government's concerns. I share the concern about section 142. I want to ensure that we allow publicity on matters affecting Government services.

It is ludicrous to imagine that local authorities exist only to perform a limited set function and to say nothing about anything else. They are there as the sole responsible elected agencies and authorities to speak for local interests, the local area and local needs.

Mr. Madden: That is why the Government do not like them.

Mr. Hughes: Often, when Government do not take sufficient account of local needs, local authorities have to make more noise. The more the Government ignore them, the more noise is made. It is only now that the Government have decided that they cannot any longer tolerate this series of criticisms. That says nothing about local authorities, which vary in political colour and control. It says something about the deafness of central Government to local authorities.

I ask the Government to stick with Widdicombe, to stand by the result of the interim report and to wait for the later, fuller report, if they want to go further, but certainly not substantially to restrict the effect of the good and well-functioning section 142, about which there is no substantial complaint. Both amendments should be accepted by the Government.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) made some valid points, and I should like to support him, perhaps from a slightly different standpoint. Substitution of "services" for "functions" and the other parts of his amendment may assist in the interpretation of the Bill. It may well cut both ways, but substitution of that word may alleviate fears on both sides of the House.

We need to go a little further. Will the use of the word "functions" in this part of the Bill clearly prevent local authorities from diverting public money to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and other such bodies? My hon. Friend the Minister of State said in the debate on clause 2(1)*(b)* that we must make clear law. He suggested that the concerns raised earlier during that debate would be dealt with when we consider those parts of the Bill relating to "functions."

It is clear from the Bill as it stands that use of the word "functions" will prohibit expenditure by local authorities on foreign affairs, on defence matters and on support for one-sided nuclear disarmament and for strikes. Sheffield city council doled out considerable amounts of money to support striking miners. The Bill as it stands might not prohibit local authorities from giving money to particular unions to support strikes, and I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would give me some information about the legal advice that he has been given.

Mr. Michie: The hon. Gentleman's comments are like a red rag to a bull, and red is the right colour. Sheffield city council did not support the strike financially. Obviously, in principle it supported the strike, but finance went to families in need. That makes a lot of difference.

9 pm

Mr. Galley: That is a matter for interpretation. The use to which that money was put is still a matter of interpretation. Some of ratepayers' money was diverted to a particular cause with political overtones.

Social security is not a matter for a local authority. Will this Bill as it stands prohibit the use of ratepayers' money if a local authority publishes a tendentious and biased information leaflet on social security? These are still matters about which Conservative Members are properly concerned. If this wording is to remain, we need to be more clear about what are "functions". I think that the word "services" would be better, because it would relate to the actions of a local authority in providing services in its area under the terms of amendment No. 32.

Clause 4 refers to the code of practice. It may be possible to define fairly closely what are and what are not the functions and/or services of a local authority. This would achieve greater clarity.

Obviously, the Bill as it stands will result in contentious litigation and a vast amount of argument. I hope that it is possible to make the legislation clearer.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall try to be brief, as I always want to co-operate with hon. Members.

The worries expressed have been reasonable. We must take care to ensure that we have not got ourselves into difficulties. We have not gone so far in the Bill as to worry the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) in the way that he purported to be worried. Local authorities have a specific power under section 144 of the Local Government Act 1972 to attract tourism. They have

a "function", which they can publicise. Any planning authority in the area of the end of the proposed Channel tunnel must be concerned with the legislation. Many of the matters which at first sight might be expected to cause problems need not worry us.

The amendment widens the clause too far. We understand that there is a policy dispute between the Government and the Opposition. This clever amendment is the reverse of our intention, which is to make expenditure on information relate more closely to what local authorities actually provide for their citizens.

There is a fundamental, interesting and ancient argument between the Government and the Opposition over whether local authorities are like little sovereign governments, or whether they are providers of services. I am glad that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is in the Chamber, because I was brought up to believe that Berwick-upon-Tweed remained, until recently—perhaps it still does—in a state of war with Napoleon.

Mr. Beith: With the Russians.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. That was tolerable as one of those ancient, antique and enjoyable anomalies that we have in the United Kingdom. However, we are moving too near to using that precedent on more serious matters. We are nearly "at separate peaces declared" because of local authorities' actions. This does not damage the United Kingdom in any way, but it brings the concept of local government into disrepute, and ridicule. Sometimes, it unfairly impinges on national party political matters.

I know that there would be a tremendous uproar from the other side if there were a Labour Government who had a different defence policy and if, by the swing of the pendulum, there were Conservative local authorities everywhere, as there usually are in those circumstances, which began campaigning with huge posters all around London for the reintroduction of Trident, and so on. I have no doubt that there would be the most frightful caterwauling from the other side. Our principle is that information must be brought back to some relationship with local authority functions, because local authorities have no functions other than those in the statute.

To some extent, my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and for Halifax (Mr. Galley) were putting both sides of this case and pointing out the tightrope. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West rightly said, "Let us not open up such a loophole that we have major problems again." My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax was worried about CND.

There is a worry at the back of our minds—it was brought to our attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West—about what parish councils can do in relation to the services of other local authorities. We shall look again at this aspect. It is a difficult matter. I assure my hon. Friends that we shall not open up too wide a loophole, and that we shall consider this and perhaps introduce an amendment in another place to meet the legitimate concerns that have been put to the House.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Boyes: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 3, line 5, at end insert—

'(1A) In the said sections 142, after subsection (2) insert—

"(2A) It is hereby declared for the avoidance of doubt that for the purposes of this Act, section 137 of this Act is a function of a local authority."

(1B) In the said section 88, after subsection (2) insert—

"(2A) It is hereby declared for the avoidance of doubt that for the purposes of this Act, section 137 of this Act is a function of a local authority."'.

The purpose of the amendment is to put into statute what is already established in case law. As presently drafted, the Local Government Act 1972 enables local authorities to publish information on matters relating to local government under section 142(1) and 2(*a*), and the Bill would limit section 142 information to the functions of the individual local authority. A district council has no social services function, and accordingly it would not be able under section 142 to publish information on, for example, advice for the disabled.

Many of us are concerned about limiting the ability of local authorities to explain to the people their rights to receive the services and materials which a social services department has to offer. I was an assistant director of a social services department, and I was aware of the full array of services and materials that it had to disburse. The department's concern was that it could not always deliver the services and provisions to the increasing number of individuals who wanted and needed them. That department would not have objected to any other tier of the local authority in its area, or to any voluntary organisation, explaining its functions.

If section 137 is itself a function of the authority, as we propose in the amendment, the authority will spend money under that section on information on social services, for example, and will incur further expenditure on the provision of that information under section 142. The statute has already been agreed upon in a number of cases that have come before the courts, most recently in R. *v.* District Auditor for Leicester Ex Parte Leicester City Council, in September 1985.

I look to my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne), who this afternoon showed himself to be extremely interested in the legal process. I have read his qualifications in "Dod's Parliamentary Companion" and I am sure that with his previous interests and those which he has now he will be able to explain to me fully what my last sentence means. I confess that I read it from a brief. If he is unable to do so, I am sure that the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, with all his disciplines, will be able to do so.

The purpose of the amendment is to achieve something quite simple. We wish to put on the statute book that which has already been determined in case law. As section 137 has been subject to legal scrutiny in a number of instances, it would appear appropriate to take the opportunity of clarifying its status in the Bill. This would help both the courts and the district auditor. It should be stressed that the amendment does not seek to change the law. Its purpose is to give it the merit of being enshrined in statute. The amendment to section 88 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 would serve to make Scottish law consistent with English law.

Mrs. Rumbold: As I understand it, the amendment would provide for an explicit declaration that, for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972, section 137 would be a function of the local authority. The amendment would cause an equivalent amendment to be made to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

[Mrs. Rumbold]

It was made clear in Committee that the Government's view is that section 137 is a function for the purposes of section 142. Looking at the matter from that perspective, we do not consider that the amendment is necessary. If a local authority undertakes some form of economic development, or any other development that is authorised by section 137, it can produce information about it under the amended section 142, because that relates to the functions of a local authority. I accept, however, that this may need to be examined. We must ensure that there is no difficulty about the interpretation of the Bill. If, therefore, it is thought that this matter ought to be examined further, it will be looked at again in another place.

9.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I speak only to encourage the Minister to do what she has hinted she will do. The Widdicombe report said that the roles of various sections of local government law could usefully be clarified. We must ensure, for example, that section 137 is not seen as allowing publicity, but we must ensure that it is seen to be an important right for local authorities to spend money upon what they choose. It must also be confirmed as a function of local authorities. I hope that when the Bill reaches another place the Minister will allow an amendment of this kind to be incorporated in the Bill. That would be helpful. I believe that the Widdicombe committee would wish that to be done. I urge the Minister to continue along this path until a proper end is reached that incorporates words similar to these.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 4

CODES OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE AS REGARDS PUBLICITY

Mr. Strang: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 3, line 31, leave out subsection (4).

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 29, in page 3, line 31, after 'section', insert

'or any alterations to a code'.

No. 21, in page 3, line 33, leave out 'the House of Commons' and insert 'each House of Parliament'.

Mr. Strang: This group of three amendments relates to the code of practice, an outline of which the Minister kindly circulated to the Standing Committee before Christmas. Our intention is to take this opportunity to emphasise further our concern about its contents. Some aspects of it confirm our worst fears about the Government's intentions. A number of the references in the code of practice confirm our view that it is vague and that it will be difficult for local authorities to know precisely what they are allowed to communicate to their electors.

Amendment No. 20 would remove the requirement that the code of practice should come before the House of Commons for approval. Amendment No. 29 stands in the name of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). I am not certain whether his amendment is necessary. However, as it clarifies the position, there might be some advantage in accepting it. We do not want the code to be altered without it first coming before the House of Commons.

It may seem ironic that amendment No. 21 requires the code of practice to come before both Houses of Parliament for approval. I say "ironic" because of the Labour party's policy on the House of Lords. However, as long as there is a House of Lords, it is sensible to stick to the normal convention that a code of practice of this nature should require a resolution of each House of Parliament. That does not, of course, apply to financial resolutions. For that reason, we believe that it would be sensible if amendment No. 21 were accepted in order fully to regularise the position.

The Minister will recall that when the Bill was in Committee there was no requirement for a code of practice to come before either House. The Minister in his speech suggested flexibility on that matter. Therefore, I think he should agree to accept amendment No. 21, and perhaps also amendment No. 29, which regularises the position.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is important that the Government should realise how much opposition there is to the present code of practice and the lack of control over it. The overwhelming view of those who studied the code of practice produced by the Government in December is that, in the words of the local government press, it is "outrageous" and that it is well on the way to the Ministry of Truth.

The problem facing the Government in December was that they had suddenly to produce a code of practice. To show that there was something on which to peg clause 4, they produced the first code that they could lay their hands on. That is a generous interpretation. The Government know that what they have produced as an example of a code of practice for local government would encompass all sorts of unpaid publicity. It has a dubious statutory basis and would have to come to this House for approval.

The amendment gives the House and local government a guarantee of proper scrutiny of whatever code sees the light of day. I hope that the Minister will tell us that the proper scrutiny is required, but, above all, that there will be nothing as horrendous as the present code of practice, which is the only example the Government have given us.

Dr. Hampson: I think that the meaning of amendment No. 29 is perfectly obvious. In Committee, the Minister stressed how the amendment would provide flexibility and the freedom to revise and alter as the circumstances warrant. That is sensible, and it is eminently attractive to have different codes to meet the needs of different authorities.

If we require the code to be laid before the House, it is necessary that any alterations to it should come before the House. This may be something of a deterrent, for it would make it more difficult for such things to be jiggled with.

If I may extrapolate on this, there is, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, deep concern within local authorities over the draft. It is important to recognise that it is a draft, put together rapidly by the Minister to help the Committee to see what areas might be included in the code. The House should make clear to the Minister that some aspects in his code will lead to severe problems. The code, or any alterations to it, should apply strictly to corporate decisions of a

council or the ruling group on a council. The present draft covers not only press releases — there has been tremendous abuse of press releases by council leaders, involving not just the logo on top of the press release—but also interviews.

I question whether a code can ban the leader of a council from being party political in interviews. That would be stretching the code. The code should be concerned with corporate decisions—matters concerned with the council as a whole or on behalf of an authority.

The draft code also refers to officers' reports to a council and to committees of a council. That is stretching the code into territory where I foresee enormous problems. Such reports may well refer to exising policies which have long been pursued, yet the code may now inhibit how the council handles them. The code, which will be a fundamental part of the Act, must not encourage mischievous litigation, but, as we said in Committee, some parts of the legislation might well do that. Above all, the code must not inhibit or add to the cost of and make more difficult the day-to-day administration of councils, but, as drafted, the code would affect such day-to-day administration.

Mr. Waldegrave: The subject of these amendments represented my finest hour in Committee when I was defeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley). The Galley amendment — rather like the Rooker-Wise amendment—will go down in history as very important, and so it should. We accept that codes of practice should be put before Parliament.

I was a little confused by the Opposition's strategy on these amendments as, if we accept amendment No. 20, we could not accept amendment No. 21. The other place recently debated codes of practice in general and I know that it takes an interest in these matters. It might be right for the code to be debated in both Houses. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax would not want to defend his successful amendment to the point of resisting that addition to it.

Mr. Galley: May I confirm that it was purely as a result of a technical procedural point that the words "House of Commons" were originally put into the amendment?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) mentioned flexibility. It works both ways. We do not want to make it so cumbersome to make minor changes that we get stuck with provisions that get further and further out of date, but I take his point about not tinkering for the sake of tinkering. I am afraid that I am genuinely open-minded about whether every change has to go through the full procedure. I can see pretty strong arguments for not doing that. We accept the principle of scrutiny by Parliament and we shall table amendments in another place to give effect to that.

Amendment negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

9.27 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Bill started out with a variety of criticisms from all sides, although it was agreed that something had to be done about certain abuses in local authorities, and the Widdicombe committee confirmed that. The interim report's principal conclusion was that statute should prevent publicity for party political purposes at the ratepayers' expense. On that principle, and that principle alone, my colleagues and I unanimously agreed that we should support the Bill.

On behalf of my colleagues, I put four serious criticisms which we wanted the Government to consider, and none of which was recommended by Widdicombe. The first was that clause 2(1)*(b)* should be deleted, as it went far beyond party political campaigns and dealt with publicity for bodies outside the body politic. The Government have conceded that, and the paragraph has gone.

The second was that clause 2(3) should go. It prohibits the financing of other bodies for publicity purposes. The voluntary sector was horrified by it and many, if not most, members of local authorities of all political parties were horrified. The Government have not amended clause 2(3), so they are threatening the activities of the voluntary sector and those who depend on local government for funding.

The third criticism was that there should be no tampering with section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Government have not moved on that. They have hinted that there may be movement, but they are still trying to restrict what local authorities can do under section 142 to talking about the functions of the authority, not matters relating to the area. There has not been a concession on that.

Lastly, the Government have allowed the code of practice provision set out in clause 4 to remain, and that is universally found to be unacceptable. I make that one gain for the Opposition, and the Government resisting three substantive attacks. The conclusion is obvious: if the Government are willing to amend the Bill before it finishes its proceedings, they might have our continuing support. We wanted to have something on the statute book but we did not want the Government to ignore the committee that they set up and go far beyond its recommendations. As they have done so, we cannot continue to support them.

Our support was always conditional and always open to the Government backing down in the light of the opposition in the country. If the House were proportionately represented, it would not pass the Bill. Sadly, the minority Government still have a majority of seats so they may be able to succeed tonight. We shall oppose them and continue to oppose them unless they make other concessions that they could and should make because they have over-reacted to something that was not of our making, and arguably not of theirs.

The Labour party often abused the processes of local government. In my constituency and those of many of my hon. Friends — Greenwich, Liverpool, Leeds — it has acted in a way that has brought the Bill before the House. It has caused the Government to legislate in this way. The Government have over-reacted—that is their fault—but let nobody believe that there is not blame to be attached to the Labour party as well. We shall not allow the Labour party to get away with its excesses, but, on the other hand, we shall not allow the Government to abuse the processes of local government in their turn. We are willing to fight for local government to continue to represent the reponsible voice of ratepayers and citizens in Britain. Perhaps that is why we are doing rather better than the other two parties.

9.32 pm

Mr. Michie: One often talks about the tail wagging the dog, but the speech by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was extraordinary.

I have been asked not to speak tonight, but I do so mainly because I think that the Bill leaves much to be desired. We are pleased that the Minister conceded various points in the Committee of which I was a member. They are small, but we should be grateful for them.

However, the Bill is unnecessary. There are ways and means of controlling the abuses about which the Government worry. Therefore, I ask them not to continue with the Bill, but to throw it into the dustbin so that we do not have further problems and further amendments throughout the next stages.

9.33 pm

Dr. Hampson: The speech by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was a joke. In Committee we noticed that, having given a blessing to the Bill on Second Reading, the hon. Member progressively distanced the alliance from it, and never agreed with any point in the Bill. Now he says that he agrees entirely with what the Government are doing in principle but denies the worth of the Bill, which is extraordinary.

The Bill follows Widdicombe in all but one sense. It expressly prohibits literature of a party political nature. There has been talk about the partisan nature of the tone and scale of some local authority publicity. The Widdicombe committee did not go far enough in its recommendations to meet the problem. It said that the local authorities' powers should be concentrated under section 142 of the Local Government Act 1948, but on section 137 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1963, it said that it should be made clear that the powers could not be used for "publicity". The Bill meets the principles of the Widdicombe report except on section 142. In the past two years we have all seen, including the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), a growing abuse by Labour councils of the way in which they are using ratepayers' money for direct party political advantage or indirectly to support causes related to the Labour party.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and I share the problem of the same city council and its abuses. The problem is that the abuses I detailed in the evidence I brought to the Committee will not be stopped by the Bill. Activities that should be allowed to carry on in local government will be stopped by the Bill. The amendments of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West, which showed that, have not got through.

Dr. Hampson: That is my main point. I was misled by the outrageous condemnation by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

I believe that the Government have had to tread a delicate line and, on balance, they have managed to do it well, because the Bill stops the worst abuses. However, it may not stop some of the more sophisticated abuses by the more devious Labour councillors. The hon. Member for Leeds, West and I have to live with them. They do not go over the parapet and try to become martyrs as they do in Liverpool, but they are insidiously working away all the time. Also, there are many sensitive areas that the Bill may not properly deal with because it goes too far.

The Widdicombe report drew a distinction between publicity of information on the functions of the council to help the residents of the area and party political information, which is propaganda and campaigning literature. I should like a third distinction in the Bill, dealing with the material produced in the normal course of running a local authority. In many areas — particularly through the code—if we are not careful we will try to stop or control normal administrative routines such as council minutes, circulars and officers' reports. That seems to be unnecessary.

Clause 3(2) defines publicity, and in many ways is at the heart of the Bill. We need to look at such definitions to decide whether the terminology is right. We must decide whether the phrase

"any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large"

is too sweeping and whether we should use phrases such as "primarily intended for the public at large " We should consider whether we are stretching into a third category of information—that essential to the day-to-day running of the council. That is no one's intention.

9.37 pm

Mr. Madden: Last night the noble Lord Stockton in another place delivered a blistering attack on the modern Conservative party. He said that it is now the vehicle for extremist elements who are completely alien to traditional Conservative values. I do not know what the noble Lord thinks of the Bill, but I am sure that he thinks it is shabby, sinister, undemocratic and unwanted. There has been no clamour for the Bill from the public. Postmen have not been rushing to the Department of the Environment in Marsham street with bulging postbags full of letters from the public demanding that the Bill be enacted as a matter of urgency.

The people of Britain are worried about jobs, housing, the National Health Service and schools, where the teachers' dispute has been running for more than a year. The Bill will not create a single job, except a few for lawyers; it will be a paradise for them. They will crawl all over the Bill, seeking to clarify, advise and define. They will tell councillors that they should not do this, that they will be running great risks if they do that. That is the purpose of the Bill — to instil fear, anxiety and uncertainty.

The Bill has come about because the Government are authoritarian and highly centralised, and are dominated by the most authoritarian Prime Minister in living memory. We are told that, when anyone is suggested to her, her first question is, "Is he one of us?" Such an attitude runs through the Government's thinking.

The Prime Minister and the modern Conservative party no longer seek to work with local government. Confrontation is their strategy, and it has been ever since 1979. Now Labour councils are being confronted with cuts, penalties, rate capping, district auditors, surcharges, bankruptcy and disqualification. We have a Government who detest local government. They have abolished councils that they do not like and they are now stopping councillors telling the ratepayers the truth about Government policies. We have a Government who do not like law centres, so they shut them down; a Government who do not like centres for the unemployed, so they seek to shut them down; a Government who do not like

community advice centres, so they seek to shut them down; a Government who do not like voluntary organisations, so they seek to starve them of money.

Those are the organisations that have sought to give the people confidence to fight the cuts in their services, and to campaign for what they want in their local communities. That is why the Government do not like them. That is why the Government are introducing the Bill. It is unwanted and undemocratic. I am sure that they will live to regret it, because the people know that the Government are seeking to move the goal posts. They are trying to silence people whom they do not like, who are giving the people a message that they do not like.

This sinister, shabby, nasty little Bill deserves the contempt that the House will show it tonight. The emptiness of the Chamber while this nasty legislation has been discussed today shows that it is wholly irrelevant to the problems, priorities and anxieties of the people whom we seek to serve.

9.42 pm

Mr. Straw: This is a serious Bill which will do great damage to local authorities and their relationship with Government. While it is a serious matter, we have been vastly entertained today by the continual contortions and twisting and turning of Liberal Members as they seek to explain why they voted for the Bill on Second Reading yet, now that it has been improved, will vote against it on Third Reading.

For hon. Members who are not fully apprised of the situation, it is worthwhile repeating some of the reasons mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for voting for the Bill on Second Reading, when he used words such as "horrendous", "appalling and extreme", "arbitrary" and "dangerous". That is why the Liberals voted for the Bill on Second Reading. Today, people have to decide why they are voting against it on Third Reading.

I did not mention what the Social Democratic party has been saying, because its members have been absent from the debate. A representative of the SDP, the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), has just turned up. It will be interesting and entertaining to see what SDP Members do.

The reason why the Liberals in Parliament have changed their minds has nothing to do with whether the merits of the Bill have changed, but everything to do with the enormous pressure under which the Liberal party in Parliament has come from Liberal councillors and *Liberal News*, which said earlier in the parliamentary Session:

"How disappointing and inexplicable it was to find Liberal Members trooping in to vote for this deplorable Local Government Bill on Second Reading."

Mr. Wareing: Does my hon. Friend not agree that that is in line with the usual hypocrisy that one finds on the alliance Benches? Has he studied the early-day motions, which include one in the name of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) criticising the Government for not funding the arts on Merseyside when he himself was one of the Members who voted for the abolition of Merseyside county council?

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Liberals have turned turtle because of the pressure they have been under. They have appreciated the utter inconsistency of their position not only in the House but within their own movement.

In the debate on the rate support grant two days ago, the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) said:

"The Government seem to forget that local government exists to provide services. It does not exist simply as a minor or even a major irritant instituted to interrupt and intertere in the otherwise smooth running of the mind of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He appears to forget that, even if local government did not exist, the services would still have to be provided".—[*Official Report*, 20 January 1986, Vol. 90, c. 88.]

That is a damning statement from a widely respected Conservative Member about the attitude of his Government towards local government.

The Bill also typifies the contempt for local government which, I am sorry to say, Ministers in the Department of the Environment continue to show. They say that their concern is about ratepayers' money not being used for party political purposes. As I have said repeatedly during the debates on the Bill, if that was so, we could agree. Those were exactly the words that were used by the national executive committee of the Labour party in its evidence to Widdicombe.

The Bill goes far wider. It is not just about controlling the use of ratepayers' money for party political purposes. It is about denying local government the right to challenge decisions of central Government and the right to say that what central Government intend to do to local services is wrong. It is about denying Lancashire county council the right to say that it believed that the Transport Act 1985 would do terrible damage to bus services in Lancashire. When Lancashire said that, it had the support of most Conservative councils as well as Labour councils.

Most insidious of all, the Bill is about censorship. The true motives of the Government were exposed when the outline of a code of practice was published which sought not only to control publicity that was paid for but also publicity that came free out of people's mouths: press conference statements and media interviews are to be controlled. The Bill is about gagging opposition. It is about an authoritarian Government led by one woman who seeks to crush opposition, whether it comes from within her own party or from outside it. The number of Conservative Cabinet Ministers who have been kicked out for opposing the Prime Minister is testament to the truth of what we are saying.

We oppose the Bill in this place, we shall oppose it in the other place and we hope to see it defeated.

9.48 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: The Bill does several other things as well as regulating local authority publicity. On Third Reading it is worth remembering that. It lays down a date by which local authorities must set a rate, which is important and which has been widely welcomed. It deals with the transfer of local authority mortgages over the heads of the holders of the mortgages; that is important and right.

The central part of the Bill is about publicity. I have been astonished by the arguments from all the Opposition parties. The Labour party's opposition to the Bill has been based on the proposition that there are no abuses and that the existing law would control abuses if there were any. On the other hand, it says that the limitations inherent in this Bill bring to an end freedom of speech in local government. As happens quite often, something in the propositions put by the Opposition is a little awry: the Bill either does something or it does not. We know it limits the

[Mr. Waldegrave]

abuses that have grown up in recent years in local authorities, and we know that the existing law has not been capable of doing that. The tricky argument by the Labour party is flawed and wrong.

The sort of abuses we have seen in the last few years would not have been tolerated for one moment by the Labour party. Hon. Members will remember that most awful of all modern British Governments under the present Lord Wilson of Rievaulx. He went off to Washington with the union jack hanging upside down over his head, and Lyndon Johnson said he was the greatest Englishman since Churchill while he praised the American stance in Vietnam. If the GLC, which I think was controlled at that time by the Tories, had covered London with posters caricaturing Wilson and ridiculing his policy, which deserved to be ridiculed, would not the Opposition have thought that that was a misuse of the publicity powers of the GLC? We know perfectly well that if the boot was on the other foot, there would be a lot of caterwauling from the Labour party.

One thing more craven than the Labour party's opposition to this Bill has been the performance of the alliance. It has not been hot, it has not been cold; it has not said yes, it has not said no. The Liberal and Social Democratic parties have been timid. They have wrung their hands and said there are dreadful abuses, but they have taken no practical steps to allow us to introduce legislation to limit those abuses. They have opposed every practical proposition, and I have come to the conclusion that so endemic in them is the spirit of opposition that they do not want action; they prefer to be in a position to complain. If somebody were to put an end to their complaints they would be terrified. They are in the position of the Spartans at the battle of Marathon who prolonged their debate about sending aid to the Athenians for so long that the battle, thankfully for Sparta, was over by the time their soldiers arrived. As usual with the alliance, it is never there on the day when the real battle is being fought.

This Bill is necessary. We would prefer it not to be necessary. We would prefer the old conventions to remain as they do in many parts of the country. Many Labour and Conservative authorities have nothing to fear from this Bill, because they have maintained those conventions. Those authorities which have not do have something to fear and it is right that they should. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 260, Noes 192.

Division No. 44] **[9.52 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*

Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

10.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 4) Order 1985, dated 18th December 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

It might be for the convenience of the House if we were to debate at the same time the second motion,

That the draft Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1985, dated 18th December 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: Is that with the leave of the House?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Rifkind: We have before us two orders. One is the main rate support grant order, which we debate each year at about this time. The other is the order continuing the scheme of revaluation rate rebates which my predecessor introduced last year to provide a welcome relief to those most affected by revaluation, since there is clearly a close connection between these two orders.

As the House knows, it is this Government's objective to reduce local authority expenditure. Since coming to office we have asked authorities to co-operate in that objective. Some have done so, but increasingly the Government have been forced to bring pressure to bear on authorities, through the level of grant, and in some cases by means of selective action, to achieve those objectives. We still have not achieved a reduction in volume terms in what local authorities are spending. Local authorities in 1985-86 were still planning to spend 1·8 per cent. more in volume terms than they spent in 1978-79. It is worth examining the figures in more detail because of the claims of unacceptable cuts which are frequently made by local authorities.

The main component of local authority expenditure is education. It accounts for 45 per cent. of relevant expenditure, and of course the main part of that — almost 90 per cent. — is school education. For demographic reasons the school population is falling. Between 1978-79 and 1984-85 primary pupil numbers fell by 23 per cent. and secondary numbers by 8 per cent. With the demand for a major component of expenditure falling significantly one would expect expenditure to fall, and to say that one expects that is not to ask for unreasonable cuts.

There have indeed been reductions in education, but only 3 per cent. in volume terms over that period. Without these savings on education, local authority expenditure would not be 1·8 per cent. above its 1978-79 level, but 8 per cent. above it. This is the real measure of the extent to which local authority expenditure has in fact increased from its 1978-79 level, despite all that the Opposition and the authorities claim about unacceptable cuts. The volume of local authority expenditure expressed in real terms is still significantly higher than it was when the Government came into office. The claim that there have been unacceptable cuts is difficult to believe.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): How many teaching posts would have to disappear to conform with the Secretary of State's guidance?

Mr. Rifkind: The important point that I emphasise is that, even if the local authorities met the Scottish Office's Red Book requirements, the pupil-teacher ratio would still be extremely healthy. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, it is better than it has ever been in the history of Scottish education. That is despite the so-called unacceptable cuts to which he has referred.

Putting aside the relatively minor reduction in educational spending, which is far less than the demographic changes would have implied, the actual volume of other expenditure of local authorities has increased, not by 1·8 per cent. but by 8 per cent., over the past six or seven years. That is very significant.

Thus, the financial background to this order is one of local authority expenditure still above its 1978-79 level, despite demographic factors which make possible expenditure reductions without unreasonable cuts in services. This being so, there remains the need to apply pressure to authorities to spend in line with the Government's plans.

There are, I am glad to note, signs that local authorities are making greater efforts to bring their spending into line with these plans. In 1984-85, 15 authorities budgeted in line with guidelines. In 1985-86 the number doubled from 15 to 30, including over half the regional and island authorities. Clearly this was in part a response to the much more severe grant penalties for 1985-86, of which authorities were given ample warning. The effect of these penalties has also been to force authorities still above guidelines to look closely at their budgets in order to find savings. One region plans to halve its planned overspend. Others are looking closely at ways of reducing or eliminating their overspends. This is good news for ratepayers, in two ways. There are savings in expenditure, and there will be refunds of grant penalty as authorities bring their expenditure nearer guideline at outturn. Authorities can calculate what grant refund they will get, and, together with the expenditure reductions, this should help to keep rates down.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does the Secretary of State agree with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that, if all the rate support grant which the Government have cut from local authorities over the past five years were to be restored, ratepayers in Scotland could have a year completely free of any rate payments? Instead of that, because of the further cuts contained in this order, domestic ratepayers face an average increase of 10 per cent. in 1986-87. Does this not prove to the Secretary of State that his Government are largely responsible, not just for cuts in local authority services, but for rates increases?

Mr. Rifkind: I disagree entirely with that, for one very good reason. The implication of what the hon. Gentleman says is that if central Government kept their contribution to local authority expenditure stable that would somehow help the ratepayers. The evidence does not support that view. For four years the rate support grant contribution from central Government was kept at 68·5 per cent. No change was made, yet during that period local authorities in Scotland increased their expenditure in real terms by no less than £240 million. That is what happened when central Government did not apply pressure through the rate support grant system. When the Government apply pressure, we begin to get results. It may be very sad indeed that it should require that sort of pressure to bring about

the results that we seek, but the hon. Gentleman, and indeed the convention, cannot deny that that is historical fact, and it is something that they should bear in mind.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am sorry to pursue this point, but what the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has just said is what we on this Bench were assured by the COSLA representatives today was the case. They said quite specifically, and in terms, that if the amount of the rate support grant in 1981, which at that time was £1,775 million in present terms, was restored, it would be the equivalent of having a rate-free year for every local authority in Scotland. Is the Minister flatly saying that COSLA is deceiving us?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, it is deceiving the House, for this simple reason. The implication is that if these funds were available the expenditure plans of local authorities would not be changed. If the expenditure plans of local authorities were not changed, it goes without saying that any increased central Government grant would go towards reducing rates. Of course that is right, it has to be true, but from all our experience—and the hon. Gentleman is a fair man—we know perfectly well that when central Government give more in grants to local authorities the increase is rarely passed on to the ratepayer. What happens is that those local authorities which wish to increase their expenditure feel that they can do so quite happily without putting an increased burden on the ratepayer, but at a cost to the taxpayer.

That is not theory, but what has happened in those years when the rate support grant has not been reduced as a percentage. That is the point that I made earlier, and it is a sad fact of life. All that COSLA is saying is that, if all other things are equal, the more central Government pay, the better it is for the ratepayer. Obviously, that is true, but it is not very good for the taxpayer, and it is not a remarkable observation.

My predecessor issued expenditure guidelines for 1986-87 to authorities at the beginning of October. These included an increase of £59 million over the provision originally made in the White Paper. After taking account of the completion of the transfer of two colleges to central institution status, the provision for 1986-87 is 4·3 per cent. ahead of that made for 1985-86. As in each year since 1982-83, guidelines were based on the client group method of needs assessment, but with limits on how far authorities were expected to change their expenditure in one year. My predecessor had particular regard to the problems of authorities with guidelines below assessed need and to the performance of authorities in relation to their present guideline and assessed need. Authorities whose assessed need was higher than their 1985-86 budget were allowed guidelines up to 7 per cent. above what they budgeted to spend this year.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), who is indisposed and unable to be present, asked me to raise a point with the Secretary of State. Perhaps in another debate he will be able to speak for himself. Strathkelvin district council now has new headquarters — Tom Johnston House. Within the guidelines, no allowance has been made for that district council, which means that ratepayers, including my constituents and those of the Secretary of State's hon. Friend, will be faced with a higher bill. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman bear that in mind?

Mr. Rifkind: I have not yet received direct representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). I appreciate the fact that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is speaking on his own and on my hon. Friend's behalf. There is no doubt that this is a matter that can properly be considered. The administrative costs of a local authority would not normally result in a change in the guidelines, which are based on assessed need. However, the matter will be considered to see what is appropriate.

Every authority that kept within guideline or assessed need this year received a cash increase of at least 0·5 per cent., and no authority was set a guideline more than 1·8 per cent. below this year's budget. There will again be severe penalties for ovespending in 1986-87, but the guidelines are not unreasonable, and I urge authorities to spend in line with guidelines, in the interests of their ratepayers. Failure to spend at guidelines will again lead to severe penalties.

Turning to the rate support grant order, aggregate Exchequer grant for 1986-87 will be £2,008·65 million, including an addition of £3·65 million to take into account the transfer of financial responsibility for list D schools, the grant figure is £100 million more than the figure that my predecessor first announced for 1985-86.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): On the matter of additional resources for list D schools, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some authorities, such as central regional council in my constituency, having received the money, are shutting the door in the face of the list D schools? They are not providing the support that they should be providing but are saying that it is a problem for central Government?

Mr. Rifkind: We are watching with careful interest the discussions that are taking place between regional authorities and the list D schools. Most of the discussions have not yet been completed. I hope that there will be a sensible resolution of the matter to ensure that the needs that are at present met by the list D schools will be accommodated. The Government are making reasonable provision for financial applications. The onus is on the regional councils to obtain a satisfactory outcome in the interests of those who need the provisions of the schools.

I mentioned that the grant figure is £100 million more than the figure that my predecessor first announced for 1985-86. It is £43 million more than the final grant figure for 1985-86 once account is taken of the generous increases in grant made to increase domestic rate relief and offset the effects of revaluation. The 1986-87 grant figure is 56·1 per cent. of relevant expenditure. This is a reduction on the grant percentage in the current year, and it is in order to put further pressure on authorities to bring their spending into line. Authorities claim that cuts in grant merely increase rates, but where reductions in spending can be made, there is no reason why that should be the case. The historical examples that I mentioned earlier prove that point. If all authorities spent in line with the Government's plans in 1986-87, the overall level of rates should fall. There should be no overall increase.

Aggregate Exchequer grant consists of rate support grants and specific grants. The Convention of Scottish

[Mr. Rifkind]

Local Authorities generally prefers money to be allocated to rate support grants rather than to specific grants. This reduces administration costs and gives authorities greater freedom to decide on priorities between services. The existing specific grants were reviewed with the convention, and it was agreed that five grants—list D schools, planning development, town development, sewerage and open space—should be discontinued. The resulting increase in needs element has been distributed in such a way that changes in total grant income for individual authorities are minimised. My predecessor, also with the agreement of the convention, introduced a new specific grant to promote Gaelic. This is part of the implementation of my response to the Montgomery report on the functions and powers of Islands councils. The amount allocated to this specific grant for the first year is £250,000, and I hope that it will provide useful assistance for the Gaelic language.

Rate support grants comprise three elements: domestic element, resources element, and needs element. Domestic element reduces the rate poundage for domestic ratepayers compared with other ratepayers. It was increased massively in 1985-86 from 1p in the pound to 8p, to offset the effects of revaluation. The cost was increased from £14 million to £102 million, largely by the extra grant that my predecessor made available. It is now proposed to reduce domestic element by a small amount from 8p to 7p, reducing the costs to £91 million. This is still a substantial amount. Since domestic element is found from within aggregate Exchequer grant, this means that more grant will be available to help all ratepayers, without any serious effect on the domestic ratepayer.

Resources element compensates authorities which have less than a standard amount of rating resources per head. Resources and needs element have been in the ratio 1:7 for some years. However, since resources element distribution is based on actual rate poundages, it is possible for high-spending authorities to attract more grant by high spending. It is now proposed to reduce the amount of resources element available by reducing the ratio to 1:8. This results in a resources element of £185·2 million.

The largest component of rate support grant is the needs element. The amount payable to each authority is shown in schedule 2 to the order, and appendix E to the report sets out details of the calculation.

The client group method of needs assessment continues to be the basis of distribution of needs element. Full implementation of the method would, however, mean substantial gains and losses for individual authorities. It is, therefore, proposed to set limits on the maximum grant gains and losses for any authority. These limits are 15 per cent. on gains and 7 per cent. on losses. The limits are symmetrical around the 4 per cent. increase in needs element generally. — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Does the Secretary of State know what that means?"]—I shall be happy to explain that, if it would be helpful to the House. I could not have explained it last week, but I can happily explain it tonight.

A number of authorities, mainly small rural districts, are worried that full implementation of the client group method would mean their using all their entitlement to needs element. For that reason, a minimum grant entitlement of £11 per head has been set, subject to the limit on gains that I have mentioned. I understand that this has been the subject of some criticism, but I would point out that the arrangement applies to district councils only, and that the £11 minimum is a modest amount when one considers that other district councils receive grant of up to £55 a head. As in previous years, Orkney and Shetland have been treated as special cases because of their extremely high rating resources. They have been given the average grant increase over what they received this year.

I mentioned earlier that the order included changes to grant for back years. Rate support grant for 1985-86 is increased by £19·6 million to compensate for interest rate changes and £239,000 as a consequence of the latest police pay award.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give us information on the level of interest rates that the Government are looking for in the next financial year?

Mr. Rifkind: This is a debate on the rate support grant, and I do not think it would be relevant to have a discussion on the normal national level of interest rates. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that local authorities are compensated for any changes that come about as a result of changes in interest rates, and that local authorities do not suffer if there is a change in interest rates. The Government compensate them for that, and that is right and proper.

Grant penalties for 1984-85 were revised in July this year, restoring £29 million in grant to local authorities because provisional expenditure returns were below budget. The penalties were revised again when final figures were available, and it was hoped that this would show a further reduction in expenditure. Final outturns were above provisional outturns for many authorities, with grant penalties overall standing to be increased by £1·1 million, although some authorities such as Lothian region, had further reductions in expenditure and in penalties.

Sir Russell Johnston: The right hon. and learned Member rightly said that this is a highly complex matter. Will he confirm that his civil servants, in making the final determination in these matters, are alleged, if there are discrepancies, to apply the "Athine" formula—"Ach, to hell is near enough"!

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's intervention. The final decisions are made not, by civil servants, but by Ministers. The hon. Gentleman's final observation is near enough to be correct.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the words of the distinguished civil servant who gave evidence to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in explaining the rate support grant system to Scottish Members of Parliament? When it was put to him that these were subjective judgments, he pointed out that these were objective criteria which, on occasion, might be applied subjectively.

Mr. Rifkind: No doubt the distinguished officials who serve the Scottish Office will apply the most acceptable criteria when they give advice to Ministers. Ministers always accept their advice if it is sufficiently convincing as to the merits of the case.

The Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1985 is I am relieved to say, a much simpler document. The recent revaluation increased the rateable values of some domestic and commercial subjects by considerably

more than the average change. To mitigate the effects of this, my predecessor introduced special relief under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 for domestic and commercial ratepayers whose new rateable value was over three times more than their old one. Those receiving relief would face large increases in their rate Bills if it were ended next year. My predecessor therefore announced on 3 December that the relief would continue for 1986-87, but at a rate of 75 per cent. The maximum relief on any one property will be £7,500. This order gives effect to that decision. The cost of the relief in 1986-87 will be about £20 million, compared with £26 million this year. I consider this to be a generous continuation of the assistance to the ratepayers most affected by revaluation. While obviously they would have preferred continuation of 100 per cent. relief, I am sure that they will welcome its continuation at 75 per cent. I believe that the Opposition will recognise that as viable assistance to Scottish ratepayers.

Taken together, I consider that these two orders constitute a very reasonable basis for local authority expenditure and rates in 1986-87. If local authorities spend sensibly, there is every reason why rate increases should be low. If they spend in line with guidelines, there will be no grant penalties and the overall level of rates will come down. On behalf of ratepayers, I strongly urge local authorities to follow this course. If they do not, it is the ratepayers who will suffer. I commend both these orders to the House.

10.30 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I extend my congratulations yet again to the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) on his appointment to the Scottish Office. I extend also my condolences, as I see that he is still having some trouble with his notes. No doubt, his reading will improve with time.

The speech by the Secretary of State shows that someone who has understood the subtleties of city government in the root of his previous job cannot necessarily be expected to understand the Scottish rate support grant settlement. I understand that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is suffering from some difficulties.

A rate support grant debate is not a place for civilised pleasantries. I hope that the Secretary of State will merely accept that we wish him well in his new job. He has taken the post of the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), and I notice that he has taken over his speeches as well. I am not sure that that bodes well for the future.

The bare facts are there for every hon. Member to see. The relevant expenditure has increased, I believe, by 3·9 per cent., but I accept that there may be some pleading on the margins. However, I suspect that it has still fallen short of the rate of inflation. It is undeniably true, when one looks at the relevant expenditure in conjunction with the reduction in RSG percentage, that we are left with an unsatisfactory position.

Th RSG has decreased by 1·6 per cent. As that is on the basis of last year's 57·7 per cent., that is a decrease of about 3 per cent. The result is a total cash settlement up by only 2·2 per cent., according to my calculations. It is therefore down substantially in real terms. The only defence for that is that it is perhaps not as dramatically as bad a settlement as in some previous years. It cannot be taken in isolation. We must look at the inheritance of the Secretary of State—what has happened in the past four or five years. The rate of Exchequer support for local services has been reduced below the danger point, and we are reducing it even further in the order. The House should not accept this in any sense. I very much regret that the Government are railroading through a totally inadequate RSG settlement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has referred to the RSG settlement. If the 1980-81 percentage is applied to the relevant expenditure in each year, we can assume that between £1·5 billion and £1·7 billion cumulatively would have been available to local government in Scotland. If one applies the 1980-81 percentage to this year, there would have been an additional £433 million.

It is interesting that the Secretary of State made the perfectly valid point that it is perhaps unfair to assume that all that money would have gone to reduce the rates. I accept that a balance would have been struck — no doubt, a varying balance from authority to authority — between improving services and protecting the ratepayer.

The Secretary of State did not for a moment dispute the arithmetic. Undoubtedly, those funds would have been available had it not been for the predatory raid by the Treasury, which has been repeated every autumn in the past five years. The total of this rate support grant is miserably inadequate. A look at the way in which the RSG has been divided shows something that amounts to chaos and confusion.

I was interested to note the Secretary of State's delicate descriptive reference to what happened to the rural resources element. The ratio has been reduced from 1:7 to 1:8. I know that it has happened, but I am not sure why. COSLA certainly did not want it. I understand that the working party on local government finance, which is a joint official working party did not recommend it. It may be a somewhat simplistic approach, but I assume that there is a reason behind the changes. It might be helpful for the Government to tell us what it is.

There have been some strange happenings with the needs distribution formula and something nasty has been happening at St. Andrew's house. The regions have some cause for complaint. I recognise that there will always be difficulties, but the regions seem to have come out of this year's distribution rather badly. The Minister will know that Strathclyde has seen an increase of 1·8 per cent. while the Central region and Lothian have had increases of 0·6 and 0·5 per cent., respectively. Those are small increases when we consider the services that the regions have to support and the impact of inflation.

The districts have come out of the distribution rather better than the regions, but it is interesting to note how the client group approach has been applied. The Scottish Office has done its sums and taken the client group approach, which is supposed to be an equitable and fair method of deciding on need, but it has not liked the results. There have been unintended consequences. The Secretary of State has told us that, when the needs of certain small district councils were assessed, it was decided that they would get nothing from the needs element provision. It has been decided arbitrarily that there should be provision of £11 per head. That has been of enormous help, and I do not complain about any authority receiving help to provide its services. The provision has helped Banff and Buchan, Wigton, Inverness, Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey. A number of small and largely rural authorities have been

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

helped, and I think that they will be the first to say that it is unfortunate that that has happened at the expense of many of the urban authorities.

If the client group approach is applied, authorities such as Glasgow, Renfrew and Edinburgh emerge with high settlements only to be cut back by the imposition of the 15 per cent. cut-off point. The Minister will probably tell me that such authorities have done very well because they have received 15 per cent., but, on the basis of need and the client group approach, they would have received considerably more. For example, Glasgow would have received £49·5 million, and it has been given only £40·7 million. In that sense, the client group approach has been manipulated to take out the peaks and troughs, but that has led to a redistribution through the formula, which the Government have endorsed, which has gone against the large urban authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): During the rate support grant debate that took place last year, the hon. Gentleman complained about the cuts in RSG for district authorities. Is he seriously suggesting that a 15 per cent. increase in the needs element is paltry.

Mr. Dewar: I am saying that if we take the Government's client group approach—presumably the Minister has read the memorandum which has been published to accompany the order — and follow it through, we find that the large urban authorities are receiving less than the undiluted client group approach would give them.

The moral of the story is that the Government do not want to apply the client group approach because they realise that if it is implemented simpliciter there will be unfairness. Why is it impossible to have the client group approach in its entirety in the distribution of the needs element when there is no holding back of guidelines, which are basically the client group approach? The guidelines—

Mr. Rifkind *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I shall allow the right hon. and learned Gentleman to intervene in a moment, so that he may receive a briefing from the Under-Secretary of State.

The guidelines are the basis on which the penalties are enforced. The refusal fully to implement the client group approach in operating the distribution formula serves to underline the way in which the section 5 machinery and the general abatement has been adminstered in the past year or two.

Mr. Rifkind: It seems that the hon. Gentleman was not listening to my speech with his customary care. If he had, he would have heard me say explicitly that limits have been placed on the extent to which the client group approach will apply to guidelines. There is a maximum increase of 7 per cent. and a maximum reduction of 1·8 per cent.

Mr. Dewar: I thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was referring to the 15 and 17 per cent. peak and trough in the distribution of the needs element. I shall look at that point, but I believe that my general point holds good. We shall have an opportunity to argue it later. I leave it on record.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Mr. Dewar: If I am wrong, many others are wrong, too. I believe in precedent. When I am told by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland that I am wrong, I tend to think that I must be right.

As for the Secretary of State for Scotland's point about the education expenditure guidelines, I accept that school rolls have dropped. However, every education authority in Scotland overspent its guidelines in 1984-85. Whether they were loyal Tory authorities or, from the Secretary of State's point of view, unsatisfactory Labour authorities, none of them could meet the guidelines. We have not yet received the outturn figures for 1985-86, but it looks as though exactly the same will happen again. I am told that Grampian will probably overspend by 4 per cent., even though it has remained within the guidelines. That is only one example. I could give others.

Therefore, it can be demonstrated that the education guidelines cannot be attained. The education service, unsatisfactorily funded though it is, is surviving, despite ministerial advice, because it is being financed at the expense of other services in the regions. I understand that if the regions were to meet the 1986-87 guidelines, it would mean a 6·6 per cent. cut, in cash terms, on 1985-86 —a cut of over £78 million. If the Secretary of State believes that such a policy should be implemented, he has scant respect for the crisis in the schools and the crisis of morale that is facing teachers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. I am very conscious of the time, and I want to make progress.

It is important to get across the point that we are referring not to money that may or may not be made available for settling the pay dispute but to the general budget for education. We are facing very substantial cuts. Any teacher would say that there are overwhelming problems over the implementation of the 16 to 18-year-old action plan because of the lack of resources.

The Secretary of State often comes forward as the ratepayers' champion. That is a very doubtful claim. We have referred to the cuts that have been made in rate support grant settlements in the past few years. Even a reduction of 1p in the domestic element is, I am told, the equivalent of 2 per cent. on the rates. It will have that impact.

The second order is another example of the hypocrisy of the claim that the Tories are the champions of Scottish ratepayers. The order is designed to provide special help for those who are particularly hurt by revaluation in the domestic sector. The Secretary of State for Scotland was no doubt a horrified spectator when his predecessor shot himself in both feet last year and got into a terrible, panic-stricken muddle. The Opposition remember clearly that in order to defuse the revaluation crisis the right hon. Member for Ayr produced £50 million out of the hat, paraded it, flaunted it and was widely believed to have provided that measure of help for the domestic ratepayer. Then the scheme was unveiled. It provides 100 per cent. relief, but it relates merely to that proportion of the rates that is represented by the excess over an increase of 300 per cent. in rateable value. It was a fraud. The Scottish

Office became the patron saint of poster sites and lock-up garages. As the figures are beginning to show, they are the major beneficiaries.

Whatever rubbish may or may not be spoken tonight, the Secretary of State will agree with me about one fact: that the £50 million turned out to be £25 million or £26 million. The reduction of 100 per cent. relief to 75 per cent. relief means that that figure is further reduced to £20 million. In effect, therefore, the Government are getting two years for the price of one. That should not be a cause for congratulation. I hope that the Secretary of State will look into the causes of the initial concern in his ranks. For example, I remember that the Solicitor-General for Scotland, who has left the Chamber, went public in his constituency and said that there must have been some mistake. The Minister said that it could not possibly be £50 million; that only £25 million or £26 million could be paid out. The Solicitor-General said that he would use his influence, reported the *Dundee Courier*, to ensure that the whole £50 million was disbursed. We heard nothing more about the Solicitor-General's influence. The Minister should make available the money that the Government advertised.

I should like to raise two small but important matters. First, I understand that the administrative cost of the scheme in the first year was £500,000. As far as I know, no reimbursement was made and there is no intention of making any in the coming year. That is a charge that falls directly on the ratepayers, and it should not.

Secondly, reimbursement for the money paid out has been made retrospectively at the end of the financial year. Why should it not be done at the beginning, or at least in staged payments? That might be planned. Perhaps the Minister could say something about it.

The consumer is interested in rates and services and the combination of the two. There is no doubt about what has happened to rates under this Administration. They have gone up and up. In 1981, the average domestic rate bill in Scotland was £199. This year it was £329—an increase of 97 per cent. Services have crumbled. Despite the Government's claims about profligacy and extravagance, expenditure has remained largely static, certainly in volume terms.

The inescapable conclusion is that the main determining, and by far the most significant, factor has been the cut in the rate support grant, which has had the cumulative effect that can now be seen in every part of Scotland.

I understand that the Secretary of State will unveil his rating reform package next week. We are deeply sceptical whether the reports are in any way correct. He knows that we regard a poll tax as utterly unacceptable. No doubt we shall carry on that debate when the time comes.

Whatever the reform package might be, until present trends are reversed, until the Exchequer contribution is adequate for the needs of the services that it has to support and until the oppressive legislation that has been put on the statute book is scrapped, the situation will continue to deteriorate. Our objection to the order is that it gives no hope of that reversal and shows no sign of a reprieve. It shows that, apparently, no lessons have been learnt. That is why we shall vote against this settlement.

10.47 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his first speech in his new capacity. He has given us a first-class lead and presented a very good rate support grant.

It seems to be my misfortune, as night follows day, to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

Mr. Canavan: Day follows night.

Sir Hector Monro: I can also see the dawn. The hon. Gentleman's speech reminded me of that old Irish saying, that the man who is not confused simply is not well informed. The hon. Gentleman was even more off the rails than he usually is on the rate support grant.

Tonight is good news night for Dumfries and Galloway. My right hon. and learned Friend announced today the new Dumfries bypass. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) has been so involved and that he followed the recommendation of the regional council and of myself. We therefore had the right line. It is warmly welcomed in my constituency.

The rate support grant settlement is good news too. I hope that we shall consider the housing orders next week, or the week after. Rural areas have at last received fair treatment in the housing revenue account and capital allocations. I hope that in the future we can look forward to relatively low rent increase and further housing developments.

Tonight we are discussing the rate support grant order. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Opposition Members do not understand that, in real terms, local authorities are spending more than ever before on providing the services that ratepayers require. There is continual talk of cuts, but the cuts are on the budgets that local authorities would like to have if there were unlimited spending. Hon. Members must recognise that if we had unlimited spending we would be back with the roaring inflation that was bequeathed to us by the Labour Government in 1979. It is because local authorities have that inclination that Governments have to restrict the amount of money available for the rate support grant.

For years I have said, on the record, that I have felt that the formula for the rate support grant—although we are now using the client group method—was unfavourable to the rural areas. Tonight I can say that the trend has at last been substantially reversed. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South, who has been much involved in these negotiations. I am glad to see from the statistics that the region that I represent, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), has had a 15 per cent. increase in its need grant. That is particularly welcome. The four districts in Dumfries and Galloway have all had an increase. Annandale and Eskdale are up by 13·5 per cent., Nithsdale by 13·2 per cent., Stewartry by 13·1 per cent. and Wigtown by 13·3 per cent. That is good news for rural areas, and all hon. Members should be glad that at last the trend towards substantial increases in the central belt of Scotland has moved further away, to where the money will be welcome.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman no doubt accepts that the overall cash settlement is up by only 2·2 per cent., which in real terms is a substantial cut. If these small rural authorities have done so well, is it not clear that it is at the expense of someone else?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, and it is about time, too. For a long time I have been saying that we want the rural areas to get fair treatment, and now at last we have it. That is why I congratulate the Government on accepting the argument that I and my hon. Friends have been making for years. With good housekeeping and authorities that are prepared to be careful in public expenditure, there should be no need for an increase in rates. Councils should have enough income to increase their expenditure and still keep the rates down to the level of inflation. Nithsdale has already said that the rates must be up a ha'penny, or 7 per cent. Good housekeeping and a little pruning would mean that they could keep the rate increase to the rate of inflation, or even to nothing.

The relationship between guidelines and needs assessment is moving in the right direction. I am glad to know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has been able to keep 75 per cent. of the increase that was obtained last year for ratepayers following the substantial revaluation. That is important, as is the domestic relief at 7p. A year ago it was standing at 1p, it increased to 5p and then to 8p, so my right hon. and learned Friend has done well to keep a domestic relief rate of 7p this year. When councils are careful, they should be nearer to a nil increase than in past years.

There is much criticism from the Opposition about the rate support grant, but they tend to forget that the settlement of 56·1 per cent. is substantially better than the settlement of 47 per cent. in England and Wales. They should also remember that there is a substantial increase in the Scottish settlement, whereas in England and Wales there was a nil increase, or a standstill, for rate support grant.

I hope that this will be the penultimate rate support grant order under the present system. I am glad to know that my right hon. and learned Friend will be presenting new proposals later this month. I am sure that they will be widely welcomed by the public, who will at last see that the Government are determined to sort out the nonsense of rates which has existed since they were introduced many years ago. The sooner my right hon. and learned Friend can introduce the changes, the greater the welcome they will receive.

10.56 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Local authorities in Scotland are at their wits' end to maintain essential services. To anyone who is aware of the problems they have had to face for the past two years, the idea that it could be improved, as the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) suggests, by good housekeeping and a little pruning makes one wonder what country he has been living in.

This year's rate support grant makes up only 56 per cent. of the Scottish local authorities' relevant expenditure. In 1976 it amounted to 76 per cent. of relevant expenditure and over 10 years there has been a decrease of 20 per cent. Since the Government took office, control over the action of local authorities has amounted to a virtual strangehold. They have taken powers to claw back rate support grant, to determine rate levels and to determine council house rent increases. We all know that

the Government's formula for determining what is reasonable expenditure is weird and wonderful. I do not wish to cover that ground again. I want to deal with the Government's actions and the effect they are having.

The levels of rate support grant in recent years have not been sufficient to keep up with inflation. In 1984-85, the increase was only 3·1 per cent. In this financial year, the increase is 4·9 per cent. The amount offered for next year represents an increase of only 3·9 per cent. Every year, the level of grant is being cut in real terms.

I have already said that grant has been steadily reduced as a percentage of relevant expenditure. Scottish Office Ministers often say that local government expenditure is in some way excessive and out of control. That is nonsense. In this financial year the local authority budget, after adjustment for clawback, is only marginally larger than it was in 1978-79. The increase has been in the region of 0·5 per cent. When one considers the level of inflation in the past six or seven years, it is clear that local authorities cannot possibly be expected to maintain services at a reasonable level unless they inflict large rate and rent increases upon the population. That is what has happened. It is because of the vindictiveness of the Government that Scottish ratepayers are having a hard time. It is not because of what local authorities are doing. The fault lies with the Government.

On the subject of overall expenditure, it is worth noting that, if all the Scottish local authorities kept within the guideline figures set by the Government for this year, expenditure in volume terms would be 2 per cent. lower than in 1978-79. Is that a realistic proposition? The Government expect the local authorities to bear the brunt of their attempt to keep public spending down, although the Government's spending in certain areas has rocketed. I shall give some examples.

Because of the failure of the Government's economic policies, spending on social security will increase by 25 per cent. between 1983-84 and 1987-88. Over the same period, defence spending will increase by 22 per cent. and spending on law and order by 21 per cent. Taking all Departments into account, the Government's expenditure will increase by 18 per cent. over that period.

The fact is that local government is doing a good job in keeping its spending under control, and the Government are in no position to point the finger at it in that regard. However, because of the Government's policies, local government is being made the scapegoat.

On a different but equally serious point, the level of grant for this year does not show that education authorities in Scotland will be in a better position next year than at present to make an offer to settle the teachers' dispute. It has been said that not one local authority can meet the education guidelines. What has the Secretary of State to say about that? It is very worrying, because none of us wants the dispute to carry on into 1986-87. If the Government have any intention to make extra cash available, we should be told. Otherwise, the prospect is not good.

The Secretary of State referred to the £26 million for the relief of rates. The figure announced at the Tory conference was £50 million for one year. That was the implication, but then the figure was apparently cut in half.

I wish to comment upon one interesting aspect of rate support grant clawback. Apparently clawback money in Scotland goes straight back to the Treasury. In England any such money is redistributed among other local authorities. Perhaps the Secretary of State can verify or deny that. If that is so, it is pathetic. Not only does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have to carry out the orders of the Prime Minister, but, having done so, he is not allowed to keep any of the spoils.

The previous Secretary of State has now been rewarded for his faithful, lackey-like service by being promoted out of the political graveyard that is the Scottish Office. The new Secretary of State has demonstrated in the past — over the devolution issue for one thing — that he is capable of making up his own mind. However, if he continues to allow Scottish local authorities and the Scottish people to suffer as much as at present, he will be no better than his predecessor.

11.2 pm

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said that local authorities are at their wits' end to maintain services. I wonder whether that stands up to examination. When the Labour Government were in power, both manpower levels and spending were lower than they are now. During this Government's period of office, local authorities have increased their spending in real terms, and most particularly and unarguably, have increased their manpower levels at a time when the number of pupils has been falling and education is the largest consumer of manpower. That is a measure of the extent to which the local authorities seem not to be at their wits' end.

I shall take Fife regional council as an example, as I know more about it than other local authorities. It is trying to ram a brand new swimming pool down the throat of Kirkcaldy district council, which does not want it. Fife regional council has no business doing that — [HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] In case hon. Members are not aware, recreation and leisure are the responsibility of district councils nowadays. The regional council is taking on 100 more social workers. One can see the advertisements in any appropriate newspaper. Although there are fewer pupils and fewer teachers it has increased substantially the education directorate. It is also expanding the strategic planning department. Those are the kind of things that Fife regional council is doing. When the right hon. Gentleman says that councils are at their wits' end to know how to continue services, it does not add up.

I welcome the rate support grant settlement. I was glad to read in a local newspaper that North-East Fife district council was pleasantly surprised at its allocation for next year. I understand that the district council has calculated that the saving to the ratepayer will be 1·7p in the pound because the district council will benefit in the needs element by the addition of 7·1 per cent. compared with what it had last year.

As that high-spending Labour authority, Fife regional council, has said nothing about the settlement, I can only assume that it is content, because it is always quick to complain when something does not suit it. I understand that it will benefit by an increase of about 6·1 per cent. in the needs element. That is perhaps why it has not said anything about the rate support grant settlement this year.

According to the figures I have worked out on the back of an envelope—my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong — if the expenditure of both North-East Fife district council and Fife regional council is at or anywhere near the guidelines, it should result in a rate reduction for

[Mr. Barry Henderson]

the ratepayers in my part of the world. I hope we will get that. I am sure that neither of those local authorities will give any credit to a Tory Government if that is the result.

I hope that Fife regional council, at least in this election year, will try to do something to curb its outrageous demands upon the ratepayer and perhaps just for once seek to make a reduction in rates. None of us will complain if the council takes the credit for itself, where it least belongs. It was only last year that it increased the ratepayer's burden by 10p in the pound. In the last 10 years it has moved from being the lowest to the highest spending local authority in Scotland. I welcome warmly the thrust of what my right hon. and learned Friend has done in the rate support grant settlement.

On the whole business of the client group formula, I recognise the desire of everyone to achieve a more objective way of determining the distribution of rate support grant. The client group formula is a useful tool to that end. As the formula has been increasingly used to determine needs and guidelines, and as the guidelines have become increasingly important in determining the distribution of rate support grant, they come close to being a cash limit. It puts a spotlight on the formula, which its perfections may not be able to deal with.

There are dangers in blindly following a mathematical formula. That is recognised by what my right hon. and learned Friend has done in the settlement. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that some hon. Gentlemen do not understand that the client group formula is important in the determination of rate support grant. Given the fact that the Government have recognised the need to limit the effect of the mathematical purity of the formula to be fair to authorities such as North-East Fife and Fife region, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider other ways in which the formula can be improved for the future.

One other problem for local authorities as they approach their budgets for the coming financial year is that, in the wake of the revaluation, I understand they will find it difficult to be certain of the exact product of a penny rate. In general that is a problem, but in Fife it will be a particular problem, given the uncertainty about the valuation to be placed on Moss Morran, which is a large, single rateable property. The relationship between the exact product of a penny rate and what I understand is the national average penny rate can have substantial effects on the way local authority finance is determined in the coming year. I hope my hon. Friend will pay attention to that when he is looking at the budgets put forward by local authorities. I thank him for what he has done in making a more just settlement this year than we have seen in recent years.

11.12 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): This has not been a happy year for Scottish ratepayers and next year will be even worse if this rate support grant order is passed. That is why I will vote against it tonight, as I have voted against every rate support grant order, irrespective of the party in power. I have made that speech before, but there is nothing better than repeating a good speech and showing that some hon. Members vote according to their consciences and not according to a party line.

Local authority independence has been eroded by continual attacks. This order is a continuation of that attack. During the period of office of this Government, the rate support grant has gone down by 12 per cent. That is a direct attack on the ratepayers of Scotland. My local authority, Cunninghame district council, has managed to control its expenditure on its own services. It is budgeting for an increase next year of only 1·8 per cent., at a time when the rate of inflation is around 5 or 6 per cent. That local authority has done its best to contain expenditure, but it has not been able to control the cost of money.

When fixing its budget last year, the Labour authority in Cunninghame believed in the statement by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer that economic policies were succeeding and that interest rates would gradually go down. Cunninghame district council estimated in last year's budget that rates of interest would go down. Now it finds, when balancing the books at the end of the half year, that it is £1·5 million out, not because of any extra expenditure by the council, but because the Government's economic policy is a shambles and in ruins, and local authorities have been asked to pick up the tab.

Not only is the council £1·5 million out—that was the figure I was given last week—but with the increase in rate of interest over the last two days and the increase that will come tomorrow, the authority will face an even greater deficit at the end of the financial year. I asked the Secretary of State what allowance for interest the Government made this year in the rate support grant. He told me that that did not really matter because local authorities would be compensated. I hope his hon. Friend will tell me what allowance within the rate support grant formula was made for rates of interest for the next financial year.

Mr. Ancram: I am glad to give the hon. Gentleman the answer to his question. An interest rate of 11 per cent. has been applied. As in past years, as my right hon. and learned Friend pointed out, the aggregate of rate support grant will be revised when actual interest rates are known.

Mr. Lambie: I am grateful for that information. It shows that the Government are estimating that during the next financial year interest rates will average about 11 per cent., yet we know that if the Government carry on with their present policies we shall have another year of high interest rates, and local authorities going to the open market will need to borrow at the rate of 15 per cent. or 16 per cent. There will be another deficit next year when we start to balance the books again. Will the Secretary of State make greater allowances for the increasing rates of interest on all local authorities in Scotland?

Not only has the Secretary of State reduced the percentage of the present rate support grant; he has also dealt with the rate fund contribution to the housing account. Not only will the ratepayers in Cunninghame be faced with substantial increases in rates; according to the figures given for the rate fund contribution of just over £2 million, we are facing rent increases of £2·62 per week. That applies not only in the local authority area but in the Scottish special housing association area which has rent increases of 11·28 per cent. at a time when the rate of inflation is about 5 per cent. At a time when the people who stay in the new towns, especially in Irvine new town, are facing unemployment on a scale that we have never known before, the development corporation has also increased rents, but this time by only 6·5 per cent.

If the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is happy about how his ratepayers will be affected, my

ratepayers and my constituents are not. They will face substantial increases of over £5 a week in rents and rates because of the Government's policies.

I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Dumfries say that he was happy that the Government were going to reform the rating system and introduce a poll tax. I remember that a year ago the hon. Gentleman told us that we did not need to worry about the effects of revaluation because the Government would introduce help in order to do away with the effects of revaluation in Scotland. We know that that has not come about.

When we were dealing with the differential between the valuation in Scotland compared with that in England, the hon. Gentleman said that that would be changed and that Scottish ratepayers would be allowed to make direct comparisons with similar properties in England and Wales. Again, the Government conned us. Now I am receiving letters and representations from the Scottish Rugby Union, a deputation came down yesterday from Kirkcaldy rugby club complaining about the fact that they were conned two years ago, not only by the hon. Member for Dumfries but by the Government.

The former Secretary of State caught himself on a hook. In order to overcome the uproar in Scotland following revaluation last year, he said that he would reform the rating system. The new Secretary of State was not party to that and I hope that he will look at it. In the past, whenever Scotland has gone it alone on local government matters and valuation we have always suffered. We have carried out revaluation nearly every five years in Scotland since 1973 and England and Wales has the sense to stop it in 1973. We know the ratepayers who are paying for that and who are feeling the effects of this continual revaluation of property in Scotland when there was a standstill in England. We know what those effects are.

If rate reform for Scotland is so good, why are they not having it in England and Wales? Why does it take the Cabinet only 20 minutes to decide that it will reform the rating system in Scotland by introducing a new poll tax? All that will happen is that when the Scottish people pay more under the new system, English ratepayers will be walking to the banks to bank their money.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Scotland, for once, may be in the van of innovation, but that is something that the hon. Gentleman seems to resent.

Mr. Lambie: I do not mind being in front when dealing with public investment, reductions in unemployment and extra expenditure on better facilities for education, but I object to being in front if it means that Scotland will be paying more and the English will be paying less. That is the point that I am making. We were conned last year by the Tory Government over revaluation, and we shall be conned again this year if they reform the rating system. The new Secretary of State has a chance to make his name and he should make it by scrapping the proposed system. If the Government are going to make changes, they should do so by giving 100 per cent. Government grant. That is the only way to reform the rating system. The Government should leave local democracy and allow local authorities to decide their priorities locally, and they should not interfere with the amount of money that they give.

11.22 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley: As the report from COSLA said, last year was not a happy one for Scottish ratepayers. This year looks a good bit better. I am pleased that the Government are retaining relief for domestic ratepayers, irrespective of the fact that it is lower at 75 per cent. We were promised £50 million. We spent £26 million last year. We shall spend £20 million this year. Does that mean that we will have two years for the price of one? Is that a good form of accounting?

I was pleased that this year I did not receive the same volume of protests about the rate support grant as I received last year. I appreciate the way in which my right hon. and learned Friend has been influenced by the vigorous representations that he has received from my district councils. I hope that those vigorous representations included mine. It seems to have paid off for the Renfrew and Inverclyde district councils because my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government have done nicely by us with the needs element, as both councils have achieved the maximum gains available. I notice that they are moving much closer to the guidelines, which must mean that they are indulging in better housekeeping.

The COSLA document this year was much more restrained than last year. That is a welcome change. There is a curiously worded passage in the document. It exhorts us to recognise local government's achievements, as if local government were an endangered species, instead of a greedy and burgeoning one.

A covering letter to the report states that the Government should not interfere in local government, as if we were in the process of disturbing the balance of nature by doing so. At the same time, it asks for our support in force-feeding funds to local government which seems to me a curious paradox. It is time that local government in Scotland accepted the need to abide by its creator's plans, though it may be a matter of regret to it.

I have said in the past that the Government have been a bit tough on local government, but I have never disputed the need for tighter controls of public expenditure, principally because there was too great a degree of uncertainty in the annual round of financial adjustments which, I believe, caused unnecessary friction between the parties concerned. Co-operation between the two layers of government is very desirable, and is something at which each in turn should aim. It has, however, always been a sad feature of the existing system that the public duty to call local government to account has had to be assumed by central Government, to the detriment of local government, despite its support for the ratepayer.

We are all extremely anxious to know what will happen next Tuesday with the advent of the Green Paper. I do not believe that it will necessarily lead to a restoration of bygone levels of rate support grant, but I think I can safely assume that the basis of calculation will be linked with a wider and more equitable spread of financing from the public. I hope that the new-look ratepayer will be freed from what is tantamount to an élite status. Ratepaying has become a hallmark of material success, or, rather, mythological material success. This is clearly nonsense for those on fixed incomes.

In thanking my right hon. and learned Friend tonight for what he has done at district level, I am conscious of the fact that there are some critics who will never be satisfied, but I am putting on record the fact that our

[Mrs. Anna McCurley]

Conservative Government have acknowledged the needs of my constituents, at any rate, even within the bounds of restraint.

11.27 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Listening to the contributions from the three Tory Back Benchers, and to the tenor and substance of the orders that the Secretary of State seeks to have passed by the House tonight, I find it very sad that these demoralised troops have at their head a new general, who has apparently decided that it is in the best interests of both the Scottish Office and Scotland as a whole for the war of attrition with local government to continue. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will find, in many of his other policies as well as these, that the recent indications of public opinion in Scotland, showing the alliance in second place and the Conservatives languishing at the bottom of the poll, will be reflected in the ballot box at the next general election.

Turning to what the new Secretary of State is proposing tonight, on the issue of the guidelines, it is apparent—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is an absolute expert on Scottish politics; he is geographically well placed to be so.

The first difference that distinguishes these ventures, as indeed the Opposition generally, from the Government is that—*[Interruption.]* I think that there would be more respect for the hon. Gentleman had he bothered to be here during the debate—the assessment of needs locally is surely a fundamental priority and principle of local government. The way in which the guidelines have been administered by the Scottish Office has done much to erode that principle and, therefore, to erode local government in practice.

On revaluation, the £50 million relief package announced last year by the Scottish Secretary has, as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) pointed out, been shown to be nothing more than £25 million in two lots, spread over two years. The effect of that, when we add the clawback by the Scottish Office from local authorities of £126 million last year, makes it an exercise in fraud for Scottish Office Ministers to try to pose as friends of Scottish ratepayers.

The Green Paper, which we expect shortly, gives the Secretary of State an opportunity to break new ground. He may feel that his predecessor has handed him a poisoned chalice in that respect. If he is to break new ground and go it alone without England and Wales, he would be well advised to take advantage of the computerised Inland Revenue system, and restore accountability to local authorities by coupling both greater financial autonomy through local income tax with reform of the electoral system through proportional representation. That is what he should do, if he wants to be radical and innovative. If he does that, he will have our support. The Saatchi and Saatchi so-called community charge, which is a poll tax under another name, is something that we would not support. In the same way, we shall not support the orders tonight.

11.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): We are all interested to hear the alliance when it produces its policies, and, although it took only 10 seconds to deliver, we heard something purporting to be a policy tonight. I found it difficult to hear, but I thought I heard the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) say that the alliance would take second place in Ross, Cromarty and Skye. We shall look forward to that.

Owing to the shortage of time, I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not answer the debate in detail. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) and for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) for their welcome to this year's settlement. Hon. Members may remember that last year there was a great deal of anxiety on conservative Back Benches. Obviously, this time the settlement has operated more fairly in respect of the district councils about which my hon. Friends were worried last year.

What fascinated me about the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was that last year he asked us to give help to the authorities that have received help under this settlement. Last year he was critical of the scale of grant movements, and he told us that we were moving too fast towards the client group approach on grant distribution. One year later, when suddenly he finds that his strictures, if not listened to, have been applied in the new settlement, he changes his tune. He now accuses us of political bias. Those who have gained by the maximum limit of 15 per cent. are headed by Midlothian, Edinburgh and Glasgow, which are not Conservative administrations as far as I know. As the hon. Gentleman represents a Glasgow constituency, I am surprised to hear him complaining that a 15 per cent. increase in rate support grant is insufficient.

More interesting, the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument was that we should apply the client group approach for grants because it would give Glasgow more. It would have other interesting effects. Looking at the list of authorities still well above the client group approach, this year Cumnock and Doon district council lost 7 per cent. on its needs element, but it is still 159 per cent. above its client group for grant purposes. Following the hon. Gentleman's argument, he would expect that grant to be reduced by that amount in future. Other councils will be interested to hear his argument. Stirling is 127 per cent. above client group for grant, Aberdeen 105 per cent. and East Lothian 112 per cent. All those authorities and West Lothian would lose a considerable amount of grant if we adopted the hon. Gentleman's strictures. It was precisely because we have tried to avoid such reductions and variations that we have fixed the limitations, which the hon. Gentleman criticised.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the rate relief order is based on a formula, and its cost is calculated on the basis of those who qualify under it. He asked about the payments that were made. They were staged this year, and will be staged again in future.

The hon. Member for Garscadden will have to wait until next week to find out about the rate reform suggestions. It is clear from what we have heard that if there is one part in the Chamber that has no intention of reforming the rates in any way, it is the Labour party. That is because the existing rating system suits high-spending Labour councils. It will never be in the interests of the hon. Member for Garscadden to reform the rates.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 180.

Division No. 45] **[11.35 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Silvester, Fred
Speed, Keith
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Ian Lane.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*

Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 4) Order 1985, dated 18th December 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

Resolved,

That the draft Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1985, dated 18th December 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Rifkind.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Representation of the People

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, dated 22nd November 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 28th November, be approved.

That the Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1985, dated 20th November 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 28th November, be approved.

That the Representation of the People (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, dated 29th November 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

Merchant Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Before dealing with the subject of this Adjournment debate, may I say that I understand that the Minister who is to reply to the debate has been elevated to Minister of State. I hope that that augurs well for the quality of the reply that I shall receive.

I propose to raise the subject of the implications for the United Kingdom merchant service of the decision by British Petroleum Shipping to end direct employment of its seagoing personnel. This is the latest and one of the highest profile issues to affect the viability of the United Kingdom's merchant shipping capacity. The issues involved affect the Government's role as a shareholder of the parent company. Despite their tendency to privatise, the Government still have a 31·7 per cent. holding in British Petroleum. However, they show an apparent lack of concern for strategic and conventional merchant shipping and for the need to maintain highly skilled seafarers. They also show a lack of concern for the maintenance of good industrial relations.

The White Paper, "The Falklands Campaign: The Lessons", referred to the crucial role of the Merchant Navy. Eight of the ships owned by British Petroleum went to the Falklands. I understand that two others were involved but did not go to the Falklands.

The Defence Select Committee, of which I am a member, examined these issues and reported in May 1985. We were anxious about the availability of merchant shipping to meet possible defence needs. I shall not detain the House by quoting the report extensively, but paragraphs 15 to 17 are crucial and concern registration. Paragraph 15 says:

"In our view potential legal and political difficulties may make it unwise to rely on the total which the Department of Transport believes to be available for requisition."

We drew attention to the disparity between what the Department thought was available in times of emergency and shipping strictly under the United Kingdom flag.

Since 1975, there has been a continued diminution in the size of the United Kingdom flag fleet. I am relying not on statistics made available to the Select Committee but on the General Council of British Shipping review of 1985. In December 1975, there were 1,614 United Kingdom-owned and registered ships of 500 gross registered tonnes and over, and deadweight tonnage of 50 million. In December 1980, that had fallen to 1,141 ships or 35·6 million tonnes deadweight. It fell again to 647 ships or 16·6 million tonnes deadweight, by June 1985. That is a dramatic decrease which should worry us all.

In their wisdom, the Government commissioned a report from the Seagroup—part of Lloyd's of London Press Ltd. — which gave projections of the United Kingdom flag fleet from 1984 to 1992. I shall not bore the House with the statistics. I simply want to know whether the 30 BP ships that are to be manned out to three agencies in particular are in the Seagroup report? If they are, BP Shipping's action undermines the report's view about the availability of ships in times of emergency.

Training suitable manpower also worries us, but I shall now consider good industrial relations. I appreciate that there is some merit in the company's view. It makes the claim, in a press release, that, by opting for agency manning and taking other actions, it will be able to match more closely the competition of independent operators. However, this decision, announced to the press on 8 January, was not one that had had a long period of gestation and consultation with the trade unions. I am reliably informed that the trade unions received this information by letter just minutes before it was announced to the press. That is not the behaviour that I would expect from any industrial company of any magnitude, and certainly not one in which the Government are a major shareholder.

I am not negotiating for the National Union of Seamen or the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers. However, I am sure that the unions, having taken cognisance of the fact that the company had lost £160 million in the past five years, would have been alive to the company's difficulties and only too ready to sit round the table to try to reach a mutually advantageous arrangement.

It is surprising that the company has gone for manning agencies. It has produced some figures showing the difference in cost. I quote from table 10, in a report issued by the International Transport Federation, but with figures issued by BP itself. It shows that there can be considerable cost saving from United Kingdom officers and ratings, including pension and social security payments. The cost per 225,000 tonnes dead weight tanker would be £790,000 a year.

The report also gives some agency manning figures, which are worth examining. A Filipino company would cost £450,000 per ship. One United Kingdom manning company would cost £423,000, another United Kingdom company £470,000, and yet another £554,000. Therefore, if BP wants to go for manning companies, why does it not discuss with the unions the possibility of going for United Kingdom companies? Why is BP going for the company on which it has decided? I severely disapprove of BP Shipping's decision. I believe that it has gone to manning companies so that it can directly attack the trade unions.

I quote from a document issued by Dorchester Maritime Ltd., one of the companies suggested by BP. Clause 8, on industrial relations, says:

"The Seafarer undertakes not to involve any industrial organisation in any dispute arising from the terms of this contract or arising from any practices on the vessels without first consulting the Company either by telex, telegram or letter and allowing the Company 30 days in which to give written replies. Further should any vessel be boycotted through any action by an industrial organisation or any of their affiliates, the Seafarer shall not assist or recognise such industrial organisation as having any authority or control over the Company, the vessels or the crew onboard and will act accordingly."

That strenuous provision effectively prevents a trade union from operating on behalf of its members. I am reliably advised that that clause is against the spirit and intention of convention 98 of the International Labour Organisation, to which I understand the United Kingdom Government are a signatory.

Dorchester Maritime Ltd. also states that the seafarer has to agree

"to provide his services to the Company on any nominated vessel trading on a worldwide basis. The Company has the right at any time to assign and/or transfer the Seafarer from one vessel to another."

The intention is that, although British Petroleum Shipping will continuing to own the vessel and it may be

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

under the United Kingdom and/or British flag—there are important strategic, defence and other distinctions—there is nothing to prevent such a seafarer from being transferred to vessels flagged by foreign Governments or companies. There are severe implications for the control of manpower in the future.

The legal basis of the document is extremely questionable. It says:

"This agreement shall, in all respects, be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of Bermuda and in the event of any dispute between the parties howsoever arising the Bermuda court shall have exclusive jurisdiction."

I am reliably told that in other agreements, where the parent company is registered in Switzerland, the law applying will be that of Switzerland.

The Minister has some severe points to answer in the debate. We know what has happened to the British flag. We know what has happened in terms of manpower and training. We see from the evidence given to the Select Committee by the British Maritime League that since 1974 there has been a loss of 100 vessels and 5,000 seafarers per year. Those are dramatic declines. We are concerned about the availability not just of manpower but of highly skilled and trained manpower. It is not sufficient just to man the ships, because, as we all know, ships are getting more complicated and the training of cadets and others must be taken into consideration.

Were the Government informed prior to the actions of BP Shipping? If so, what was the Government's response? Did they give any view of the strategic implications or the implications for manpower? What is the effect of those changes in terms of flag, management and crews on the Sea group report? What are the training implications of the decision? What are the Government going to do about British shipping? Are they bringing in proposals or are they leaning on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the interval between now and the Budget, to correct some of the damage that the Government's fiscal policy has done to British merchant shipping? What views do the Government express on the abrogation of convention 98 of a vital United Nations organisation, the ILO? If the Minister checks, he will see that seven of those ships went to the Falklands. Those ships were manned by British seafarers—all good men and true. A little over three years ago, the ships and the men went to the Falklands in what the Government considered to be the national interest. Are the Government content to ask those seafarers to sign such an odious, despicable agreement? The National Union of Seamen and the other unions require an answer tonight. That is vital. I earnestly await the Minister's reply.

12.5 am

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the agreement of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and of the Minister to intervene?

Mr. Stott: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) for allowing me to intervene briefly in this important debate.

Notwithstanding the tremendous contribution that my hon. Friend has made to the debate, I am sure that he and I, and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), agree that this is an unsatisfactory way of dealing with a major issue concerning our British merchant fleet. It is a tragedy that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West has had to raise such an important issue on the Adjournment of the House. It is an indictment upon us that we are debating it in a quarter of an hour, in a Back Bencher's time on the Adjournment.

All that I wish to say in my brief intervention from the Opposition Front Bench is that we are wholly dissatisfied about the way in which the matter has been dealt with. My hon. Friend has raised many important questions, which the Minister will have about 10 minutes to answer. That is not his fault; it is the fault of the procedures of the House.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): It is the hon. Gentleman's fault.

Mr. Stott: It is not my fault. We are discussing an important issue in an unsatisfactory way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West told the Minister of State that he is in possession of a document provided by one of the management agencies that presumably will take over one of our major fleets—British Petroleum Shipping, in which the Government have a major shareholding. It is wholly unsatisfactory in terms of industrial relations and manning agreements and in regard to the law. If British seamen have any dispute with the company, their only recourse to justice is by going to a court in Geneva. If the newly appointed Minister of State tells me that he is satisfied with that way of conducting our business—asking seafarers of this great maritime nation of ours to seek recourse in the courts of Switzerland—we have come to a pretty poor pass.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the matter. I give notice to the Government that we shall find a more appropriate opportunity to return to the subject.

12.8 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) deplored the fact that this matter was not given more than half an hour in which to be debated. There is ample opportunity, if the Opposition wish, to use some of the time at their disposal for this purpose. If they genuinely feel as strongly about it as the hon. Gentleman suggests, no doubt he will make an opportunity to follow up the matter in that way. In any case, he has shortened the amount of time for me to respond to the debate.

It is perhaps unusual for a Minister to welcome the opportunity of a debate on a commercial decision by a private company, but the issues raised by the present case are of national interest, and it is appropriate that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) should bring them to the attention of the House.

First, let me clear out of the way the red herring of British Petroleum being a company with a large Government shareholding. It has been the policy of successive Governments, of all parties, not to use their rights as ordinary shareholders to intervene in the company's commercial decisions. We have made no change at all in that.

British Petroleum Shipping gave prior notice to the Government, at separate meetings with the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of

Energy, of the announcement about its future operations, which it made on 8 January. My understanding of the situation is that after losses of £20 million in each of the last two years, and as much as £160 million over the last five years, BP Shipping is to hand over the responsibility for manning its bulk fleet of 30 vessels — 13 crude carriers, 16 product carriers and one LPG carrier — to three international agencies, but the vessels will remain under the management and operational control of BP Shipping.

It is also expected that many of the vessels currently United Kingdom registered will gradually be transferred to Bermudan registry, that is, they will continue to fly the British flag. *[Interruption.]* BP's specialist fleet of offshore support vessels will remain under United Kingdom registration, with manning in the hands of a United Kingdom agency. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will stop interrupting from a sedentary position, he will find that I shall deal with the points if I have time.

BP Shipping's 1,690 seagoing staff will be given early retirement and redundancy terms but will be offered jobs by the manning agencies. Apart from those who choose to leave the sea, it is expected that most seafarers will continue to serve in BP's fleet. BP Shipping's reason for taking these steps is the simple one of survival. Despite reductions of more than 50 per cent. in ships and staff since 1980, it has continued to make losses at the rate of £20 million per year in the last two years. It has found the operation of the two non-BP-crewed vessels that it has had on the Bahamian registry to be satisfactory, and £350,000 per ship per year cheaper. With such savings, it has a chance of matching the competition of independent operators more closely and operating profitably in the long run. Without them, it does not. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West must recognise that the fundamental choice is between having vessels crewed in a way of which he does not approve and having no vessels at all.

The differences in operating costs arise because for its own crews BP has to pay national insurance contributions, train cadets, make contributions towards pension schemes and, because of substantial leave entitlements, employ considerably more seafarers than are actually at sea at any one time. Manning agencies outside the United Kingdom are likely to have to make much smaller welfare payments to the state, they incur no training or pension costs, and directly at least they do not pay for leave. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East would stop interrupting from a sedentary position, I should be able to reply more clearly to his hon. Friend.

The move to agency manning will not itself affect BP Shipping's plans for the growth of its offshore support operations. The continued existence of a pool of BP marine expertise will also allow the expansion of the management and maintenance services which BP Shipping offers other shipowners and shore-based industries.

Of course, there are some aspects of the move that are of considerable concern. The loss of vessels from the United Kingdom register—even to a dependent territory register—is a matter of some regret. The ships remain no less an asset in time of war—and I shall revert to this—but the decline of our registered tonnage tends in time to reduce our influence in the conduct of maritime affairs. To the seafarers themselves it is, of course, a matter of real significance. They are faced with the loss of a range of benefits carefully negotiated in happier days, but the alternative for most will be no employment at all at sea, and I understand that the overall remuneration package that will be offered to them is viewed by many of them as attractive.

What other problems does the change involve? There is one aspect that gives us cause for special concern—the implications for the future training of United Kingdom merchant seamen and officers. BP Shipping has over the years made an outstanding contribution to the maintenance of the corps of United Kingdom seafarers, but it is not realistic to expect any commercial company to carry the burden of training on behalf of wider interests. — *[Interruption.]*

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to continue. He will not accept yes for an answer. I agree with the point that he made earlier about the problems of training. The closure of BP Shipping's training facilities comes at a time of increasing anxiety over the future supply of men for the United Kingdom merchant marine. Management agencies may be able to meet today's demands for United Kingdom officers and men, but they are not themselves engaged in training, and we have to ask ourselves whether they will necessarily be able to find British replacements as ex-BP seafarers come up to the age of retirement. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue, I have just two minutes left and I want to answer the questions that he asked.

In the longer term, this is an issue of significance for the defence of the country and as well as for standards in the industry generally. My Department, together with the Ministry of Defence and the General Council of British Shipping, has begun to look into the availability and training of seafarers, and this decision by BP Shipping means that particular attention will read to be given to training.

I should like the House to be quite clear that the fact that over a period BP Shipping will be transferring bulk carriers to the Bermuda registry has in itself no direct implications for defence. These vessels will remain under the ownership and control of BP and will be available for requisition in time of tension or war by use of the Royal prerogative as readily as if they had remained on the United Kingdom register. These vessels will be on the Bermuda register, but will continue to fly the United Kingdom flag.

The company has made it clear that no change in the pattern of its trading operations is contemplated. It will continue to operate in the north-west Europe area, and will remain available for defence purposes should the need arise. Bermuda-registered vessels are required to have United Kingdom citizens as senior officers and, as we know, BP Shipping hopes that sufficient other members of the crews will accept the new employment terms to ensure that British crews continue to man these vessels as at present.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The hon. Gentleman is reading a press release.

Mr. Mitchell: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that I am reading from a press release. His constant interruptions are causing me to have difficulty in reading my own writing.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Seagroup report included these BP vessels. The answer is yes, but of course the vessels will remain fully available in the circumstances

[Mr. Mitchell]

covered by the Seagroup report. The hon. Gentleman rightly points out that the vessels will fall into a category which has been identified as likely to be in relatively short supply for defence support purposes. The Ministry of Defence——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seventeen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BERKSHIRE BILL [*Lords*] *(By Order)*

Considered.
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

SWANSEA CITY COUNCIL (TAWE BARRAGE) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 30 January.

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the provisions of paragraph (4) of Standing Order 243 (Joint committees on petitions) be applied to the Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the House of Lords as the Joint Committee on the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill — *(The Chairman of Ways and Means).*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered upon Thursday 30 January.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 30 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug-related Offences

1. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted of supplying heroin or the possession of heroin with intention to supply in each of the years 1982 to 1985; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of drug-related offences during the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available, compared with the number for the previous 12 months.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): The available information relates to persons found guilty of or cautioned for offences involving controlled drugs. The total numbers found guilty or cautioned for such offences in the United Kingdom in the years 1982 to 1984 were 20,300 in 1982, 23,300 in 1983 and 25,000 in 1984. Within those totals, the numbers who were found guilty of supplying, or of possession with intent to supply, heroin were 210 in 1982, 260 in 1983 and 570 in 1984. Corresponding figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Mr. Carlile: As convictions largely depend upon the importation of drugs, will the Minister assure the House that, while the Government are rightly considering precautions against the importation of rabies through the Channel tunnel, they will also seriously consider the level of precautions to be taken against the importation of drugs through the tunnel? Will the Government be prepared to come to the House in due course and make a statement about the level of security against the importation of drugs?

Mr. Mellor: That is a fair point. Work on the matter is already in hand. There is no reason to think that security for the Channel tunnel will pose any greater difficulties than in the case of the other methods of getting into the United Kingdom. However, that is a matter worthy of consideration and it will receive it.

Mr. Fraser: Does the Minister realise that most of the people convicted of supplying heroin are addicts and that the police have success only when they catch a dealer who is rich, ostensibly respectable, and is not an addict? The real problem is that the drug squads in London do not have enough manpower to follow the leads up to the higher levels of supply. What is the point of banning overtime for policemen when one is trying to stamp out the serious drug trade in London? Will there be any change in manning procedures for drug squads?

Mr. Mellor: The Metropolitan police drug squad has already been increased in size, and authority has been given for a further 50 officers to be recruited. Mainstream officers are also engaged in work on drugs. It is no longer left solely to drug squads. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the strength of the Metropolitan police has increased by about 4,800 officers while the Government have been in office. When one adds to that the creation and increased

resources of the national drugs intelligence unit and the creation in regional crime squads of designated drugs wings, involving an increase of 20 per cent. in the strength of regional crime squads, I think we are taking the steps that the hon. Gentleman wants. Perhaps he will appreciate that in due course.

Sir Edward Gardner: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the importation and possession of heroin is a great problem, there is an equally serious, if not worse, problem looming up behind it and threatening to overtake it—the possession and importation of cocaine? Will he assure the House that every step will be taken to ensure that that traffic is stamped on as quickly and severely as possible?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I know that my hon. and learned Friend has had the same experience as me in seeing what is happening in America. An additional squad has been formed in Customs to deal with investigations into cocaine. We and others have warned about the problems of cocaine and the dangers that the United States experience reveals. So far, I am happy to say, there has been no sign of the great explosion in cocaine that some predicted. The seizure figure by Customs of 73 kilos in 1983 and of 79 kilos in 1985 does not show a great increase. But we are not complacent about the matter.

Mr. Martin: Has the Minister contacted his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State north of the border about the fact that, after public houses, council houses are being used to push drugs, which is causing a great nuisance, particularly in my constituency and, no doubt, in council estates throughout the country, to tenants who want a quiet life? Will the hon. Gentleman take steps to advise local authorities on what action should be taken?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman made an effective speech on that point two nights ago. I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is aware of what he said. He sits on the committee that I chair. The hon. Gentleman's point is important and will be treated as such by my colleagues in the Scottish Office.

Crime Statistics

2. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the increase in the number of crimes for the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available over the preceding 12 months.

3. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for the most recent 12 months for which figures are available, the number of victims of crimes of violence compared with the number in the 12 months ended March 1979.

12. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the crime figures for 1985.

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in crimes of violence against the person in the 12 months ended September 1985; and if he will give similar figures for the 12 months ended March 1979.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): In the 12 months to September 1985 the total number of notifiable offences recorded by the police increased by 5 per cent. Figures for the whole of 1985 will be available in March. The number of offences of violence against the person recorded by the police in the 12 months to September 1985 was 119,400 compared with 88,100 for the 12 months ending 31 March 1979. In percentage terms, the number of offences of violence against the person increased by 6 per cent. during the 12 months to September 1985, compared with an increase of 7 per cent. during the 12 months to March 1979. Information on victims is collected regularly only in relation to homicides.

Mr. Eastham: Do not those figures clearly show the dismal failure of the policies of the Government, who went to the nation promising that they would improve law and order in Britain? Has the Home Secretary taken notice of the petition deposited in the House yesterday on behalf of Chief Inspector Brian Woollard, who has been making inquiries into corruption in London, and makes an allegation that there has been interference by freemasonry? As he has already referred to the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, what action is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to take?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman certainly knows, recorded crime has been rising at a roughly steady rate for 30 years now. The difference between Conservatives and the Opposition parties is that we have a strategy for dealing with that problem, and Opposition Members have only slogans and divisions. I shall look carefully into the point about freemasonry, which does not arise from this question.

Mrs. Clwyd: does the Secretary of State agree that women are suffering far more under this Government from massive increases in crimes of violence and fear of violence? What will he do about that dreadful situation?

Mr. Hurd: I have already tackled that, as the hon. Lady knows, by increasing the penalties for attempted rape. The Metropolitan police in particular, as well as other police forces, have been devoting a great deal of attention, with our encouragement, to handling with greater sensitivity the crimes to which the hon. Lady refers. I think that that is beginning to have an effect.

Mr. Fatchett: To what extent does the Home Secretary accept that the Government's own policies contribute to those appalling crime figures? Are the Government responsible in any way for the record increase in crime?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my earlier answer, he would have heard that the rate of increase in recorded crime has been roughly steady for 30 years now, so his question does not arise. Neither we nor the country will take seriously criticisms on that point from the Labour party, which left our police forces in tatters when it left office, with morale at rock bottom. That Labour party still includes in its ranks people who base their activities on a desire to undermine the police and separate the police from the community.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are not the police complacent about crimes of violence in some parts of the country? Is the Home Secretary aware of a case in my constituency where the home of an elderly couple was broken into? The couple were savagely beaten by the attacker. They suffered bruises and were badly injured. One of them was briefly hospitalised. The charge that was brought was one

of actual bodily harm—a minor charge. The police gave bail without referring the matter to the court, and when I tackled the police about the case I was told that the chap had been given bail because of the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Is that not a disgrace, and will the Home Secretary hold the fullest possible inquiries into that case in the county of Cumbria?

Mr. Hurd: It is open to the hon. Gentleman or to his consituents to make a complaint against the police if they feel that they have mishandled that case. In my discussions and visits I have not found among the police any complacency towards crime, especially the attrocious kind of crime that the hon. Gentleman described.

Mr. Malins: Given that there is a great deal of auto-crime in London, will my right hon. Friend say whether motor manuacturers could be encouraged to introduce into new cars extra measures to prevent such crime?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. That was one of the fruits of my right hon. Friend's seminar at 10 Downing street the other day, when it was agreed that there should be a new British standard which would cover the security of cars. My hon. Friend is correct. The rate of auto-crime is extremely high. It is worth pointing out that 60 per cent. of the offences take place against unlocked cars.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public think that some of the sentences imposed for the most bestial crimes of violence, compared to those for crimes against property, bear no relation to reality? Is he aware also that some of our courts seem to the public to be utterly out of touch with reality?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hurd: I note what my hon. Friend says, and that he has some support from the Benches behind me. It is not for Parliament to lay down how courts should sentence, but to provide them with adequate maximum sentences. That we are doing. As my hon. Friend will be aware, we tried in the last Session to include in the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 a provision which would have helped allay public anxiety about lenient sentences. Unfortunately, that provision was thrown out in another place. We are still considering how to revive that subject.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: In the light of the serious crime figures, and as the Thames valley has the worst police-to-population ratio of any force except Norfolk, will my right hon. Friend guarantee today that he will seriously consider the Thames valley chief constable's request for 200 extra officers as soon a possible?

Mr. Hurd: We have, and there is good news on its way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Does the Home Secretary realise that in the relatively short time that the exchanges on this question have taken place there will have been a serious assault, a robbery and several burglaries? How does the Secretary of State reconcile that unpalatable fact, and the dramatic increase in the number of offences that have occurred since the Government came into office, with the Prime Minister's assertion that it is the Government's duty to protect its citizens from crime?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows about this subject. He knows better than to put that kind of jejune question. We have a coherent and defensible strategy, of which on the whole I believe that the country understands and approves, to deal with crime. It would be substantially more effective if it enjoyed the support from the Opposition that it deserves.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the electorate is becoming increasingly exasperated by the Labour party's attitude towards this matter? At a time of rising crime, surely they should support the Government's policy of putting more police on the streets and more resources into policing rather than criticise and undermine the constabulary, which is the hallmark of what the Opposition Front Bench says?

Mr. Hurd: That is the point which, in my less eloquent way, I was trying to make.

Mr. Kaufman: The Home Secretary spoke about the Government's strategy against crime. Is he aware that, in a war, a general whose strategy resulted in ever more casualties and ever more defeats would be court martialled, if not put up before a firing squad? Will he please explain why, after seven years of this Prime Minister, and after all the hot air and the public relations gimmicks, crime is now worse than it has ever been in the country's modern history?

Mr. Hurd: Prime Ministers, of whatever party, neither create nor abolish crime. I read in the correspondence columns of *The Guardian* that the Opposition are fumbling their way towards a policy on law and order. Might I suggest that they start by putting their own house in order?

Air Weapons

4. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the laws and regulations relating to the ownership and use of air weapons; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): We have no plans to do so at present. The controls on air weapons are already strict, and most owners use them safely and responsibly. Nevertheless, we will keep the situation under review.

Mr. Chapman: Is my hon. Friend aware that the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police concerning air weapons has increased year after year, and that there is plenty of evidence of increasing misuse of air weapons, especially by young people? Is it not time that the Government reviewed the complicated legislation on the matter, which relates to four age groups, and at least considered raising the age limit for the possession or ownership of such weapons? Will they require people to notify their local police station that they have such weapons, thus avoiding the bureaucracy of the certification system?

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about any increase in crime involving weapons that can cause serious injury, if not fatality. I hope, however, that he will be modestly encouraged by the fact that the rate of notifiable offences involving air weapons increased by 1·2 per cent. in 1984 as compared with 1983. I am not satisfied with that, but the problem is not so much lack of legislation as making greater efforts to enforce existing legislation. I accept the need for greater effort in the areas of greater need.

Mr. Michie: Does the Minister agree that there are responsible clubs which could control the use of air weapons, and any other weapons, but that some recorded incidents are not necessarily criminal? Bus drivers are sometimes sniped at. That happens in many cities and could be extremely dangerous. The Minister said that the number of offences increased by only 1·2 per cent., but there is much evidence, if the Government are prepared to seek it out, to show that there is a growing tendency towards the misuse of air rifles in such a way as could cause serious injury. Will the Minister institute a survey?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman must have misunderstood me. I quite accept the need to control and reduce the number of recorded offences involving air weapons. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that many sections of the population are at risk. We must increase information and training available through clubs to ensure that young people, many of whom acquire these weapons through their parents, are correctly instructed in their use.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that what I have drawn to his attention in correspondence and have had drawn to my attention by a constitutent—the possibility of buying air guns, crossbows and revolvers through catalogues available to the general public without restriction—is clearly wrong and should be considered with the greatest possible urgency in the interests of doing something about this increasing problem?

Mr. Shaw: I agree that there is a problem that may require consideration.

Mr. Soley: Is the Minister really surprised that the Opposition and his Back Benchers, some of whom went to see him about the matter more than a year ago, believe that the Government's policy on law and order has failed? Crimes of violence and other offences of that type are increasing faster under this Government than they did under any other. The Government have done nothing to clamp down on the availability of weapons such as crossbows, air weapons, guns and others. Will the Minister now act on our recommendations to him a year ago and set up some form of committee to consider the availability of guns and the corresponding availability of guns that are then required by the police? The matter is far too serious to be left any longer.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman will recall that offences involving firearms were increasing at the rate of 49 per cent. in the year that Labour left office, while 20 per cent. is the current figure. Substantial actions have been taken to restrain the availability and the misuse of firearms. The question relates to air weapons. I accept that more must be done to restrict the availability of air weapons and to ensure that persons can be trained in handling them.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that the murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher aroused strong feelings, which overwhelmingly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about air guns.

Police (Special Branches)

5. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the operations of the special branches of the police forces in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I am satisfied that the chief officers of forces in England and Wales take sensible measures to ensure that the operations of their special branches are carried out properly and effectively, having regard to the provisions of the Home Office guidelines on the work of a special branch issued on 19 December 1984. I pay tribute to the dedication and resourcefulness of our special branch officers.

Mr. Winnick: It comes as no surprise that the right hon. Gentleman is satisfied. Is it not interesting that while the Home Secretary and the Conservative majority on the Select Committee were satisfied that all was well with the special branch, abuses occur which come to light, such as the vetting of the BBC? Does that not demonstrate that on matters of civil liberties — I am not discussing the excellent work undertaken by the special branch against terrorism—there are abuses that should be put right?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman had his go at the Select Committee, but he did not persuade its members that his analysis was right. I have no objection to the hon. Gentleman keeping an eye out for possible abuses and drawing them to the attention of the House, but he has not proved his point today.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that he will pay personal attention to all the reports and statements that have been forthcoming, which state that the rank and file in the Tottenham area are disturbed by the events leading up to the riot and by what happened at the riot?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. Partly with that in mind, this week I invited the London executive committee of the Police Federation to come and see me, as the police authority concerned, not specifically to deal with Tottenham, but to discuss its point of view about the policing of London.

Mr. Ryman: Is the Home Secretary aware of the great resentment of police officers at special branch officers going to other police divisions without informing the head of the police division that they are visiting the area? That causes much resentment in the police divisions. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, like the flying squad officers, special branch officers wander round the country without prior notice, thus offending many local police officers? They can easily be identified, because most special branch officers have large moustaches and wear carnations.

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe that moustaches on officers are a widespread complaint. However, if the hon. Member has a specific example that he would like to put to me, let him do so.

Civil Defence

6. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to improve the emergency broadcasting system.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The main improvements involve the strengthening of installations at certain BBC transmitters and the extension of the wartime broadcasting service to include its local radio stations.

Mr. Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend accept the urgency of the need to press ahead with improving communications between local authorities and local

communities, especially now that it is generally accepted that civil defence personnel and facilities can be used for all major hazards, including civil hazards?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. We are pressing ahead and will push the matter through as fast as possible. My hon. Friend will be aware of a private Member's Bill on this subject.

Violent Behaviour

10. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent inquiries he has made into possible links between violence depicted on television and violent behaviour by young people.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office research unit published a review of the research on this subject in 1977. Work is in hand to update the review, and will be published later in the year.

Mr. Livsey: In view of that statement, will the Secretary of State consider publishing a consultative document which can be discussed publicly, as there is great anxiety about the issue?

Mr. Hurd: There is no doubt from my postbag, especially from letters that I receive from right hon. and hon. Members, that substantial anxiety exists. The Home Office receives about 20 letters a day on the matter. That is why I took an initiative just before Christmas. I am to some extent reassured by what the broadcasting authorities have said and done since then. The House will have a chance to go further into the subject on Friday.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public as a whole are sick and tired of the amount of violence shown on television? If the broadcasting authorities are unable or unwilling to deal with that problem, surely the Government must step in at once.

Mr. Hurd: Parliament has given the broadcasting authorities — the IBA and BBC governors — in the charter and in Broadcasting Act 1981 clear and specific duties which it has not given to the Government. Most hon. Members would agree that that is right, but it is perfectly reasonable that the public, including the House, should keep a close and watchful eye on how the broadcasting authorities perform those responsibilities, and draw their own conclusions.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Secretary of State aware that the BBC is currently discussing the updating of its guidelines about portraying scenes of violence? Will he consider making that document available for the Adjournment debate so that the House can discuss the matter and see whether there is a distinction between television violence which is vicarious and prevents the acting out of violence, and television violence which encourages violence? There is evidence on both sides of the question.

Mr. Hurd: I accept that. I welcome what I have been told about the BBC's intentions, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The House will have an opportunity on Friday, and perhaps thereafter, to express its views more clearly on the subject.

Mr. Lawrence: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that not only the BBC, but ITV, has this week announced plans to reduce the amount of violence shown on television programmes? Is that attempt to self-regulate the industry not extremely welcome and long overdue?

Mr. Hurd: It is extremely welcome.

Rape Victims (Compensation)

11. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to reconsider the amount of compensation paid to rape victims.

Mr. Mellor: The board is responsible for reviewing the general level of awards in recognition of changes in the levels of civil damages, and carries out such reviews when it considers them necessary. It would not be right for my right hon. Friend to intervene in that process.

Mr. Ashley: My question does not ask the Home Secretary to intervene in the reviews. It asks him to invite the board to reconsider the amounts paid to rape victims. Will the Minister please answer the question? While he is at it, will he consider whether it is reasonable to invite the board to take account of the long-term psychological damage which is imposed by rape and to seek information from organisations working with rape victims?

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman asks Ministers to intervene, which would be unprecedented in the 20 years that the board has been in operation. In January 1984 the board assembled a panel of 41 judges and senior lawyers who were invited to give an opinion on what should be the starting figure—I stress the starting figure —for rape awards, upon which additional awards could be made in particularly bad cases. It was only after consideration by that panel, including several women lawyers, that the present level of awards was set. It would not be right for the Home Secretary to intervene in this quasi-judicial exercise.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is an important but tiny strand in the whole vexed question of compensation payments made in a variety of different ways for a variety of different reasons? Does he also agree that there are serious dangers in following too readily the path followed in America towards high compensation payments in other areas, which simply attract litigation of all kinds?

Mr. Mellor: The purpose of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is to make awards on behalf of the community to people who have been damaged by crimes of violence. I am happy to say that under this Government the level of awards made last year had risen to £35 million from £13 million in the last year of the Labour Government.

General Household Survey

13. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information on the incidence of crime he derives from the general household survey.

Mr. Mellor: Information from the general household survey is used to assess the true incidence of burglaries and thefts in dwellings. For example, comparison of burglary figures with general household survey and British crime survey figures suggests that in 1972, 45 per cent. of

burglary offences were reported to the police. In 1983, nearly 80 per cent. of such offences were reported. This may be a result of greater confidence in the police, or insurance demands.

Mr. Holland *rose—— [Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have more than 10 minutes of Question Time to go.

Mr. Holland: Despite the figures that the Minister has quoted, he must be aware that household survey figures seriously underestimate the real incidence of crime, which is up 40 per cent. from 1979, at the time of the outgoing Labour Government. Surely the Minister is also aware of the correlation between rising crime and unemployment, especially in inner city areas. Will he tell the House what measures he will take to improve matters, and what measures the Government intend to take to remedy the undeflying causes of crime by bringing jobs back to the inner cities?

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to risk his academic reputation by making spurious claims of the kind that he has just advanced. The general household survey and the British crime survey show the existence of the dark figure of crime, that is, crimes which for many years have not been reported. The surveys also show that in certain sensitive crimes, like burglary, the proportion being reported has increased, suggesting that the kind of simplistic comparisons between reported crimes in one year and another made by the Opposition are superficial and not worthy of the breath it takes to utter them.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that the chief constable of Northamptonshire has said that he will have difficulty in following up minor crimes if his resources are not increased? Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is the duty of the police to investigate every crime that is reported?

Mr. Mellor: It is certainly the duty of the police to investigate every crime. The level of resources that they devote to each crime is a matter for local decision. We are reviewing the strengths of all police forces. There is provision for an increase of 1,000 police officers and civilians in 1986-87, and that is on top of the 13,000 increase in police officers and civilians that has taken place in England and Wales since 1979. I shall ensure that the claims of my hon. Friend's county force are not overlooked.

Mr. Dubs: However one looks at the figures, it is clear that in six years of Conservative Government the crime rate has increased by 1 million a year. The Government have no excuse for that.

Mr. Mellor: I appreciate the Labour party's desperation to win some spoils from law and order. It is depressing that during two Question Times in a row the Opposition should parrot this stuff. I suspect that they would be better occupied taking up the Home Secretary's challenge to devise a policy, rather than leave it to the editorial writers of the *Guardian* to do it for them.

Mr. Cash: In relation to the questions that have been asked this afternoon about obscenity on television——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid we are past that.

Police (Ethnic Minority Officers)

15. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the numbers and percentage of serving police officers from ethnic minorities.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): On 30 November 1985, 753 police officers —0·62 per cent. of the total police strength in England and Wales—were members of the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Alton: Will the Minister tell the House how many policemen have been recruited from the ethnic minority into the graduate training scheme? Given that that scheme will be used for the high ranking officers of the future, do the Government intend to try to attract more people from the black and ethnic minority groups?

Mr. Waddington: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the figure now, but I shall write to him about it. It is most important that the question should be on the Order Paper. I do not think that any of us underestimates the importance of the matter. We should bend our efforts towards attracting more members of the ethnic minority into the police.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Can my hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that in police recruitment aptitude and ability will continue to be the paramount considerations?

Mr. Waddington: That is absolutely right. I am glad that my hon. Friend has mentioned that point. In the Scarman report it was made plain that it would not be right to lower educational standards, nor would it be right to have quotas and give the impression that there are second-class policemen. We cannot deal with the problem in that way.

Mr. Boyes: What exactly is the Minister doing to encourage more people from the ethnic groups to join the police?

Mr. Waddington: For a number of years there has been an annual advertising campaign, directed not so much at those who will join the force but at the opinion formers so that they may preach the gospel that the police service offers a good career. Most important of all, the police should continue to take steps to gain the confidence of the ethnic minority communities, and, of course, hon. Members and others should build up the confidence of local communities in the police and avoid denigrating them. It is that sort of behaviour, all too prevalent on the Left, which destroys so many of our efforts.

Prison Staff

16. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with prison staffing levels and recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are satisfied that prison staffing levels and recruitment are sufficient to meet the general requirements of the prison service. Prison officer numbers at over 18,500 are higher than ever before, and represent an increase of around 17 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. In view of the Government's excellent prison building

programme, is he satisfied that there is sufficient and adequate provision for the recruitment of further prison officers to staff the enhanced prison accommodation?

Mr. Mellor: We took a decision late last year to increase the numbers that could be recruited in the present financial year. I assure my hon. Friend that the matter is kept under constant review.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister consider the reply that he has just given to the House? Will he confirm that he has had constant representations from the Prison Officers Association about the inadequacy of staffing in prisons, such as Winson Green in Birmingham, which leads to both convicted prisoners and those on remand being locked in their cells for 22 or 23 hours a day?

Mr. Mellor: I acknowledge that, despite the Government embarking on the largest increase in expenditure on the prison system this century, problems still remain. One is that the increase in the number of prisoners means that we are still below the authorised staffing levels in some prisons. I accept that that has unfortunate consequences in some establishments, including Winson Green. We shall continue to do what we can to tackle the problems.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend accept that morale is an important factor in recruitment and in the retention of prison officers already in post? Will he therefore order an immediate investigation into the scurrilous attack made on Monday in the *Daily Mirror* against prison officers at Rudgate prison in my constituency, so that their good name may be cleared quickly?

Mr. Mellor: The individual who made those allegations was himself a former prison officer dismissed from the service for dishonesty, so he obviously has an interest in saying such things. We have no reason to think that any of the allegations are true, but the matter is being investigated, as my hon. Friend wishes.

Police (Firearms)

17. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days' training per year is given to police officers on the use of firearms.

Mr. Hurd: The Association of Chief Police Officers, in consultation with the Home Office, has recommended to all chief officers of police in England and Wales that the basic training course for firearms officers should last a minimum of 10 working days, and should be followed by regular refresher training four times a year for two consecutive days on each occasion. Once they have qualified as authorised firearms officers, some officers undergo additional specialist firearms training; the length of such courses varies according to the type of weapon involved and the duties likely to be undertaken.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Home Secretary agree that this training rightly takes up a considerable amount of time and is extremely expensive? Is it not therefore essential that police officers should be armed on only the absolute minimum of occasions?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hurd: I had some difficulty in hearing the hon. Member—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hurd: —but I take his point. It is worth while telling the House that the number of firearms issued to the police in 1984—the last year for which I have figures—is down on 1983 by more than 16 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to attend a reception in honour of the Prime Minister of Israel and shall later preside at a dinner for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Mr. Nellist: Before the Prime Minister loses another member of her Cabinet to the Brittangate scandal, will she send a message to Mr. Rupert Murdoch of News International, one of the millionaire owners of Britain's undemocratic press, that he is not a first world war general filling the trenches outside his Wapping plant with rolls of barbed wire — *[Interruption.]* — and that industrial serfdom, where the workers become the property of the masters, should have disappeared from this country centuries ago?

The Prime Minister: He is, in fact, trying to get rid of restrictive practices which should have been got rid of years ago, as they affect the future of some of Britain's most distinguished newspapers.

Mr. Walters: The parents of Yvonne Fletcher, who live in my constituency, have understandably been very upset by the decision to allow the return of a member of the Libyan People's Bureau to this country, and indeed, to Wiltshire. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that this will not be looked on as a precedent for other members of the bureau?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the case is unique. My hon. Friend will be aware of the circumstances, which are that Mr. Ben Rahba applied for a visa to re-enter the United Kingdom in order to rejoin his English wife and children. The application was rejected by the Home Office because of his presence in the bureau at the time of the shooting. Mr. Ben Rahba exercised his right of appeal, and the adjudicator found in his favour.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether she is currently maintaining her Government's policy of allowing the pound to find its own level?

The Prime Minister: I have no change to announce in interest rates, if that is what the right hon. Gentleman means.

Mr. Kinnock: The question that I asked was very plain. I hope that, on reflection, the Prime Minister will find it in herself to respond to that question, because the whole country is interested. Could she then tell us if her policy, to which she is not prepared to make an addition today, is going to continue, and, if so, for how long?

The Prime Minister: The exchange rate is one of the factors that one looks at in continuing the policy of having as top priority the reduction of inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is highly desirable to persuade our partners in the European fighter aircraft project that this should be a European programme, bearing in mind the health of our defence industries, especially Ferranti, the largest private employer in Edinburgh?

The Prime Minister: When the European fighter aircraft project gets under way we shall have a radar competition later this year. When that competition is held, I am sure that Ferranti, which has an excellent product, will be a very strong contender.

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister, having lost control of her Cabinet, has now also lost control of the economy. Is she aware that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is now widely thought to be in favour of joining the European monetary system? If interest rates rise, as many fear will happen tomorrow, will she make it clear to the House that this will be accompanied by a decision to join the EMS?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will first get control over his own small party before he criticises others.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if pension funds were forced to invest in a national investment bank under the control of a Labour Government, that would inevitably lead to investment in loss-making undertakings, which would jeopardise the pensions of millions of people who are in occupational pension schemes?

The Prime Minister: Yes. We must ensure that that never happens.

Q2. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: If interest rates rise, will not the Prime Minister be ashamed of the fact that this country will have the highest interest rates of any developed industrialised country, except Italy, and that that will mean that mortgages will rise, which will have a devastating effect upon those with the lowest incomes? What will she say to those poor people who believed the Tory propaganda about a property-owning democracy?

The Prime Minister: It is not propaganda. We are gradually bringing about a far wider spread of house ownership and of share ownership than ever took place under previous Governments. Rises in interest rates are unwelcome. The Government have pledged themselves to take whatever action is necessary to keep down inflation. The markets have been unsettled this week as the price of oil has fallen, but the Bank of England has maintained its current dealing rates.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday marked the sixth anniversary of Dr. Andrey Sakharov's banishment to Gorki? The whole House—I venture to think without exception — condemns unequivocally the holding of prisoners of conscience anywhere in the world, either without trial or on the basis of trumped up charges. Will my right hon. Friend, at the earliest opportunity, make representations to Mr. Gorbachev about the case of Dr. Sakharov?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that we should have special memory for Dr. Sakharov's fantastic efforts to try to get some liberty in the Soviet Union. We condemn this kind of action wherever it occurs, and we admire Dr. Sakharov's moves for liberty.

Q3. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Does the Prime Minister agree that the present spate of massive takeover bids is bound, in the long run, to lead to even greater redundancies in this country and will put even more pressure upon smaller businesses to improve the economy of the country? Will the Prime Minister encourage her Ministers positively to discriminate in favour of the smaller businesses in this country, which are so beleaguered by high interest rates, increasing council rates and all the other charges?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's proposition that in order to increase wealth creation, and in particular job creation, we need to pay particular regard to the policies that affect small businesses. We try to do just that. The numbers of small businesses are increasing. The numbers of self-employed are also increasing. That is good news.

Mr. Harris: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that earlier this week she raised with President Mitterrand, either in English or in French, the very serious crisis in the tin industry? If so, can she say whether there has been a favourable response towards a settlement of this deep crisis?

The Prime Minister: I am very much aware of my hon. Friend's particular interest in this problem. I raised the subject of the crisis in the tin market. I believe that there is now an increasing amount of co-operation among the European nations.

Q4. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister agree with her hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) that the chief pressure for high rates in the shire counties this year is the Government's policy on the rate support grant?

The Prime Minister: No. There was a decision this year to move towards giving more money to the inner cities, and I am afraid that did cause great trouble with the shire counties. We are urged in the House constantly to give more attention to the inner cities, and we find it a bit hard to be criticised for doing what we have been urged to do.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. Friend aware that all the teachers unions, except the National Union of Teachers, seem to be willing to try to find an accommodation through ACAS? Is it not high time that the NUT started to put the pupils' interests first?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and I hope and believe that it is. I should like to pay tribute to those many teachers who have stayed at their posts honourably and conscientiously and borne the heat and burden of the strike action of those who have not.

Mr. Faulds: Did the right hon. Lady impress upon Mr. Peres the essential need for Israel to accept the validity of the PLO in any negotiations towards a peace treaty in the middle east? Will she try to make him understand that, if he does not use the moderate influence of Chairman Arafat, he, or his successor, will have to face a much less moderate and more radical leadership of the Palestinians?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows the position, and it has not changed. Mr. Peres is in favour of direct negotiations between Israel and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation within the framework of an international conference. I do not think that there is any question of accepting the PLO until it accepts resolutions 242 and 388, renounces violence, and accepts the right of Israel to exist.

Q5. **Dame Jill Knight** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is much interest in the talks that she had yesterday with Mr. Peres, in which one would hope that she did not adopt the belligerent attitude of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds)? Is she able to tell the House of any advance made or of any solutions put forward in regard to the middle east situation?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that I cannot suddenly come out with new solutions. One knows this particular aspect of world politics very well and the difficulty of finding a lasting solution which will give peace and security to all states in the region. The talks which I had with Mr. Peres were not only enjoyable but very interesting and constructive. I hope to visit Israel later this year.

Q6. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Prime Minister think that her current placing in the opinion polls is a reflection of the way that people feel about the way she runs the country?

The Prime Minister: I think that there is only one answer to that—no. I hope that we shall go forward to the next election and win for the third time with an even larger majority.

Q7. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Despite the recent pressures on the sterling exchange rate, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm her commitment to lower interest rates in the long term and lower income tax for the people of this country? Will she ignore totally the Opposition Front Bench, whose economic policy would bring this country to absolute ruin?

The Prime Minister: I gladly support the last aspect of my hon. Friend's question. We would all like lower interest rates, but there are other things, like the level of inflation, at which we have to look as well. We would all like lower taxes, and that means being very careful in budgeting for public expenditure. With regard to keeping industry competitive, it is vital that any wage increases should go hand in hand with productivity increases.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the Prime Minister find time to discuss with the Minister for Health the cataclysmic drop in the morale of nurses as a result of the implications of the Griffiths report? Is she aware that the disillusionment of nursing officers is creating a crisis in the Health Service? Will she meet representatives of the Royal College of Nursing at the earliest opportunity?

The Prime Minister: As I said during Question Time on Tuesday, I visited a large hospital last Friday. I did not find the situation as the hon. Gentleman reports it. I found good morale, and some nurses have the opportunity to apply for the jobs of managers.

Q8. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stanbrook: The two best things about the Channel tunnel project are that thousands of jobs——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am about to ask my question, Mr. Speaker. The two good things are the thousands of jobs that it will create and the fact that it will involve no expenditure of public funds. Will my right hon. Friend now look around and find similar projects for the application of those two principles?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend puts his finger on a most important point. Six and a half years ago it would have been unthinkable that we could agree a Channel tunnel scheme and have it privately funded. It is enormously exciting that we have done so, and we should look round for other similar projects.

Westland plc

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the outcome of the inquiry into the disclosure of certain information in my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January.

As the House knows, the chairman of Westland plc, Sir John Cuckney, wrote to me on 30 December 1985 asking whether Westland would no longer be considered a European company by the Government if a minority shareholding in the company were held by a major international group from a NATO country outside Europe.

This question was of fundamental importance to the company in making its decision as to what course it was best to follow in the interests of the company and its employees. It was therefore essential to be sure that my reply should be in no way misleading to anyone who might rely upon it in making commercial judgments and decisions.

The reply was accordingly considered among the Departments concerned, and the text of my letter of 1 January 1986 was agreed in detail by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my right hon. Friends the then Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and finally by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. My letter was made public.

Two days later, on 3 January, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence replied to a letter of the same date from Mr. Horne of Lloyds Merchant Bank asking him a number of questions, covering some of the same ground as my own reply to Sir John Cuckney. The texts of the letters became public that same day.

My right hon. Friend's reply was not cleared or even discussed with the relevant Cabinet colleagues. Moreover, although the reply was also material to the commercial judgments and decisions that would have to be made, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General was not invited to scrutinise the letter before it was issued.

On the morning of 6 January, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General wrote to my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence. He said—and I quote:

"It is foreseeable that your letter will be relied upon by the Westland Board and its shareholders.

Consistently with the advice I gave to the Prime Minister on 31 December, the Government in such circumstances is under a duty not to give information which is incomplete or inaccurate in any material particular."

The letter continued:

"On the basis of the information contained in the documents to which I have referred, which I emphasise are all that I have seen, the sentence in your letter to Mr. Horne does in my opinion contain material inaccuracies in the respects I have mentioned, and I therefore must advise that you should write again to Mr. Horne correcting the inaccuracies."

That is the end of the quotation.

I have quoted extensively from the letter which, as hon. Members will know, was published a week ago. As I have already indicated, it was especially important in this situation for statements made on behalf of the Government, on which commercial judgments might be based, to be accurate and in no way misleading.

That being so, it was a matter of duty that it should be made known publicly that there were thought to be material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected in the letter of my right hon. Friend. the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) of 3 January, which, as the House will recall, had already been made public. Moreover, it was urgent that it should become public knowledge before 4 pm that afternoon, 6 January, when Sir John Cuckney was due to hold a press conference to announce the Westland board's recommendation to shareholders of a revised proposal from the United Technologies Corporation-Fiat consortium.

These considerations were very much in the mind of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the copy of the Solicitor-General's letter was brought to his attention at about 1.30 pm that afternoon of 6 January. He took the view that the fact that the Solicitor-General had written to the then Secretary of State for Defence, and the opinion he had expressed, should be brought into the public domain as soon as possible. He asked his officials to discuss with my office whether the disclosure should be made, and, if so, whether it should be made from 10 Downing street, as he said he would prefer.

My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that, subject to the agreement of my office, he was giving authority for the disclosure to be made from the Department of Trade and Industry, if it was not made from 10 Downing street. He expressed no view as to the form in which the disclosure should be made, though it was clear to all concerned that in the circumstances it was not possible to proceed by way of an agreed statement.

My office were accordingly approached. They did not seek my agreement: they considered—and they were right—that I should agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected should become public knowledge as soon as possible, and before Sir John Cuckney's press conference. It was accepted that the Department of Trade and Industry should disclose that fact and that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made by means of a telephone communication to the Press Association. *[Interruption.]* Had I been consulted, I should have said that a different way must be found of making the relevant facts known.

The report finds, in the light of the evidence, that the Department of Trade and Industry acted in good faith in the knowledge that it had the authority of its Secretary of State and cover from my office for proceeding. An official of the Department accordingly told a representative of the Press Association of the letter by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and material elements of what it said. The company was also informed. The information was on the Press Association tapes at 3.30 pm.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was, in my judgment, right in thinking that it was important that the possible existence of material inaccuracies in the letter of 3 January by the then Secretary of State for Defence should become a matter of public knowledge, if possible before Sir John Cuckney's press conference at 4 pm that day. In so far as what my office said to the Department of Trade and Industry was based on the belief that I should have taken that view, had I been consulted, it was right.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has authorised me to inform the House that, having considered the report by the head of the Civil Service, and on the material before him, he has decided after consultation with, and with the full agreement of, the Director of Public Prosecutions and senior Treasury counsel, that there is no justification for the institution of proceedings under the Official Secrets Act 1911 in respect of any of the persons concerned in this matter.

In order that there should be no impediment to co-operation in the inquiry, my right hon. and learned Friend had authorised the head of the Civil Service to tell one of the officials concerned, whose testimony would be vital to the inquiry, that he had my right hon. and learned Friend's authority to say that, provided that he received full co-operation in his inquiry, the official concerned would not be prosecuted in respect of anything said during the course of the inquiry.

The head of the Civil Service did, indeed, receive full co-operation not only from that official but from all concerned. My right hon. and learned Friend tells me that he is satisfied that that in no way interfered with the course of justice: on the facts as disclosed in the inquiry there would have been no question of proceeding against the official concerned.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): After persistent efforts, we have managed to pull a statement from the right hon. Lady. It had a detail produced not by frankness but by guilt —unerasable guilt. That stain will stay with the right hon. Lady for as long as she endures in politics. Her excuses are completely implausible. She cannot justify or excuse the conduct of her Government in any one respect.

In this squalid story, we have been told that the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter was authorised — authorised by the right hon. Lady's office and connived in by her office, all, says the Prime Minister, with her subsequent endorsement. We must ask the Prime Minister, especially given her personalised and centralised style of government, where she was on 6 January so that she could not be contacted on a matter as basic and essential as this. She has a duty to tell the House what she was doing when her office, as she says, was getting on with the business by itself.

We have been told that the matter was authorised. What was actually authorised was a conspiracy by people in the Department of Trade and Industry and people from the right hon. Lady's office to disclose certain parts of a letter written by a Law Officer to another member of the Cabinet about a matter of important public business. That was their way, we are told, of putting it into the public domain. That was the route chosen — not by open means, but by subtefuge and dishonest means.

We have been told that there was an inquiry. Indeed, there have been answers in the House from Ministers, including the Prime Minister, saying that an earnest inquiry was being undertaken in the normal fashion. We have to ask: why was there an inquiry when everybody knew what had happened? Why was there an inquiry when everybody knew that there would be no prosecution because the dispensation had been given? The only precedent comparable with this act of contrived insincerity is the way in which Macbeth so fiercely looked around for Duncan's murderers.

We hear from the Prime Minister that an immunity was offered. Why was that the case when it was plain that there was to be no prosecution?

We have heard a shabby story—an effort to defraud the public. The fact is that the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and everyone else involved would have got away with it were it not for the fact that in this democracy ultimately the Prime Minister had to make a statement. They would have dealt with the former Member of the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for Defence, not by the means available to the Prime Minister, if she believed that he was acting contrary to the national interest—not by sacking him—but by trying dishonestly and covertly to subvert him. That is a profound dishonesty. For the Government to leak in order to inform and influence public opinion is normal. For a Government to leak in order to discredit anyone is shameful. For a Government to leak in order to subvert a member of that Government is the action of a Government who are rotten not just to the core but from the core, and they should go.

The Prime Minister: I totally reject much of what the right hon. Gentleman said. As he has seen from the Solicitor-General's letter, the Government had a duty to give accurate information, and not to give any misleading information, because that information could be used to make commercial judgments. Because there was a possible inaccuracy, it was important to get accurate information into the public domain in time for the meeting at 4 o'clock. I agree, as I have said, that it should have been done by a more correct method. The fact is that I was not consulted, as I indicated in the statement. Yes, I did institute an inquiry and the right hon. Gentleman would have been the first to castigate me if I did not. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition was heard in silence. The Prime Minister deserves a fair hearing.

The Prime Minister: I instituted an inquiry. It started on 14 January. I instituted that inquiry to find the full facts because they were not known. The inquiry reported on 22 January and I have made a full statement today, 23 January.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agree that if, as appears to be the case, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had been aware, or been made aware, of what he believed to have been the misleading information which could have seriously damaged the future of Westland, there would have been an overriding and imperative duty to correct that misleading information to protect Westland from further damage and that if he had not fulfilled that duty he would have been failing in his duty as Secretary of State?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. and learned Friend's analysis is the correct one. The Government had a duty to see that no misleading statements were made. Therefore, possible inaccuracies had to come into the public domain at the relevent time because commercial judgments were about to be taken.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Is the Prime Minister aware that her statement reveals yet another chapter of shabby and astonishing behaviour in the higher reaches of her Government? Does she recognise

[Mr. David Steel]

that she owes the House and the Civil Service an apology? She allowed nine days of a charade of an inquiry when she could have cleared up the matter in 10 minutes by calling in her colleague, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and her own press officer.

Why was the Solicitor-General not told that his letter was to be used in this way? Why was the right hon. Lady's colleague, the then Secretary of State for Defence, not told that the letter was to be made public? If it was so important to make the matter public, why was there not a clear Government statement of policy rather than the hole-in-the-corner method used? Is the right hon. Lady aware that, if she were living in the real world outside and this inquiry had been conducted, she would now be on a charge of wasting police time?

The Prime Minister: The inquiry was set up to establish the facts——

Hon. Members: You knew.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If I had refused demands for an inquiry, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) would have criticised me. The inquiry established many facts which were not known to me. The right hon. Gentleman said that I could have cleared up the matter without an inquiry. That is not what he would have said had I failed to follow that course.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are Conservative Members whose first consideration in this matter is the integrity of Government? Is she satisfied that the statement that she has made this afternoon has enhanced the integrity of her Government?

The Prime Minister: I have tried, having set up an inquiry and received the full report yesterday, to give as full an account as I possibly can, because the House deserves to have it.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Does the right hon. Lady recall that a week ago, when I asked her about it, she said that the inquiry was going ahead but it was not the custom in any sense to make a report to the House, and she was not going to do so? When she gave that answer to the House and drew a veil over the proceedings, saying that the inquiry was going to proceed, she must have known all the facts. So she was concealing the truth from the House and the country. When will she apologise for that?

The Prime Minister: No, the right hon. Gentleman is not correct. I did not know all the facts, and that is why an inquiry was set up. It is not the usual tradition or custom to give the outcome of such inquiries. There have been rare exceptions when that has been the case. One such exception was on 1 July 1976, when the results of an inquiry were published and a statement made about the disclosure of information regarding child benefit. When I got the result and the report of the inquiry, I knew full well that it would have to be one of the exceptions, when a full statement would have to be made. I have made such a full statement because that was what the House wanted and required.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we need lessons in leaking, we have only to read the Crossman and Castle diaries, from which we would learn that previous Labour Governments leaked like sieves?

The Prime Minister: I think that there would have been a different way had there been more time. Hon. Members should remember that there was a time constraint. It was urgent because of that meeting at 4 o'clock that afternoon.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that, as I listen to and watch this tawdry saga rattle on, I no longer care about the relationships between Trade and Industry Ministers and industrialists? I no longer care whether the machinery of Government is being run properly. All that I know is that if as Home Secretary, I had set up an inquiry, and people came back and said, "But, sir, you authorised it", I should have resigned.

The Prime Minister: No. I have, in fact, in a long statement, given the facts, I hope, showing that I was not consulted. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will have the decency to accept that statement.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): If what I said in the letter, which was apparently so difficult, caused such concern, as it was in the hands of No. 10 and the Department of Trade and Industry on the Friday afternoon, and there was no protest from colleagues about its contents, and as the first that I heard of concern was late on the Saturday night, when the Solicitor-General told me that he would be writing on the Monday, would it not have been possible for colleagues to have considered, discussed and perhaps even agreed any withdrawal of anything in my letter that was misleading? As I did respond to the Solicitor-General, and as the text of his letter has been published, would it not be now right for the text of my reply to be published as well? Does the Prime Minister accept that every word of the letter that I sent to the European consortium stands uncorrected by any statement by this Government?

The Prime Minister: The problem would never have arisen had my right hon. Friend cleared his letter with the Solicitor-General because it was upon the basis of that letter that commercial judgments would have been made. My right hon. Friend did not do that. He knew full well that I had cleared every word of my letter because it was thought that it might be included in or material to the prospectus. Had my right hon. Friend cleared his letter, this problem would never have arisen.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Will the Prime Minister now tell the House when her office told her that it had given cover to the Secretary of State's office to reveal the letter? Did that happen on 6 or 7 January? When did that happen, and why did she not tell the House as soon as she knew that her office had been involved in the leak? How can the Prime Minister continue to hold the high office that she does when she constituted a leak inquiry in the full knowledge that her office, and by implication she herself, was fully involved in this whole sordid affair?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has fully taken into account every single thing in my statement. The inquiry was set up to establish the

facts. An enormous number of the facts were not known to me until yesterday—22 January—when I received the results of the inquiry.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): My right hon. Friend will be aware that many right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, like the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), are not really interested in listening to the facts of the full account given by my right hon. Friend. What view does my right hon. Friend think that the House might have taken of any Minister in any Government placed in such an invidious situation by the action of a colleague who had failed in his duty to ensure that correct information was made public as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it would have been much easier, as the facts were commercially sensitive, if the relevant letters had been cleared as mine was with the Solicitor-General. It was vital to have accurate information in the public domain because we knew that judgments might be founded upon that and that the Government could be liable if wrong judgments were made as a result of misleading information. It was to get that accurate information to the public domain that I gave my consent.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): The Prime Minister said that it was an open decision taken by No. 10 to release the letter to the Press Association. Did the Prime Minister see Mr. Chris Moncrieff on the "9 o'clock news" on television last night? Mr. Moncrieff said that there was no way in which he would reveal any details about that letter, about who or where it came from. Is not the right hon. Lady aware that there is no more honourable a member of the Press Gallery than Mr. Moncrieff? Why should Mr. Moncrieff say those words in contradiction to what the Prime Minister has told the House this afternoon?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that there is a contradiction. I have set out the full facts as a result of the inquiry and I have set them out extremely carefully and accurately. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will consider them with the same care that I have given to expressing them.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that this is probably the House of Commons at its worst when political parties which hope to obtain power and destroy the prosperity that the Government have created wish to make bogus points pretending that they are matters of principle? Should not those parties consult their consciences?

The Prime Minister: I repeat that the report of the inquiry was submitted to me on 22 January. On the basis of the report of that inquiry, most of the facts in which were new to me, I have faithfully reported to the House.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): Is the right hon. Lady aware that as she and her Government sink deeper into the bog of deceit and chicanery, almost her only remaining memorable words will be that there were commercial decisions involved, and that Governments before hers have been activated by considerations higher than that?

The Prime Minister: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says, but when commercial decisions and different reconstructions are made on the basis of a prospectus, legal obligations follow and information should not be misleading. I should have hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would accept that.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): When the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry addressed the House at length last week, did he know that he had authorised the leak?

The Prime Minister: The inquiry was under way. It has now reported and given the facts.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When did the Prime Minister's press office first tell her what it had done?

The Prime Minister: I have given as full an account —*[Interruption.]*—of the inquiry that I established to establish the facts. I have said that I was not consulted at the time.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): Will my right hon. Friend take it from me, as one who worked as a political correspondent in this building for 13 years, that the events which took place in the Department of Trade and Industry, which she has outlined, differ not one jot from the regular practice of Labour Members when they were in government? Will she take it from me that, if there is anger and criticism on the Conservative Benches, much of it relates to the way in which a comparatively straightforward issue is being blown up into so grotesque a debate?

The Prime Minister: Because of the duty to see that accurate information on a commercially sensitive matter was in the public domain, the decision was taken. I have said that I was not consulted at the time. I set up an inquiry to establish the facts. It has established them.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In view of this afternoon's exchanges, does the Prime Minister consider that in six months' time she will still have the same team and that she will be captain of that team?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I wonder whether I may make a comment as a Back-Bencher who has never understood the workings of the official or unofficial channels or the difference between an official statement or a statement attributed to a spokesman. The information that was released was of such importance that it should have been released at that time by whatever means.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is making a comment on the practice of non-attribution. I accept that many comments could be made about that.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Prime Minister, who has always sought credit for being the Prime Minister who is always on the job, answer one simple question? When was she told by her officials of their involvement in the agreement to disclose the Solicitor-General's letter by the Department of Trade and Industry?

The Prime Minister: A vast number of the facts in that report were not given to me until yesterday. I am not going to tease out what was and what was not. A number of the facts which came in that report were not known to me until yesterday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must bear in mind that we have business questions after this and that this is an Opposition day with two important debates. I propose to allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While there may be some hon. Members on both sides of the House who think that in this fast-moving situation a public statement would have been preferable to an unofficial leak, is it not wrong to allow disagreements on this matter to distract us from the fact that thousands of jobs could have been put at risk if the Government had allowed the board to take a decision on the basis of conflicting advice from different Departments? Now that this matter has been disposed of, should we not let Westland get on with the job?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the points in my hon. Friend's question about the public statements and allowing Westland now to get on with the job.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): As it is obvious that the whole episode was conceived to get rid of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), whose job was filled within 10 minutes of his leaving the Cabinet, will the Prime Minister tell us what he did wrong to merit such treatment?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has forgotten that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) took his own decision.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I was in my constituency on Friday and Saturday and that a large number of — *[Interruption]*—did not mention Westland to me? Is she further aware that in my postbag I did not receive one letter on the subject? Has not the matter been blown up by the press and seized on by the Opposition who are short of ammunition to use against the Government?

The Prime Minister: I heard two thirds of what my hon. Friend said and agreed with it wholly. I am sure that the other one third was marvellous.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Prime Minister aware that, instead of the robust, fighting statement from her that we were promised by the press, we have had a shoddy, pathetic statement which will not convince most people but which is a perfect illustration of the deceitful way that the Government go about their business? Is she further aware that, while we are, of course, all pleased that no civil servant will be used as a scapegoat, it is plain that if the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had the least idea of what honour meant, he would have resigned by now?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has omitted to mention the fact that I deliberately set up an inquiry to establish the facts. It has established the facts. I have reported to the House upon them within a day of receiving the report.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): As it was the Government's clear, collective decision before Christmas that Westland's future should rest with the decision of the shareholders and the company, how did my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Defence come to write that extraordinary letter to the chairman of a merchant bank which was acting on behalf of one of the parties involved with the potential rescue? In those circumstances, was it not right for the Law Officer and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take extraordinary measures to give the true and accurate facts?

The Prime Minister: It was a unique situation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had a duty to see that the facts were available at the relevant meeting. It would have been better if we had all followed the same procedure during that difficult and sensitive period and cleared our letters with other Departments and with the Solicitor-General.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On this issue and many others, have not the Government become one where the merest assertion of Prime Ministerial power and patronage is deemed sufficient to sweep aside principles and honour?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. There are some who would allege that Prime Ministerial power was not sufficiently in evidence during part of the incident.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all hon. Members would prefer accurate information to be placed in the public domain? The information had to be accurate for the shareholders of Westland. Would it not have been better if, instead of leaking a small part of the Solicitor-General's letter to do the most damage to a colleague, there had been a delay so that the reply of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), which was accepted by the Solicitor-General, and the evidence for which the Solicitor-General had asked, could also be released so that the shareholders could make a proper judgment?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is essential to get into the public domain the fact that there were possible inaccuracies which were relevant to that situation. I accept at once that it would have been better if a statement had been made or if the information had been released in a different way.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Prime Minister has given us certain detailed information as to the factual accuracy of what happened. Can the Prime Minister help me as I am a layman and not a lawyer and, as I understand it, the Solicitor-General's expertise is in legal matters? What vital legal consideration was at stake on this issue? Did the Solicitor-General know that his letter would be leaked?

The Prime Minister: In the letter which I quoted, and which the hon. Gentleman knows has been released fully into the public domain, the Solicitor-General said, in respect of what my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence had written:

"It is foreseeable that your letter will be relied upon by the Westland Board and its shareholders.

Consistently with the advice I gave to the Prime Minister on 31 December, the Government in such circumstanes is under a duty not to give information which is incomplete or inaccurate in any material particular."

That is because of the prospectus point.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Prime Minister aware that when in future the people of Britain examine these days, they will say that the Prime Minister did not tell the truth? Is the Prime Minister aware that in 1963 Mr. Profumo, in admitting to the House that he had deliberately misled it, was found to be in contempt, and that he admitted his contempt? Does the Prime

Minister not accept that this matter would be best dealt with by the Committee of Privileges, which is in a position to find out the nature of the contempt that has taken place?

The Prime Minister: I totally reject and resent the hon. Gentleman's assumption.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): Is the Prime Minister aware that, whatever the faults of the Government in handling this situation—and there have been grave faults — nothing justifies the farrago, the hypocrisy, the humbug and the cant that we have had to endure from right hon. and hon. Labour Members?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Throughout, I thought it absolutely vital that, as Westland had the choice, it should be able to make that choice on the basis of accurate, and not misleading, information. That will continue to be our policy.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does the Prime Minister think that it should need an inquiry for her to learn what had been authorised by a member of her Cabinet?

The Prime Minister: Had I attempted not to have an inquiry and said, "I will do it internally," right hon. and hon. Gentlemen opposite would have been the first to criticise.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the general judgment will be that we have had a candid speech? It was clearly in the national interest, and in the interest of the company, that the information should have been discussed. All we are talking about is the manner of the disclosure, and that is an essentially trivial and minor matter. Does my right hon. Friend also accept that the electorate will not easily forget those who perpetuate this matter out of narrow, personal and political interest?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I only add one thing—I wish that the manner of the disclosure had been different and more orthodox.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Prime Minister has told the House that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry authorised what she called "material elements" in the Solicitor-General's letter, and not the whole letter. The Prime Minister said that this was covered by Downing street. Can the right hon. Lady tell the House to whom Mr. Ingham is accountable and who decides his standing orders?

The Prime Minister: I have looked carefully at the statement, and I ask the hon. Gentleman to look carefully at the statement to see what was agreed and what was accepted. It was drafted absolutely in accordance with the report that I received. I should like to say that Mr. Ingham has served successive Governments with devotion and dedication, and I have great confidence in him.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): My right hon. Friend did not mention this in her statement, but may we take it that the writer of the letter, the Solicitor-General, gave his approval in advance that part of the letter should be selectively leaked to the press?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, and I deeply regret that.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Prime Minister said that she feels that the information in the letter could have been made public in other ways than through a leak. Can the Prime Minister say in what ways it should have been given to the press?

The Prime Minister: It is now a hypothetical question. The alternative way would have been to make a straight statement. As the hon. Gentleman knows, things were not easy at that time. The people concerned—I say again that I was not consulted—were up against a severe time constraint, as I said in the statement.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend find it remarkable that the Opposition's indignation on the question of leaks is selective? Why, for instance, do we not hear about the leak of Sir Raymond Lygo's letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? All this hot air amounts to the fact that if a leak will damage the Government the Opposition will highlight it, and if it does not damage the Government they will ignore it completely.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I repeat again that I believe it was right not to have potentially misleading information at a time when important commercial decisions were about to be taken which involved the future of a particular company.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Prime Minister give the House an assurance now that when she has "teased out" the details, as she describes them, she will tell the House exactly when she was told of her officers' involvement in the disclosure?

The Prime Minister: I set up an inquiry to find out the facts. I discovered most of the facts when the inquiry had been reported.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It has been known for many years that the people who stand in the greatest danger in this place are Lobby journalists. They risk being run over and tripped up by Cabinet Ministers and others trying to tell them secrets. Of course it would have been better to make an open statement at the time, but we are making too much fuss about a tiny company—one about the size of a moderate hotel in north London. It is time that we got on with some proper business.

The Prime Minister: As I understood it, we had a clear duty to see that accurate and not misleading information was put into the public domain at the time. My right hon. and learned Friend carried out that duty, and I agree that his judgment of getting it into the public domain was right, but I did not like the way in which it was done.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Because of the wholly unsatisfactory and unconvincing nature of the Prime Minister's statement and replies this afternoon, I wish to give you formal notice that I shall, at the appropriate time this afternoon, seek leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have a statement to make.

Departmental Minute

4.20 pm

Mr. Speaker: Following points of order yesterday, I have looked at the further document handed in by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) yesterday which purports to be an extract from the official minute of the meeting held on 17 October between the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Sir John Cuckney. I note that there are only minor differences between this extract, and the words quoted by the hon. Member from the minute which he said he was using when he put his original point of order to me on Monday.

These differences do not affect the ruling I have already given that the passage in the speech of the Secretary of State, of which complaint has been made, was not a quotation. It is to be expected that if an accurate account is to be given to the House of a meeting, doubtless some words will be found to be common to both the account and any record of that meeting. But our rule is concerned solely with quotation, and I have ruled that there was no quotation on this occasion.

I confirm what I said yesterday. I am not responsible for looking behind what is said in the House to check whether words used by Ministers are also to be found in official documents. It would put an impossible burden on any Speaker to ask him to do that. I intend to continue to uphold the house's rule on this matter as set out in "Erskine May" which has now been quoted several times, and in so doing, I shall be continuing to act in exactly the same way as my predecessors have done.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have made my ruling and nothing arises.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I merely wish to thank you for your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have another point of order altogether.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it after the business statement.

Business of the House

4.22 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a business statement. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 27 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Airports Bill.

TUESDAY 28 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

Motion on the London Regional Transport (Levy) Order.

WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY — Opposition Day (5th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on a motion in the name of the leader of the Liberal party. The subject for debate to be announced.

There will be a debate on a motion to approve the recommendations of the House of Commons (Services) Committee Report 1984-85 relating to research assistants.

THURSDAY 30 JANUARY—There will be a debate on the Army on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 31 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Housing and Planning Bill.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. When are we likely to have a debate on the public expenditure White Paper? Will he reassure us that there will be a debate on the White Paper on the Channel fixed link well before the signing of the treaty between France and Britain in about three weeks' time? Does he agree that it would be intolerable if Britain were tied in to a binding treaty before Parliament had had a chance to give its view on the issue and vote on it?

Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that there is an early statement on Denmark's position in the EEC now that the Danish Parliament has rejected the reform package? Finally, when will the House get an opportunity to debate the Green Paper on rate reform?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps I might answer the right hon. Gentleman's questions in reverse order. A statement will be made on the rate reform proposals. Perhaps through the usual channels we could then consider the appropriate time for a debate. I shall of course draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to what the right hon. Gentleman said about Denmark and the EC in the context of the reform package. I recognise the continuing interest for another debate on the Channel tunnel in the context of the White Paper. I do not think that there is any likelihood of the treaty becoming effective before the House has considered the matter. Finally, I hope that we might be able to consider further through the usual channels a debate on public expenditure.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My right hon. Friend is aware that the textile and clothing industries employ one in 10 of those employed in manufacturing in Britain. I am sure that he is also aware that the multi-fibre arrangement is at a critical stage. If the Danish Parliament is able to stand up for the best interests of the Danish people, will he ensure that this Parliament has an opportunity to express its views on how the MFA is going and the European approach before any agreement is signed?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about some of the European Commission's proposals. The best thing that I can do is refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Would it be convenient for the Leader of the House to know that, in view of the number of questions that the Prime Minister has just failed to answer, I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) intend to provide the House with an opportunity to debate the matter further next Wednesday?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for filling the tantalising gap that had been left in my reference to Wednesday's business.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Does my right hon. Friend remember that on 16 December we had a debate on science which was rather heavily interrupted by two very long statements? Is he aware that, since then, three important scientific publications have been put before the House? May we have another debate in Government time to discuss these matters fully and effectively?

Mr. Biffen: Of course I should like to consider the request of my hon. Friend, embellished as he now is with a knighthood. However, I do not want to give rise to too high expectations for too soon.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Leader of the House remember being in the Chamber on Tuesday when the Secretary of State for Social Services made a very bad and unsatisfactory statement about Crown immunity? Is he aware that it was reported yesterday that 64 people had been made ill by salmonella poisoning? Does he agree that the case for abolishing Crown immunity is stronger than ever? Is it not time that we had a debate on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I know that all of these things are in the eye of the beholder, but I thought that my right hon. Friend made a measured and thoughtful statement and that the right hon. Member made an intemperate riposte. However, I know that he has a long-standing and sincere interest in this issue and I shall draw his remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As, somewhat unsurprisingly, consistently and totally regrettably, the European Community seems to be operating with an illegal budget, may we have a debate so that we do not have to condone that illegality by forking out for what it is asking for?

Mr. Biffen: I would not like Liverpool and the EC to find an unintended similarity. My hon. Friend raises a significant point and I shall refer it to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that, when the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was Home Secretary, he made a clear commitment to end by the end of 1983 the routine use of police and court cells to hold unconvicted and unsentenced remand prisoners? As police and court cells have continued to be used routinely virtually every night since to hold such people in appalling conditions and at great expense, may we now have a debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: I do not have before me the exact terms of the commitment to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but he will know that our exchange takes place in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and I am sure that he will have taken note of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): The contract for pharmacists cannot be implemented without primary legislation, which was not forthcoming in 1985. When will such legislation be introduced?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into that point.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate the widespread anxiety in the textile and clothing industries about the implications of the renewal of the MFA? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a statement is made after next week's meeting of the Council of Ministers, which will discuss further the mandate for renewing the MFA? Will he also note the requests made in an early-day motion signed by me and others?

[That this House, recognising the vital importance of the textile and clothing industry for the United Kingdom's balance of trade and as the employer of one in 10 of all those working in manufacturing industry, emphasises the damage that would be done to the industry by any failure to secure an effective renewal of the Multi Fibre Arrangement; views with alarm the terms of the European Economic Community's draft negotiating mandate which would inevitably permit an increase in imports, including a diversion of imports from better-protected markets to the United Kingdom; urges Her Majesty's Government to insist on a European Economic Community mandate which fully protects the interests of the British industry; and demands that no final decision is reached in Brussels until the matter has been further debated in the House.]

It demands that the House debates the issue before the mandate is finalised so that the views of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House can be expressed before a decision is made.

Mr. Biffen: I have, of course, familiarised myself with the terms of the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and with the considerable number of signatories that it possesses. The best thing that I can do, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), is to have the matter referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, so that he may take account of the points raised.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on tourism in the United Kingdom. Will he give the House an early opportunity to debate that important report and to discuss its findings?

Mr. Biffen: That is certainly one of the many claims upon the time of the Floor of the House that are made by the reports of Select Committees. I shall take account of what my hon. Friend says, but he will understand that I have real difficulties, because there are so many reports. As far as possible we must include them in our more general considerations.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this is an Opposition Day. I shall call the hon. Members who have been standing, but I hope that they will ask brief questions.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): In view of events in the early hours of Tuesday morning, which led to the temporary exile of my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), has the Leader of the House looked at the early-day motion in my name calling for more time to be given to debate the Welsh rate support grant.

[That this House regrets the failure of Her Majesty's Government to make sufficient time available for debating in the House the rate support grant order for Wales representing as it does the major allocation of resources to local Government, with far reaching consequences for ratepayers and the level of services; and calls for a minimum allocation of half a day's debate for this order in future, so as to ensure the opportunity for the expression of the points of view of all political parties representing Wales in this House.]

Mr. Biffen: Exile is the inevitable lot of political revolutionaries. I am sure that, although the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) merited all that happened to him that morning, the House appreciates the difficulties that arise in the consideration of the Welsh rate support grant. There are many established political interests, which seek to be called during debates on the matter. I shall certainly do what I can in the future.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is appalling that we do not yet know the subject for debate on the Liberal Supply day motion? Does my right hon. Friend consider that the confusion that arises in the alliance is evidenced by the fact that the alliance voted for the local Government Bill on Second Reading and against it on Third Reading?

Mr. Biffen: In spirit, my hon. Friend is compelling on both points, but he is on stronger ground on the second.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In view of the debate on Wednesday about the position of research assistants in the House, does the Leader of the House recall the assurances that he gave me and my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) that when the debate was held it would cover the position of lobbyists who may hold passes as research assistants. Will the Leader of the House give an opportunity to discuss the matter on Wednesday?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly look into the matter and I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend believe that generally we should get back to reality? Will he find time to debate a motion that the House recognises and takes note of the recent report of the chief economic advisers to the National Westminster bank, which concluded that only four other nations in the world can now match Britain for economic growth, price stability and a strong balance of payments, and recognises that encouraging enterprise and individual initiative, and ensuring that the state is the servant, not the master, is the best way to economic prosperity?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes an excellent summary of the formidable case for the Government's economic policy. He has only to await the Budget and the debates following it for an opportunity to deploy it more fully.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware of the continuing scandal of the National Coal Board refusing to accept the decision of the independent colliery review procedure tribunal, which is this week conducting a hearing into the proposed closure of Bates pit in Blyth? I received a letter from Mr. McGregor about the matter only today. Is the right hon. Gentleman now in a position to make a statement on behalf of the Government about the matter?

Mr. Biffen: We always have these good-natured exchanges week after week after week. I wonder what happens? Do they appear in a provincial newspaper, or is the National Coal Board paralysed at the prospect that they will be terminated? However, I shall certainly look into the matter.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): In the hope of saving the Leader of the Opposition from moving his motion under Standing Order No. 10, may we have a debate next week on leaks, and leaks that are not leaks? We could then go into the history of leaks that have occurred under Governments of both sides, certainly since I have been in the House.

Mr. Biffen: I am essentially a traditionalist as well as a creature of the usual channels. If the Leader of the Opposition says that he will do something, I believe that I should wait and see what he does.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see columns 41 to 43 of Monday's *Hansard*? In the answer to the question that I asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment it was revealed that 50 constituencies had a reduction in unemployment of more than 5 per cent. As that is such important news and as so many jobs are now being created, will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on that important subject, especially as Leicester, East has had an 8·37 per cent. reduction during the past 15 months? That is good news to tell.

Mr. Biffen: Leicester, East is, fortunately, served by an excellent Government and a sound Member of Parliament. However, given the restraints that we have on these matters, my hon. Friend will have to make those arguments in the Budget debate.

Westland plc

4.37 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order Order No. 10, to discuss a matter of urgent public interest, namely,

"the circumstances surrounding the publication of classified information relating to the future of Westland plc."

The matter is specific and important because it relates to the furtive activities and future activities of Ministers and to the Prime Minister's counterfeit inquiry into the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January.

The matter is urgent because it is essential that the House and the country, having heard evasions from the Prime Minister today, should have a speedy opportunity to secure more precise and more candid answers to the many questions about the conduct and methods of the Government than we have had hitherto.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely

"the circumstances surrounding the publication of classified information relating to the future of Westland plc."

I am satisfied that the matter raised by the right hon. Gentleman is a proper matter for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Does the right hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House?

The leave of the House having been given, the motion stood over until the commencement of public business on Monday 27 January.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Alan Haselhurst
Sir David Price
Mr. J. F. Pawsey

BILL PRESENTED

HOUSING AND PLANNING

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John Patten and Mr. Richard Tracey, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to housing, planning and local inquiries; to provide financial assistance for the regeneration of urban areas; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

Opposition Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Gartcosh Steel Mill

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.39 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscaddén): I beg to move,

That this House, recognising the fundamental importance of the steel industry to the economy of Scotland and the record of Gartcosh in the production of top quality strip steel for the British and European markets, calls on the Government to recognise that Ravenscraig and Gartcosh cannot be treated as separate entities, to extend the present guarantee given to Ravenscraig to Gartcosh and to halt the closure of the plant.

The debate is about the future of the cold rolling mill at Gartcosh, the jobs of 700 men, and the future of the village and a community. All hon. Members will accept that that is sufficient to justify concern, but the debate goes well beyond that. We are talking about the future of steel, both north and south of the border, Government attitudes to our industrial base in Scotland, and the Goverment's ability to comprehend, reflect and feel for opinion in Scotland. At the beginning we want to emphasise that we in the Labour party have a complete commitment to the continued operation of the five integrated steel plants at present being operated by British Steel. Ravenscraig is one of them, and it must have a secure future. That is essential and non-negotiable.

I know that the Secretary of State and his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry will say that the Government support the continuance of the five sites. However, the guarantee that has been offered is limited, qualified and inhibited. It has a three-year time limit running from April 1985. The continuance, stability and worth of that guarantee are essential. I am genuinely sorry that only one Conservative Back-Bench Member is present —the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The hon. Gentleman should appreciate and make clear to the House that few Scottish Members can take part in the debate because his colleagues in Committee on the Housing (Scotland) Bill have opposed a sittings motion which would have allowed the Committee to adjourn and Scottish Members serving on it to be present for the debate.

Mr. Dewar: There are not exactly 100 per cent. of Scottish Conservatives involved in that Committee. Moreover, I understand that there has been a disagreement between the usual channels. We requested that the Committee adjourn, but conditions were made which could not be agreed. Therefore, if we are to apportion blame in that petty fashion, we must bear in mind the two sides of the matter. What is important is what happens when we vote tonight. Then Conservative Members' interest in the matter will be assessed.

I am particularly interested in the three-year guarantee, and I hope that the Secretary of State will say something about his personal position on it. There have been changes in the formulation, and the words used have been varied.

[Mr. Dewar]

The phrase "at least", for example, has crept in on one or two occasions. The Secretary of State may be able to say a word or two about that, as a subsidiary theme.

We are worried because it is extremely easy to be cynical about that guarantee with its limitation and to argue that it suits British Steel. It allows some essential restructuring to take place, and at the end of three years the company will be able to strike out the strip mill and say, as it has said on many occasions, that in the circumstances two are better than three.

There is a suspicion in some quarters that the three-year guarantee suits the Government because it postpones the evil day of decision making until after the general election. The fears that I am reflecting have been reinforced by rumours about the Dalzell plate mill, and the failure in the past to invest in new coke oven capacity at Ravenscraig. It would be helpful if the Secretary of State could say something reassuring about the Dalzell plate mill, which is important for any future for Ravenscraig.

I wish to make it clear that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I certainly do not want to join the cynics. We want the guarantee to have worth, to hold, and to be extended permanently. We want to guard against the possibility of any future Government being presented with a virtual fait accompli, and a sharp and soulless accountant arguing that Ravenscraig's future cannot be on the agenda for management reasons.

The best way to lay those fears at rest is for the Government to give an unmistakable, unambiguous signal that they believe in the future of the Scottish steel industry, and in Ravenscraig. The way to do that is to intervene and reverse the decision to close the Gartcosh mill. That is essential, if uncertainty is to end.

We cannot separate Gartcosh from Ravenscraig, as the Government are suggesting, in support of British Steel. Gartcosh takes 25 per cent. of the total steel output and 31 per cent. of hot rolled coil. The plants are connected by industrial logic and political necessity. I shall refer to other pressing arguments, which the Secretary of State will know.

One is that Scotland's industrial prospects must depend to some extent on the existence of a steel industry that can flourish and serve our future manufacturing industry. Our anxiety about the loss of more than 160,000 manufacturing jobs since the Government came to power will be common to all hon. Members. Strip steel is basic to any hope of recovery.

It must be a disincentive to someone wishing to found manufacturing capacity to say "You are welcome, but you will have to bring your strip steel either from Europe or from the south of the United Kingdom. There is no capacity for producing it in Scotland." That will not appeal to an incoming industrialist, and it is not logical for British Steel. Presumably, the hot rolled coil from Ravenscraig will go south for finishing, involving transport costs, and anyone in Scotland who wishes to use strip steel will have to cart it back to Scotland. That is not sensible.

British Steel and United Kingdom industry as a whole will face problems with capacity if we lose Gartcosh. I recognise that these arguments are subjective, and I do not deny it. I recognise that there will always be two sides to the argument, but there seems to be a pressing and persuasive case that there could be a bottleneck in the production of fully-finished steel. We shall not have potential capacity.

We are constantly hearing talk about loading the remaining finishing mills to 95 per cent. capacity. That is open to grave doubt, given the testimony from Japanese and European experience. If, for example, Nissan coming to Washington in County Durham starts to increase demand for strip steel in the motor car industry, and if General Motors is successful in building up its United Kingdom content, there is a real danger that we shall not be able to meet that demand. In the end, exporters of steel to the United Kingdom will rejoice and gain advantage. That would not be in the national interest.

The Scottish Affairs Select Committee had an extremely useful session with Sir Robert Haslam and Mr. Scholey of British Steel. That point was put firmly to British Steel by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), who is unfortunately ill. Mr. Scholey said:

"Could I just add this: basically 30 per cent. of our production at this moment is export. We will be very happy to substitute some of that percentage for home-based business, whether it is through Nissan or whatever."

In other words, he seemed cheerfully to assume that some export business could be dropped overboard to make room for any increase in domestic demand. That seems to bear out our worries. By implication he accepted that, without Gartcosh, there is a potential problem in terms of the capacity that will be left at the cold production end.

The same argument applies to the possible lost orders that will result from the closure. Anyone who has read the documents will know that British Steel has said that lost orders will not amount to more than 2,500 tonnes per annum, and that it hopes to overtake that. Gartcosh has an excellent record with Ford (United Kingdom), Ford (Germany), BMW and Austin Rover, and its customers are satisfied. With the closure of Gartcosh, through no fault of anyone, there will be a two or three-year period when strip steel will come through the ingot route, not through continuous casting, so British Steel must run the risk of a considerable dip in orders for strip steel. That will be a direct result of the mistaken decision to dispense with Gartcosh.

The signs are there for all to see. That case has been fiercely argued, not just by the stewards but by many other people with considerable experience of the steel industry. We know from leaked documents that there appears—I put it no higher than that, because I accept that documents can sometimes be misleading — to be a substantial downturn in orders from the domestic market for strip steel since the Gartcosh announcement was made. We know that Austin Rover, for example, is now sourcing from Belgium. It will be said that is merely a safety device to make sure Austin Rover is not dependent upon one supplier, but there seems to be a great deal of evidence that the order book will be at risk if we put ourselves in this uncertain position over the next two or three years.

The substantial downturn is not some sort of routine fluctuation. I am sorry to say that British Steel management makes that argument, but that is merely a determination to shuffle off awkward facts by a group of people hell bent on the closure of Gartcosh. I remind the Minister that the Steel Industry Management Association, in the introduction to its well argued and technical rebuttal of the case for closure, says:

"BSC may be significantly short of rolling capacity to produce even the modest tonnages which they forecast over the next five years."

That is a risk we should not run, but it is a genuine risk. I know my view on that has support in all parts of the House, and I am grateful for that.

In accepting the argument for closure, Ministers are accepting British Steel's contentions, put firmly at meetings with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). It was put bluntly to us that British Steel does not see any recovery in demand in the foreseeable future. If the Government are prepared to accept that decision, they are stripping of all credibility the economic case that they will present at the next election. It is a desperate message of depression and recession if we accept that we are to get rid of Gartcosh because demand is not going to improve for such a basic commodity as strip steel. A great mistake is being made.

The Government are facing a key decision which will fundamentally influence how Scotland sees not just this Administration, but the system of government operated by the Conservative party. The tragedy and the mark of the Government is that they are full of inflexible obstinacy. I say with no great pleasure that we are left with the rather sick feeling that much of the talk about open-minded consideration of the evidence has been no more than a sham. I was genuinely disappointed when, within hours of his appointment to his present office, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) let it be known that there was unlikely to be any change in the Government's attitude. That gave the impression he would be no more than a spectator as the nails were hammered into Gartcosh's coffin.

No doubt the Government hope that they will get away with what is a sin of omission, that they will be able to sit tight and do nothing and let British Steel close the plant. In many ways Government policy is the root cause of the problem, and I do not mean that just in terms of the recession, the fall in demand, that they have created. I remember the first meeting that I and my hon. Friends had with Sir Robert Haslam and Mr. Bob Scholey. They went to great lengths to say, "We are trading profitably." They were ultimately persuaded to set a figure of about £11 million as the cost of keeping Gartcosh open, and that has subsequently been confirmed in evidence to the Select Committee.

They went on to say that that was incompatible with their policy, not because carrying that burden would stop them moving towards profitability—they were talking about a target of £200 million a year—but because that was an indadequate target, given their instructions that they were to prepare and drive towards privatisation of British Steel's mainstream activities. I fear that is one of the conditioning factors and one of the root causes of the present management's attitude. There is nothing in the subsequent record to rebut that presumption, and I am sure many of my hon. Friends hold that view as well.

The House will have to make its own judgment. It is extraordinary that the proposition to close Ravenscraig is a political one. We make no complaint about that—in fact, we applaud it—but to say the closure of Gartcosh is not a political decision is false. It is worthless, indefensible and inexplicable, because the Gartcosh closure is a policital decision. There is no doubt that the circumstances dictate that. Anyone who has lived in Scotland for the last two months will know that. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not know it, his unfortunate Back Benchers certainly do.

There is every reason for the Government to think again. There is evidence in plenty. The stewards have presented an unusually well informed case, but it may be that they are thought to be too parti pris—they have a vested interest in a certain decision.

I have referred to the Steel Industry Management Association document. The Scottish Trades Union Congress and a host of other organisations have all pointed to the dangers that I have tried to sketch.

We also have a report from a Select Committee that looked carefully and honestly at the evidence. I would never accuse the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) of dishonesty, whatever else I might accuse him of. The Select Committee report recommends exactly the terms of the motion in the name of the Opposition. It is supported not only by Labour Members, but by the hon. Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie), for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson), for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and I think I am right in saying that the hon. Member or Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) wants to be associated with it. I understand that to be the position.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's last comments.

Mr. Dewar: I am staggered. I am sometimes accused of taking a somewhat oversimplistic view of life. I took the view that, because the hon. Gentleman had signed the report, I was able to claim that he supported its contents. I find that quite extraordinary. When we see the hon. Gentleman's name on a report, we shall have to ask him whether he meant to sign it or whether it was some sort of accident.

I press upon the Minister that there is convincing evidence. The Select Committee report was carried by hon. Members from both sides of the House, and I should not forget that a Liberal party member also signed the report. There is also Scottish public opinion, and that is not unimportant.

I am sure hon. Members will have seen the Systems 3 poll in the *Glasgow Herald*. It was taken at the beginning of January. Some 80 per cent. of the people polled said they thought Gartcosh should remain open and 3 per cent. backed the Government in thinking it should be closed. I recognise that the Government are probably depressed to know that their standings in the rating is 15 per cent.—fourth place. The 3 per cent. figure in the poll should remind them that if they get things wrong, they will go even lower. No doubt they will try to discount it all with professional flair. I invite Ministers and their Back-Bench supporters to look at some of the small print in that poll. One of the questions was:

"If Gartcosh goes will Ravenscraig close in five years?"

Some 59 per cent. of the people polled thought that was very or quite likely and only 13 per cent. thought it was unlikely. Of the Tories polled, 53 per cent. were with the majority. People were asked:

"Under this Government does the steel industry have a future?"

The replies were yes, 9 per cent., no, 77 per cent. Even among committed Tories, 50 per cent. thought that under

[Mr. Dewar]

this Government the steel industry in Scotland had no future. They sadly accepted that this Administration will not or cannot do what needs to be done.

These serious matters will have to be weighed. It may sound a little cynical to talk to politicians about politics, but it seems sensible to draw these matters to the attention of hon. Members. In this debate the Government have a last chance to draw back and take the right decision. The Gartcosh issue has united the whole of Scottish opinion. The Scottish Office is in danger of becoming an isolated, unrepresentative presence that will command no significant support even among the Government's own previous supporters.

The Government must reconsider. I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues to do so this evening. I ask Conservative Members to vote for the moderate, sensible and united motion that stands in my name and the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I know that on the Conservative Benches there is a deal of private sympathy for the motion and for the steel workers. It is vital that that private sympathy should be translated in the Lobby into public commitment. If the Government do not respond, it will be a contemptible dereliction of duty. It will be a tragedy for the men and their families, of course, but it will be a threat to the future of the steel industry, born out of obstinacy and an insensitive disregard for the needs of Scotland.

5 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, 'to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

recognises the fundamental importance to Scotland and to the United Kingdom as a whole of the Government's and British Steel Corporation's aim of restoring the Corporation to financial self-sufficiency and sustained profitability; and endorses the Government's decision not to intervene in the Corporation's commercial decision to close the Gartcosh plant.'.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and his hon. Friends would have us believe that they speak in the debate as champions of Gartcosh and of the steel industry in Scotland. I would have been prepared to pay more attention to that claim if their hon. Friends on the First Scottish Standing Committee considering the Housing (Scotland) Bill — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"]. If this is the crucial debate that the hon. Gentleman would have the House believe it is, it is less than credible that his hon. Friends should have precluded the adjournment of the Standing Committee. The fact is that no fewer than 19 Scottish Members out of 72 serve on that Committee, and they are precluded from attending the debate, or are forced to choose where their responsibilities lie. That is a disgraceful choice for them to be asked to make. It is Opposition Members who must take responsibility for that.

Mr. Dewar: May I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman a simple question? Did his Whip offer an adjournment simpliciter, or did he put on ridiculous conditions about making progress?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is well aware— [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] — that if he wants the House and the people of Scotland to believe that the Opposition attach the greatest importance to the debate, Opposition Members should have co-operated in enabling Scottish Members to attend the debate.

Mr. Dewar: May I give the right hon. and learned Gentleman an absolute promise now that if he wants to send a runner upstairs to instruct the Patronage Secretary's representative to move a simple motion to adjourn the Committee, we shall not oppose it?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friends have made it clear throughout today that they are anxious that all Scottish Members should be enabled to attend the debate. It has been the actions of the Opposition alone that have prevented that.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am a member of the Standing Committee. At about 6 minutes to 1 o'clock a sittings motion was moved that the Committee should sit again at half-past 7 o'clock. Being a Scottish Member, the Secretary of State will know that when one is committed to travelling, that sort of warning is ridiculous. That is why the motion was talked out. I think that it would have been possible to have had a normal adjournment of the Committee.

Mr. Rifkind: The adjournment of the Committee would have been very much in the interests of this debate, and it could have happened if the Opposition had permitted it.

The hon. Member for Garscadden has said why he believes not only that Gartcosh should remain open, but that the Government should intervene. Let me make my position clear. In the short time that I have been Secretary of State for Scotland, I have received a number of requests from those interested in the matter to meet me and to discuss it. I have today seen the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other representatives. I have seen the Scottish Steel Industry Management Association. I have received representatives of the work force at Gartcosh, and I have met the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who asked to see me last week. I listened with great care and enormous sympathy to what those people had to say, because all hon. Members on both sides of the House obviously share in the deep sympathy that is aroused when any plant is required to close, involving a loss of jobs.

No doubt the hon. Member for Garscadden would be the first to admit that the question to which the House has to address itself is not a simple and straightforward one as to whether the decision to close Gartcosh is a matter for management. Everyone would accept that in normal circumstances the future of a plant with 600 to 700 employees must be determined by management and that there is very little precedent for Government to intervene.

I remind Opposition Members that when the Glengarnock steel works closed under the Labour Government, that Government did not accept responsibility to intervene to prevent closure. They accepted that however regrettable, and however unfortunate, the closure might be, it could not be proper and right for the Government to intervene——

Mr. Dewar: That was a different case.

Mr. Rifkind: Of course that was a different case, because it was a different Government, therefore the hon. Gentleman comes to that conclusion. Of course he claims that the circumstances were different, because he is embarrassed to be reminded of that event. I am entitled to

point out to the hon. Gentleman that the Labour Government were not in the habit of intervening when plants employing 600 to 700 people were proposed for closure by management. *[Interruption.]* I am prepared to reply to the debate, but only if I am given the opportunity to be heard. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am trying very hard to listen to the Secretary of State. I hope that hon. and right hon. Members will enable the House to listen to him.

Mr. Rifkind: I think the House will accept — certainly a Labour Government accepted—that the only proper basis on which the Government could have intervened to prevent the closure of the plant was if it could be established that the decision to close Gartcosh would pre-empt the future of Ravenscraig. That connection has to be established if it is to be suggested that it would have been proper for Government to intervene. Therefore, the remarks that I intend to make, and the points to which I intend to respond, will be concerned with the central question whether it has been established that the decision to sustain Ravenscraig has been pre-empted by the proposals for Gartcosh.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The Secretary of State will notice that there is a mention in the Opposition motion of both Gartcosh and Ravenscraig, but that there is no mention at all of Ravenscraig in the Prime Minister's amendment. It is a negative amendment, simply endorsing the closure of Gartcosh. Did the Secretary of State not fight within the Cabinet for the inclusion of a reference to Ravenscraig and the toughening up of the Government's commitment to Ravenscraig, or are we again lumbered with just another of Maggie's men of straw, like the Secretary of State's predecessor? Is it not time that Scotland had somebody to stand up and fight within the Cabinet for the rights of Scottish workers?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government amendment refers to the need and the desirability to achieve a viable steel industry for the country as a whole. The Government have already indicated the importance that they attach to Ravenscraig. I shall make some remarks on that during my speech if the hon. Gentleman will be so patient as to wait.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The Secretary of State is making the case that the Government have no locus to interfere and that the decision must be one for management. How does he explain the Prime Minister's excuse for selling off the gas industry, which is that it would allow the industry to get away from Government interference? Does that not simply that the Government are able to interfere with a nationalised industry?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course the Government can interfere. That is one reason why Ravenscraig is open today: A Conservative Government interfered to achieve that result. The question is not whether the Governmet have power to intervene, but what has been the view of successive Governments about the circumstances in which it is appropriate to intervene. Just as the Labour Government did not believe that the closure of Glengarnock should be prevented by them, so we do not believe that it would be appropriate to interfere with the decision of management on Gartcosh.

The crucial question is whether it can be substantiated that a decision on Gartcosh will pre-empt discussion on the future of Ravenscraig. A number of arguments have been put forward, and some of them have been made by the hon. Member for Garscadden.

I should like to comment briefly on some of the main points that have been made over the months by the hon. Gentleman.

It has been said, for example, that it would be unique in the Western world to have a hot strip plant that did not have a cold finishing facility adjacent to it. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman did not say this, but he is aware that this argument has been put, and I feel it right to comment on it. It would not be unique. There are plants in Japan, France, Italy, Canada and the United States where the cold finishing facilities are many hundreds of miles away from the original plant, so that is not a significant consideration. Ravenscraig's situation would not be unique in any way.

It has been suggested on many occasions—indeed, it has been put to me at the meetings that I have had— that there are certain grades of steel that can be manufactured only at Gartcosh, and that if Gartcosh closes it will have profound implications for Ravenscraig. I have looked into this because it seems an important consideration, but I have been assured that that is simply not the case. There are no grades of steel produced at Gartcosh that cannot be produced at other cold finishing facilities elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

It is suggested that the profitability or competitiveness of Ravenscraig will be materially affected if its product has to be sent to Shotton for cold finishing purposes. On the face of it that may appear a persuasive argument, if the cold finishing facilities are some hundreds of miles away, but when we look slightly further into the steel industry in Scotland we find that this argument cannot be sustained. About 97 per cent. of the demand for cold finished steel in the United Kingdom does not arise in Scotland. Only 3 per cent. of the demand arises in Scotland itself. With regard to the ultimate destination of the product leaving Gartcosh, no less than 75 per cent. of it goes to customers south of Manchester. At the moment, only 25 per cent. of the product of Ravenscraig goes to Gartcosh. The rest does not, and has not done so in the past. That is an important consideration.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): The reason for that is that the Government have shut down so much of our manufacturing industry. It is important to retain the Gartcosh-Ravenscraig complex so that we will have that base for future investment in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that at the moment only 65 per cent. of existing capacity in cold finished steel is utilised. He knows also that there is enormous over-capacity in this sector. If a vast proportion of the product of Gartcosh is being sold to customers in the United Kingdom south of Manchester, we must ask ourselves whether there will be any significant effect on the competitiveness of Ravenscraig if the cold finishing facilities at Shotton are used, as proposed by the British Steel Corporation.

Another argument that has been put, and may indeed have been put by the hon. Gentleman today, is that the customers of the British Steel Corporation will go elsewhere as a consequence of the Gartcosh closure.

[Mr. Rifkind]

Neither the hon. Gentleman nor anyone else has produced evidence to support that assertion. On the contrary, Austin Rover, which is quoted as one of those companies which might, or would, go elsewhere, has, as I understand it, expressly denied any intention of doing so.

It is suggested that even in the period since the announcement was made the British Steel Corporation's market share has declined. There have been various reports in the press during the past week or so suggesting that this is happening. This is, indeed, correct. There has, regrettably, been a decline in the corporation's market share. If we look beyond the headlines and examine what has been taking place, we find that the recent decline has been not simply in those areas which concern Gartcosh but over a whole range of steel products. The decline has more to do with the exchange rate than with any other single factor. The British Steel Corporation has indicated that it believes that the decline is over and that there is likely to be an upturn in the next couple of weeks. We would all welcome that.

The arguments about customer disapproval or of a declining market share because of proposals involving Gartcosh, although undoubtedly put forward with great sincerity, have not been accompanied by hard evidence linking any trends or developments with any specific decision on Gartcosh.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On the question of the market share, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that for every Japanese car imported into this country, 1 tonne of British steel is correspondingly unused; steel which could and very probably would be produced at these strip mills, of which Ravenscraig is one? Would the argument about market share not be reinforced if those who are concerned about the Scottish steel industry demanded that those who work in it should themselves buy British cars rather than Japanese ones?

Mr. Rifkind: Sadly, my hon. Friend is correct. It is indeed the case that if the people of Scotland and of the United Kingdom as a whole had been interested in and willing to purchase motor vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom, not only would the British steel industry and the Scottish steel industry be very much stronger, but Linwood might still be open today. That is a factor that we all should bear in mind, now and in the future.

One additional argument is used, most notably by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. He has argued that the closure of Gartcosh could lead to a bottleneck, and that if the demand for steel products greatly exceeded what is currently predicted by the British Steel Corporation, Ravenscraig might not be able to be used to full capacity because there would be inadequate cold finishing facilities elsewhere to make use of that product. As a hypothesis or theory, there is logic in what the hon. Gentleman says. Where his argument falls down is that the hypothesis would be valid only if there was an expansion of demand far greater than anyone predicts or remotely contemplates at present. If there was a significant increase in demand, beyond that which the British Steel Corporation expects, it could be accommodated by Ravenscraig — and it would be very good for Ravenscraig if that were the case. If the predictions of level suggested by the hon. Gentleman are the basis on which the bottleneck theory is put forward, he must substantiate it by some credible evidence about where the demand will come from.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Secretary of State realise that the implication of what he has just said is that Ravenscraig should be closed?

Mr. Rifkind: No, it is not, and I will tell the hon. Gentleman exactly why. It has been suggested by the hon. Member for Garscadden and others that the argument that Ravenscraig's future will be unaffected by the fate of Gartcosh is one in which no one apart from the British Steel Corporation and the Government believe. That is not correct. I put this to the House, and I believe it to be of considerable importance.

The House will be aware that the closure of Gartcosh is part of a wider strategy announced last August, the aim of which is to bring the British Steel Corporation to a level of profitability that will make it financially self-sufficient within the current planning period and with no more state aid after 1985. I am glad to be able to tell the House that the European Commission, not known for its softness in these matters, not known for its sympathy on these issues — *[Interruption.]* If the House, and in particular the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), would care to listen, this is good news that I am able to give Opposition Members. They may wish to hear it. They may not like to hear good news about the Scottish steel industry, but they might at least be silent for a moment.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I am sorry that I put my name down to speak, because it means having to sit and listen to all this rubbish.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) must not keep interrupting from a sedentary position. The House wants to listen to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rifkind: If the right hon. Gentleman, who was once the possessor of the office that I presently hold——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): He was a lot better than the right hon. and learned Gentleman is.

Mr. Rifkind —had had to listen to seated interjections from someone who had been his predecessor as Secretary of State, I think that he would have taken a pretty dim view of the integrity and calibre of the person concerned. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to cast reflections upon the integrity of another right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State may have been discourteous, but he did not stray out of order.

Mr. Rifkind: I return to the point that I was trying to make, despite the interruptions from the Opposition. I am glad to be able to tell the House that the Commission, on advice from independent experts, accepted the viability plan based upon the agreed strategy, and that all the outstanding aid due to the British Steel Corporation was paid in December.

The Commission's advisers said, when endorsing the viability plan, that the assumptions used by the British Steel Corporation were reasonable and consistent with the Commission's criteria. It went on to say that the

corporation would reach viability in 1987-88 by meeting the Commission's target profit. As to the forecast of sales, the Commission's independent consultants thought that any conservatism that there might be in domestic sales forecasts was more than offset by optimism over the projected level of export sales. The consultants significantly discounted the British Steel Corporation's overall sales forecasts to make allowances for this.

I hope that that disposes of the argument that the BSC has been unduly pessimistic. The point that I want to emphasise is that the viability plan which the Commission's independent experts has endorsed is based upon the continuation of all five British Steel Corporation integrated works and all the other features of the strategy that was announced last August.

Mr. Dewar: Of course I welcome good news, but I want to be sure what it is. It is not clear to me. Is the Secretary of State saying that Europe accepts the continuation of the five integrated steel plants until April 1988, but not beyond that, or is he saying something that would be very much more welcome—that the British Steel Corporation now accepts that it should retreat from its declaration that it wants to lose at least one of its strip mills.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his acceptance of the fact that this represents good news. — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I have every intention of answering the hon. Gentleman's specific point. The Commission has said that the British Steel Corporation's strategy plan, announced last August, which involves the closure of Gartcosh, also involves the continuation of all five integrated plants. The Commission's view is that under this plan the British Steel Corporation will achieve viability. The Commission has concluded that it is a realistic strategy. It is well aware that the strategy involves the continuation of all five plants, including Ravenscraig. The Commission believes that that plan is realistic and that the corporation ought to be able to achieve viability by 1987-88. I welcome that. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome it. I should have thought that the Opposition would also welcome it.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Am I not right in thinking that as soon as the steel industry makes a £200 million profit it will be ripe for privatisation? In addition, in my constituency and in that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) 460 men are being paid off on the steel tube producing side. That is also being prepared for privatisation. Is that not the Government's policy?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's policy is that the British Steel Corporation should become viable. That was also the policy of the last Labour Government. It is an eminently sensible proposal. This policy is being pursued, not only by the British Government, but by the whole of the European Community. All member states are seeking to achieve viability for ther steel industries in a world in which, sadly, there has been very great over capacity.

Mr. Hickmet: Can my right hon. and learned Friend please explain to me why 140,000 people who worked for the British Steel Corporation should have been made redundant since 1980 or 1981 if those who are now working at Gartcosh continue to be employed? The viability of the British steel industry, which is now the most successful and efficient steel industry in Europe, is being threatened by inefficient and overmanned steel processes. Does not the survival of jobs in my constituency depend upon a viable British Steel Corporation as a national entity?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct when he says that it is essential that the British Steel Corporation should identify those markets where expansion is possible and where demand is likely to grow, and that it should concentrate upon responding effectively to those demands. one is conscious of the fact that when a plant closes there are important social consequences for those concerned and for the areas in which they live. During the last two or three years the Government, both directly and indirectly, through the Scottish Development Agency, have made a significant contribution towards providing help for those areas that have been most affected by the decline in employment n the Scottish steel industry.

The Scottish Development Agency initiated the Motherwell and Coatbridge projects. During the last two or three years some £24 million has been invested by the Scottish Development Agency in these projects. In addition, and partly through the work of the Scottish Development Agency, a large amount of private capital investment has been attracted to these areas. There has been about £64 million of private investment in the Motherwell area and about £24 million of private investment in the Coatbridge area.

The British Steel Corporation proposes to invest £750,000 in assisting those areas that have been affected by the closure of steel plants. Over £5 million of European Community regional development fund assistance has been provided on the non-quota side to help Strathclyde. At the moment we are pressing the Commission for further help, which we hope will be concentrated more specifically in the areas primarily affected by the closure of Gartcosh.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that when the former Secretary of State for Scotland referred to the Coatbridge project — which was three weeks before the summer recess and four weeks before this announcement — I pointed out that the number of jobs that it was hoped would be achieved—800—was almost exactly the same as the number of jobs that might be lost at Gartcosh? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that the former Secretary of State said on that occasion that we should not assume that those jobs had already been lost?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, of course that is the case. However, the hon. Gentleman knows very well that the work done on these projects can be of enormous value. For example, I referred earlier to the closure of Glengarnock.

Mr. Tom Clarke: It has already gone.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will alsp know that the work that has been done in that locality has created more jobs than were lost by the closure of the Glengarnock steel works under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the priority is to create new jobs, so that employment is available in that area? Is it not hypocritical and unfortunate that certain elements in the Labour party and the trade unions have chosen instead to concentrate upon media gimmicks and have refused to

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

negotiate with the British Steel Corporation and others who are in a position to help them to create jobs in the community?

Mr. Rifkind: It must make sense for the Scottish Development Agency, the local authorities and others involved to co-ordinate their efforts to ensure the best prospect for new jobs. If there can be the same sort of success from efforts in Coatbridge, Motherwell and other areas affected by the closure as there was in Glengarnock from similar activities, that must be welcome to Opposition Members as well as to the Government.

I appreciate that those who have taken part in the campaign to save Gartcosh in the last few months will be sadly and bitterly disappointed, but I believe that a number of valuable developments have arisen out of the campaign in that period. I attach importance in particular to the clear and explicit statements which the British Steel Corporation has made on several occasions and to various people that it does not believe that the closure of Gartcosh will in any way affect the viability of Ravenscraig or determine the future of Ravenscraig. It is of great importance that these statements have been made in such explicit and unambiguous terms, because in any discussions that may take place in future it will be important for it to have been clearly established that in the view of the corporation nothing that has happened, or will happen, in regard to Gartcosh will have any effect on the future of Ravenscraig.

The hon. Member for Garscadden remarked at one stage that the reprieve, as I think he called it, for Ravenscraig announced last year was simply some device to tide the Government over until after the next general election.

Mr. Dewar: I did not say that.

Mr. Rifkind: That was certainly the impression that I obtained from the hon. Gentleman. If he would like to tell us what he said, I should be happy to listen.

Mr. Dewar: I said that there was a cynical view that that was the case. I specifically went on to say, with some emphasis, that I did not want to believe that. I still do not want to believe it. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman would say something apart from the fact that the European Community agrees with BSC about Gartcosh, and produce some good news about a guarantee to Ravenscraig workers, I should be delighted.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now acknowledge that the conclusions of the European Community are good news. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] The reluctance of Opposition Members is extraordinary. The answer is that the European Community, unlike Opposition Members, is not taking part in a political campaign. It has no interest in endorsing a BSC strategy that involves the continuation of all five integrated plants unless it honestly believes that that is a viable strategy and one that can lead to profitability for the British Steel Corporation.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comment that he was referring only to cynics and that he was not seeking to suggest that the decision on Ravenscraig that was announced last year was simply some electoral device. I recollect that when the decision was announced in 1982 that Ravenscraig would not be permitted to close, the Labour party argued that that was a short-term reprieve, and that once the election was over Ravenscraig would be doomed. After the election was over and this Government were returned, the matter was considered again by BSC last year, and it made an announcement that Ravenscraig was to be saved for at least three years. Many Opposition Members repeated the same old hoary statement that this was simply an electoral device to tide the Government over until the next general election.

I say to Opposition Members and to the House that they should beware of the danger of creating a fundamental lack of confidence in the Scottish steel industry. Without any qualification, I say that I attach great importance to Ravenscraig and to the viability of the Scottish steel industry, which I want to see as a healthy and viable industry. I believe that the corporation can achieve viability with the continuation of all its five plants, including Ravenscraig, and I am delighted that the European Community has endorsed its judgment to that effect.

I invite the House to oppose the motion and to support the amendment.

5.35 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I say in all candour to the Secretary of State that his attempts to be convincing have failed entirely. I can give his words today no more credence than I gave to the words of his predecessor when he gave that assurance to me in the Scottish Grand Committee. The blandishments that he is offering to Lanarkshire, an area already suffering from high unemployment and which has totally unacceptable social conditions are, in the context of this debate, quite offensive. To tell us, in view of the devastation we have seen and are about to see if Gartcosh is closed, that the Government will help by way of the Scottish development agency and in other ways reminds me of the man who went along to Sweeney Todd and was assured by him that he was going to do him a favour by cutting his throat. I am afraid that such logic will not find much acceptance among the people of Lanarkshire.

We are seeing not just the collapse of the steel industry but a Government pledged, and in many cases elected, to help small businesses now presiding over the collapse of more small businesses than ever before. The Secretary of State must have known as he spoke that Plan-It Precision Engineering in my constituency has written to him only this week indicating that it will be losing a number of jobs if the plant goes. That firm is typical of the small businesses in Lanarkshire which are so dependent upon Gartcosh. The House will therefore not be surprised that in Scotland—and this is reflected in all political parties and expressed by people who are politically committed and those who are not—BSC's argument about Gartcosh and the clear-cut Government support for that decision are found to be entirely unacceptable.

The Secretary of State need not pretend that there is no responsibility on Government. On the day of the announcement the chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), endorsed it, and was supported by the then Secretary of State who had the effrontery to say that this was good news for Scotland. What has been the response? Papers such as the *Sunday Post*, which is not exactly the *Morning Star* of

Scottish journalism, told the Government on Sunday exactly what it thought. It published countless names of individuals in Gartcosh suffering from the decision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Tom Clarke: I shall not give way because I wish to be brief, and hon. Members are fully aware of the hon. Gentleman's eccentricities in these matters.

The fact is that the Secretary of State refused to address himself to the views of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which of course has a Conservative majority. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry likewise expressed a view last year, having taken evidence from the British Steel Corporation, and the Secretary of State must surely be aware—if he is not, everybody else is—that BSC made it very clear then that it wanted to close one plant, and that that one plant is Ravenscraig. For the Secretary of State to say that, apart from British Steel, nobody takes that view, is a nonsense that nobody accepts.

I address myself to the very serious implications of the closure of Gartcosh even if there were not the overwhelming argument, which has clearly been sustained, about its relationship with Ravenscraig. Lord Young, one of the Secretary of State's colleagues in Cabinet, spoke in the other place a few weeks ago. He said:

"For many years Governments have told unions that the way to jobs is through the high quality of work and responsible pay claims . . . We know that we have to compete and innovate so that people choose to buy the goods which British labour has created. That means competition on quality, reliability, design and consumer appeal. And we have to compete on price, too." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*—13 November 1985; Vol. 468, c. 27677.]

On every single one of those tests, Gartcosh should be surviving. The record of the men and women in the plant has been absolutely outstanding and the Secretary of State should have acknowledged that record instead of selling the Scottish steel industry and its workers short, in the way that he did.

I am not surprised, for, after all, the Secretary of State was in the Foreign Office as the Minister responsible for European affairs when decisions were taken about quotas that were absolutely tragic for the whole of the British steel industry, and especially, as we are now seeing, for Gartcosh and Ravenscraig.

The Secretary of State referred to orders in the debate. I have tried in my letters with Sir Robert Haslam and in my letter to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to obtain the facts. So far, I have not succeeded, so I ask the question again. Will the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, who is to wind up, give us precise facts about orders lost to this country since the Gartcosh decision was announced? Will he confirm what everybody in British Steel knows, that imports have mounted since that decision? Will the Government stop trying to pretend to the House and the country that these things are not taking place? The situation will be exposed as easily as was that which led to the exposition that the House witnessed this afternoon. The Prime Minister was forced to make a statement in the light of events as they were uncovered. Events are being uncovered in this respect as well.

The Government know that Austin Rover is placing orders with a Belgian company but pretend that they do not; they know that the order books suggest that not only orders but jobs are being lost to Britain. Therefore, I am entitled, on behalf of the men and women of Gartcosh, to say that the workers' commitment to British ideals, industry and patriotism far exceeds those already established by British Steel and by a Tory Front Bench that appears to be determined to join in the cover up—a cover up that many people refuse to excuse.

What will all this mean to Lanarkshire, to my constituency and to those of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the west central belt of Scotland. Closure would add to the appalling unemployment figures. In Lanarkshire, there is over 20 per cent. unemployment. In the districts and villages around Gartcosh, Moodiesburn and Stepps, male unemployment is at 16·8 per cent.; in Easterhouse and Garthamlock, it is 36·1 per cent.; in Coatbridge it is 20·4 per cent.; and Motherwell 20·9 per cent. If the closure goes ahead, the village of Gartcosh will have 32 per cent. male unemployment. To add to that another 1,000 unemployed people, as has been suggested by the Government, when we already have some of the biggest social and industrial problems in Europe is utterly repugnant. We shall continue to expose it.

Why are the Government doing this? Why does this decision have the support of British Steel's propaganda machine? They tell us that it is because Gartcosh is costing £11·5 million a year, but it costs a great deal more than that to keep people unemployed. The reality is that the Government and the BSC are aiming at a £200 million profit next year and £300 million profit for the year after for one simple reason—to achieve privatisation. The price of that objective and obsession is far too high because it has to be paid in human terms.

In "The Deserted Village" one Oliver Goldsmith wrote:

"Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay".

If the Government continue to pursue their course on Gartcosh, may God forgive them because history will find it difficult so to do.

5.46 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) because he has taken a prominent part in supporing the case of his constituency in the past year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made an impressive speech and I am sorry that in his first major debate on the Floor of the House I have, for the first and, I hope, last time, to disagree with him.

I have never been a great enthusiast of Select Committees and I think that everybody from the Whips Office downwards knows that. However much Select Committees inquire into Government activities, the reaction is the same. Little happens and nothing that is relative to the hard work put into the inquiries by the Select Committees. Nevertheless, in our detailed inquiry, we had one advantage over the Government because we were able to interview people in British Steel and the unions face to face, and that is valuable in evaluating the strength of the evidence.

Last month, a substantial majority of the Select Committee favoured the report that came to the conclusion that there was a link between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig and that it should be retained. Some time ago, the Macmillan Government invested massively in cars, trucks and tractors. The steel requirements were to be met from Ravenscraig, which became the symbol of a new dawn for

[Sir Hector Monro]

heavy manufacturing in Scotland, to supersede the old heavy industries of shipbuilding, locomotive construction and heavy engineering.

The new industry had its ups and downs, but the Ravenscraig complex remains that great symbol—the manifestation of the Scottish steel industry. British Steel wanted to close Ravenscraig and of course Gartcosh in 1982. The plants were saved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) and the advice of the Select Committee. The complex worked through the miners' strike, with the workers showing great loyalty to their industry. Nevertheless, there was not a shred of evidence to show that BSC had changed its mind about the 1982 decision and would close Ravenscraig if the Government had not ordered otherwise.

In the summer of 1985, rumours were rife and widespread that Ravenscraig was threatened again. Many of us visited Ravenscraig and met shop stewards and the management. We saw the plant and its obvious need for investment, particularly in new coke ovens. I decided then, as did some of my hon. Friends, that the Ravenscraig complex must be retained and given new investment. It was very welcome news when, in August 1985, the Government announced that they had ordered BSC to retain Ravenscraig for at least three years, but I was horrified that the BSC could use its commercial judgment to close Gartcosh. I still find it difficult, despite what my right hon. Friend says about differentiating between political decisions at Ravenscraig and the commercial decision on Gartcosh.

How far can we go towards pruning Scottish steel? Do we stop at Gartcosh? What about Dalzell and the important plates for submarines? What about the whole complex of Ravenscraig? We have lost Glengarnock and now we have lost Clydesdale and Imperial, with a loss of 450 jobs on top of 700 at Gartcosh.

What about the repercussions? What about the suppliers? We hear of the thousands who will be affected by the closure of Gartcosh. For instance, the South of Scotland Electricity Board sells 61 million units of electricity worth £1·7 million to Gartcosh. We know that the SSEB is already overcapacity in power, so great difficulty lies ahead for the board if Gartcosh goes.

Will motor car manufacturers continue to take supplies from British Steel? We have heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about Austin Rover. The Select Committee did not have information on Austin Rover, BMW or Ford, and is still vague about what exactly Nissan will want, which may be crucial to the future of steel in Scotland.

The steel industry, in a way, is an indication of a nation's industrial virility, and Ravenscraig without Gartcosh must be much more vulnerable than it would be if the two were together.

I am very pleased that the Government, with British Steel, announced further investment for Ravenscraig—£10 million for a coal injection plant and £5 million for modifications to the No. 3 concast machine, plus silica welding of ovens. There seems to be some doubt, particularly on the shop floor, about whether in the long term this will be satisfactory.

I would be greatly encouraged to hear the Minister say that there is to be more investment in Ravenscraig. I certainly welcome the fact that British Steel Industries is bringing jobs to Scotland. I particularly welcome what it did in Glengarnock, but it has a great deal to do now in the Ravenscraig area. I feel that if Gartcosh closes and its fine workforce is disbanded, it will never reopen.

Tommy Brennan and his team have fought a good fight, and deserve a better result. I know that Ravenscraig steel will, instead of going to Gartcosh, travel the long road or rail journey to Shotton in North Wales. I am unimpressed with British Steel evidence about transport costing and assurances that Shotton will never be fully loaded by coated steel from other plants to the exclusion of Ravenscraig.

The Alphasteel concast machines will go to Llanwern to increase production there. Jolly good luck to the Welsh, except perhaps on the rugby field, but that is of no avail to the Scots, nor does it do them much good to know that the Alphasteel quota will be of more benefit to Lakenby than Ravenscraig.

I was most impressed by the evidence given by the Steel Industry Management Association. Who is right—the Government, British Steel, SIMA, the unions or the Select Committee? The crux is really in British Steel's forecast for future demand. It seems pessimistic in view of the expansion for which we hope. If the forecasts are wrong, it will be too late to save Gartcosh.

SIMA foresaw a grave risk, which I share. The Select Committee felt that the evidence of BSC was inconclusive. If the closure goes ahead it will be final. The saving of £11 million is seen to be crucial to British Steel, but the political and industrial implications are enormous. It may be the most expensive £11 million the Government will ever save. Many major decisions are based on judgment, and not strictly on an accountant's appraisal of a balance sheet. I doubt that we would be going ahead with the Channel tunnel if we looked only at facts and figures.

We need a high degree of vision. That is extremely important. The same is true of British Steel. We need a value judgment to be made on Ravenscraig's importance to Scotland and the United Kingdom. Ravenscraig and Gartcosh are, in my view, one and should be retained with its skilled force.

It is 21 years since I made my maiden speech on unemployment, particularly relative to Upper Nithsdale where it was, and is, very high. I have had a prime interest in unemployment ever since. I have always supported the Government and the Conservative party, but tonight I must protest that the Government have misjudged not only the industrial consequences but the political and social repercussions.

I support the Select Committee's recommendation but must, however reluctantly, vote against the Government.

5.56 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on a cogent and brave speech. This is the most significant and specific debate we have had on Scottish economic matters for many years. If we are honest, we will admit that on many occasions the Chamber witnesses pyrotechnic displays of bogus indignation and spends its precious time indulging those who are more interested in scoring party points rather than in examining, because of its responsibilities, real problems in a thorough and fair way.

As a Scot and a democratic politician, I regret that the Government, having the responsibility for the Gartcosh

closure, were unwilling to make time available to debate it, or the Select Committee's report on the closure, either on the Floor of the House or in the Scottish Grand Committee.

The Labour party motion is not partisan. It bases itself on the recommendation of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. This was a conclusion it found difficult to reach, as we all know, and I see no point in berating Conservative Members about this. It was hard for some of them, like the hon. Member for Dumfries, to make that recommendation. I do, however, seriously criticise and condemn the Government for their unwillingness to debate it. Not only the Select Committee but a huge majority, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has said, will show the widest conceivable cross-section of Scottish opinion. Today, I heard that the Highland region meeting in Dingwall passed a motion in support of Gartcosh and wanted the matter to be debated. If Parliament is to be a place where issues of difference are genuinely argued through, that should have been done a long time ago, and not at the eleventh hour.

Whatever the colour of the ideological aims of a Government, if they call themselves democratic and fail to respond to the reasoned, logical and carefully documented unexaggerated approach that Tommy Brennan has made on behalf of the work force, they incite blind, angry, bitter and unyielding opposition and weaken the capacity of any future Government to solve difficult and stressful problems in a sensible way.

The Prime Minister, who gave much publicised tea to young unemployed people, is of course, an incredibly busy person—I am not saying this at all sarcastically—and is subject to a variety of unremitting stresses, but she was wrong, deeply wrong, to refuse to see Tommy Brennan and those who walked from Scotland to London to publicise their plight. As no one would debate the matter, it seemed the only way they could bring it to her attention.

This is not a light matter or another example of the special pleading to which all hon. Members are regularly subjected. It is a central question about the future shape of the Scottish economy.

The hon. Member for Garscadden has already made the basic case and, if I may say so without causing embarrassment to him, has made it very well. He has been supported most lucidly by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

One of the problems with being some way down the list of speakers is that what one wants to say has been said. I do not believe in wasting time on repetition and I know that many hon. Members want to speak. I shall therefore briefly repeat three arguments, all of which were repeatedly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who was the Liberal Member on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I pay tribute to his dilegence.

First, this decision is wrong for the Government in their own terms—their own terms being the primacy of the free market—to make decisions about the future of a crucial part of a key industry on the basis not of profitability but of wholly unreal profit targets, artificially sought with a view to sale. Incidentally, the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board happily breach the Government's terms on the primacy of the free market, and long may that happen. The Scottish Council (Development and Industry) hardly comprises a group of militants. It is certainly interested in industrial efficiency. It says that the desired surplus target—this has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton)—of £200 million is 50 per cent. better than the best in the world and 100 per cent. better than the average. Gartcosh is the clear victim of ideological prejudice.

A couple of years ago, Members of the Liberal party met members of the BSC board. Plans were set out and it was made clear that they were in response to the Government's wishes. We were told that BSC was on target. I said, "If that is possible for BSC as a state concern, why is it necessary to privatise? Has the steel industry not been an ideological football long enough?" I never received an adequate reply.

It is interesting that, at a time when one's door is continually battered down by people from Guinness, Argyll and Distillers, no one from BSC ever appears. Perhaps that is because increasingly people do not believe BSC, especially its denial of the inevitable, inextricable link between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig.

Secondly, the decision ignores future increased demand in the automobile industry. It proceeds on the assumption of no general economic recovery. It conceals the loss of markets at home and abroad. Those points have already been well made.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that last year was yet another record year for car sales in the United Kingdom. The tragedy is that not enough of those cars were manufactured in the United Kingdom. Will the hon. Gentleman take that point into account?

Sir Russell Johnston: We know that soon more cars will be manufactured in the United Kingdom, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) wishes.

hirdly, the decision will have a domino effect—that American phrase which means that, if one thing falls down, many others fall as well. At a certain stage, a stand must be taken in the general débâcle. The domino effect, when applied to Gartcosh and Ravenscraig, is appalling. The decision will affect the profitability of British Rail in Scotland. It will have a direct effect on the capacity to survive of the two ports on the Clyde and the Forth. The decision is already having an effect. Polkemmet will not be reopened I believe that that it should be reopened. The decision will undermine a basic part of Scotland's manufacturing capacity.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewer) said that this is a key decision, and how right he was. It demonstrates the Government's serious disinterest in the Scottish economy. As the hon. Member for Dumfries has said, there is a lack of vision. Not only the social consequences but the general consequences on the Scottish economy will be miserable, disruptive and expensive. No Scottish Government with economic powers would allow it.

We all know that ecomonic forecasting is chancey yet the Government, as the Secretary of State has stressed, have committed themselves to a three-year guarantee for Ravenscraig. As the motion says, the guarantee given to Ravenscraig must be extended to Gartcosh. When the former Secretary of State for Scotland made the pledge, everyone thought that it included Gartcosh. The present

[Sir Russell Johnston]

Secretary of State has accepted that the Government can intervene. Whether that has or has not been the practice of successive Governments has nothing to do with it.

The Secretary of State spoke with the aggression of the guilty. The Government can act if they wish. I ask them to do so. If they do not, their lack of foresight and commitment to Scotland will justly reap massive retribution at the next general election.

6.5 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): The Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I am Chairman, has had opportunities to look at the BSC's work. It has been a pleasure to note the way in which the corporation improved its profits over the past six months. I congratulate the management and the workers.

One of the most revealing features of the BSC—I speak personally on this point, not on behalf of the Select Committee—is the way in which the workers' devotion to their task has been increasing, especially in the three integrated steel plants at Port Talbot, Llanwern and Ravenscraig. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) referred to the link between Ravenscraig and Gartcosh. When I looked at what was happening at Ravenscraig, I assumed that we were talking about Gartcosh as well. I had no doubt about that. Gartcosh is part of Ravenscraig's future. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will correct me if I am wrong, but no such error was ever made apparent to me as a member of the Select Committee.

As a Conservative, I believe that we should look forward to the BSC moving towards privatisation. However, we are not debating that—we are debating whether organisations, such as those at Ravenscraig, including Gartcosh, could ever achieve what I understand are the requirements imposed on the BSC by the Government. What are those requirements? My understanding to about a first order of accuracy, is that the Government are looking for a profit of £300 million on £4 billion worth of sales. That sounds pretty good. I hope that BSC can achieve it. If it can, it will achieve something that its prime competitors in other parts of the world, like Nippon-Kolkan, Nippon-Steel and Thyssen are simply not able to achieve. Those competitors are turning over profits that are about a half or a third of those that the Government expect BSC to make if it is to be a saleable commodity. Surely, the BSC's strategy must be to produce those items that can be sold to make such a profit.

Ravenscraig and Gartcosh simply do not have that ability. Ravenscraig will remain open, as the Government have said. I trust that that is because it is the only plant at which the BSC produces steel for the Trident submarines. Gartcosh would be kept alive by producing high-volume, relatively low-profit steel for car manufacture. It is not in the BSC's interests to sell that plant because it does not provide the profits that the Government want BSC to make.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) asked about Nissan. Why is there silence about BSC's attempts to sell to Nissan? I am afraid that there is silence because of the nature of the product that must be made to produce the profit margins that the Government requires of BSC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Warren: I am reluctant to allow interventions in what I regard as a Scottish debate, although I think that this is a United Kingdom question.

Mr. Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Warren: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. I want to be as brief as possible and I am afraid that I am already taking a lot of time. Other hon. Members want to speak.

I hope that the Government will answer these questions. There is no doubt that output at Gartcosh is of high quality. One would not transport Gartcosh steel 340 miles to the gates of Port Talbot just to sell it to British Steel's plant if that were not the case. There is no question about the quality there. Llanwern and Port Talbot have their own cold mill. As I said, I have always regarded Gartcosh as part of the Ravenscraig complex. I am told by those who work at Gartcosh, although I would not expect them to say otherwise, that Shotton cannot match the quality of Gartcosh, so why transport the steel down there? The danger is that if the quality is not there, whatever Austin Rover says, it can go away tomorrow and will not come back. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) about a mill going away and no people being there to resurrect it is perfectly true. Once lost, skilled workers never return.

Over the past year the workers at Ravenscraig and Gartcosh have achieved 14 records unequalled in any other part of the United Kingdom and I praise them for that. The argument that we can do away with Gartcosh and load Shotton and the other mills implies a loading of those mills to 94 per cent. of their installed capacity. It is not possible to operate such mills at that level of capacity without them breaking down and the customers going away. One will never be first source. One might climb aboard a second or even third source. Loading to such a capacity simply is not realistic. There is no doubt about it. If one looks at the other European companies which are in direct competition with the BSC, the best they can usually achieve is 80 to 85 per cent. I am told that the Japanese who went to Ravenscraig and Gartcosh and looked around, no doubt with their canny eyes slanted on opportunity first and advice second, let on to the workers at Ravenscraig that if one loads over about 85 per cent., it costs an extra £1 million in maintenance costs for every 1 per cent. over 85. Bang goes all the savings. There has to be more logic.

If I am right in my information about the returns that British Steel is expected to provide, which I do not dispute as being fair and reasonable, there is no way that many parts of the BSC, including Gartcosh and Ravenscraig, can ever achieve those objectives. We must have a second look.

6.12 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) reinforced my belief that if the people who will be voting at the end of the debate have listened to the arguments, not only during the debate but during the investigations of the two Select Committees, the result would be not different. So far, only the Secretary of State for Scotland has spoken against the motion. The Secretary of State made great play about the fact that Governments close steelworks. He mentioned the fact that the Labour Government had closed Glengarnock steelworks. I know that he is new to the job, but he should

know that the Labour Government did not close Glengarnock. It was still there at the end of the Labour Government's turn of office. At that time we were hoping that by further investment and with the opening of the direct reduction plant at Hunterston we would have a new complex—the Glengarnock-Hunterston complex—again to make Ayrshire an important steel area in Scotland. Glengarnock steelworks was closed under this Government. The new Secretary of State must recognise that.

The Secretary of State made great play about the fact that the steelworks at Glengarnock was closed and that we are no longer a steel producing area. He also said that we have had help from the BSC and from the Scottish development agency and that all the problems have now been solved. It is correct to say that we have had help. Many of the buildings have been refurbished and repainted. The environment has been improved. We now have a loch and a recreation area where trees and grass are growing, but the unemployment rate today is double what it was when the steelworks was there.

Last week the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) took a deputation from Cunninghame district council to meet the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). He was complaining about the economic situation in Glengarnock and was appealing for more Government aid. That aid has been refused by not only the Scottish Development Agency but the Industry Department for Scotland as well. I say to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) that if he believes the arguments about closing the steelworks and allowing BSC Industries to come in, he should go to Glengarnock and see the unemployment in that area, which is still over 25 per cent. and growing every day. I know that the Secretary of State is new to the job, but I put it to him that the same arguments used for closing Gartcosh will be put in two years to close Ravenscraig.

In discussions about Scotland I often hear people say that Manchester and Birmingham are a long way off. They feel they cannot compete because of the distance between the Scottish production units and the markets. The British market is flooded with steel from 1,000 or 2,000 miles away and even from Japan, which is 7,000 miles away. There is no talk about distance there. It is a sorry day when we hear the new Secretary of State for Scotland using the old English argument that Scotland is on the periphery of the United Kingdom, is too far away from the golden triangle and can expect only the crumbs, green fields and trees and all the sporting and recreational activities that go with them. I do not mind that from an English Minister, but I object to that argument from the new Scottish Secretary of State.

Mr. Rifkind: I think that if the hon. Gentleman reflects on what he has just said he will realise that he is being unfair. I was making exactly the same point. The fact that Ravenscraig already sells much of its product to purchasers south of Manchester means that its competitiveness will not be affected by the fact that the cold finishing will take place at Shotton. I was agreeing with the hon. Gentleman and making the same observation.

Mr. Lambie: I thought that all the right hon. and learned Gentleman's arguments were in the opposite direction. He was not speaking about Ravenscraig, he was listing the reasons for closing Gartcosh. I put that to the right hon. and hon. Members who were present during his speech.

As Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs I have a duty to put our recommendation on the record. Although it has been mentioned, no one has stated exactly what was finally recommended by an overwhelming majority:

"we are not convinced that Gartcosh and Ravenscraig can be treated as separate entities, as BSC asserts. We therefore recommend that any guarantee given to Ravenscraig be extended to include Gartcosh".

That recommendation had all-party support. Only two hon. Members voted against the final report—the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). Those two hon. Members are completely discredited in Scotland and are completely out of touch not only with Labour party opinion in Scotland, but with Conservative opinion, as the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro) has just shown.

To show deep feeling is in Scotland about the closure of Gartcosh, the officials of the Conservative and Unionist Association in Cunninghame, South have stated that they will resign on 31 March if Gartcosh is closed and that they will not put up a candidate against me in the next general election. I am happy about that, as long as they vote for me as well as not put up a candidate.

On 7 August 1985 the closure of the Gartcosh mill was announced. It was unfortunate that the previous Secretary of State for Scotland hailed that decision as a victory for Scotland because he said that it guaranteed the future for Ravenscraig. I could have accepted that if I had not known the people in the BSC with whom I have been dealing during my period as a Member of Parliament.

Chairmen of the BSC come and go. Even Ministers come and go, and now they are coming and going with greater regularity than ever. As a Member of Parliament, I have seen many chairmen in my time, but unfortunately Bob Scholey, now the chairman-elect of BSC, is still there. He is the man with the power, and he now has greater power than ever before.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Black Bob.

Mr. Lambie: No one wonders he is called Black Bob. He is a very strong and opinionated man, but, to be fair to him, he believes in what he is trying to do.

At the instigation of Mr. Scholey in 1982, the BSC tried to close Ravenscraig. At that time, the Select Committee investigated the decision with—I say this openly—the full co-operation of the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). At that time we were afraid that the BSC would get the Government's permission to close not only Ravenscraig but other integrated steel works in the United Kingdom. When the Select Committee made recommendations against BSC's intention to close Ravenscraig, we got full support from the Secretary of State. In fact, he used the recommendations of the Select Committee to fight in the Cabinet Sub-Committee and the Cabinet itself; in fact, to fight our corner for the future of Ravenscraig. That is why I am disappointed to hear the present Secretary of State say tonight that when he had the opportunity to fight his corner in the Cabinet for the nearly unanimous recommendation of the Select Committee to retain Gartcosh, he did not take it. In fact, he did the opposite.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman made a serious error in his first statement as Secretary of State, when,

[Mr. Lambie]

instead of saying that he would wait to receive the report and read the evidence of the Select Committee before making up his mind on how he should react to BSC's proposal, he stated clearly that he accepted it hook, line and sinker and that the Government would not interfere with the corporation's decision. I am afraid that, unlike the previous Secretary of State, the new Secretary of State has shown himself to be a yes man, at the beginning, not the end, of his career. Because of the circumstances facing the Government upon his appointment, he was afraid to rock the boat. He thought that they were in enough trouble.

I do not accept the evidence that was given to the Select Committee by the BSC, not because of the details about the number of tonnes, the costs and the mileage, but because I know the people with whom I am dealing in the BSC. Mr. Bob Scholey and Mr. Jake Stewart, the two most important men in the BSC, have told me privately and publicly that it is and has been their intention to close Ravenscraig, and not even to stop at Ravenscraig but to close other integrated steel works in the United Kingdom.

In spite of the assurances that the Committee received, I still believe that the figures show that since the decision to close Gartcosh was announced there has been a downturn in BSC's steel production and a tremendous increase in imports. As Mr. Scholey told the Select Committee, the BSC is no longer a British company and can no longer be thought of in that context. It is now a European company and must behave like one. It must consider not only Scottish but British interests. It must submerge our interests beneath those of the whole of the European steel industry. Capacity must be reduced, and even Ravenscraig must go, according to Mr. Scholey. I believe that the BSC will demand that the Government close Ravenscraig well before the three-year guarantee is up.

Whoever controls the order book of BSC controls the future of individual plants. Even now orders are being diverted from both Gartcosh and Ravenscraig. Once one takes orders away from a plant, the overheads remain the same and the plant's viability is in question. Most Scottish Members will have received a statement from the joint co-ordinating committee of Dalzell steelworks, which states:

"We are convinced that the BSC have made their plans years ahead with the ultimate aim to close Ravenscraig and Dalzell works.

The Corporation could not afford to close Ravenscraig or Dalzell at the moment because of purely business reasons but if the plans for the Scunthorpe complex go through they could close both Ravenscraig and Dalzell without any loss of business".

The joint co-ordinating committee is correct. The shop stewards committee of Ravenscraig and Gartcosh is correct. I believe that the Government and the BSC intend to close not only Gartcosh but Dalzell and, finally, Ravenscraig. That is why I hope that enough Conservative Members will vote with us, even if we do not win, to give the Government a fright and make even this Secretary of State, this failure who now holds that office, stand up and fight his corner in the Cabinet for Scottish interests, as he is supposed to do.

6.27 pm

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): This is the first opportunity that I have had to take part in the long-running debate on Gartcosh. I know that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), as Chairman of the Scottish Select Committee, has spent much time considering the connection between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig, and trying to save jobs at Gartcosh.

It is no comfort that we have been here before, at Linwood, Invergordon, and various shipyards and other steelworks in Scotland, when we have faced such problems. I have seen at first hand the worry and desperation of managers and workers as they search for yet another lifeline to try to save their factory and prevent its closure. Contrary to what is said by Opposition Members, Ministers and officials also search hard for ways of averting closures. A great deal of time is spent seeking new owners, new markets or new finance to prevent such closures, but at the end of the day factories that cannot be made viable cannot be saved, no matter how generous Governments may be with taxpayers' money.

Linwood, Bathgate and Invergordon closed not because Governments of both parties refused money, but because they could not compete in their markets. Steelworks have not closed because Governments have refused finance. Literally thousands of millions of pounds have been poured into the BSC, yet under Labour and Conservative Governments many thousands of jobs have been lost—more than half the work force. That is the context in which we should be viewing the problem of Gartcosh.

Labour Members choose to ignore the facts and in particular they ignore what is happening in the international steel markets. World demand is flat, not expanding. World capacity, however, has considerably increased in recent years, not least as less developed countries become self-sufficient in steel. Steel is also being substituted by other products, not just in motor car manufacture, which is important, but in other industries. It is absurd for Opposition Members to try to suggest that if, perchance, they were in Government there would be a return to building as many ships, motor cars at Linwood or other vehicles at Bathgate, as would justify the expansion or continuation of steelworks which are not viable today.

British Steel's task is to maximise its share of a rather static market and to do that against strong competition in Europe. The corporation's survival depends on its ability to compete. It is our job to take a realistic view of how best the BSC can compete in world markets.

I know that the Labour party may seek some short term advantage in ignoring such matters. Its protests are loud and it loves protest rallies. Frankly, Labour has nothing to offer the steel industry in Scotland but marches, parades and speeches at rallies. To that extent the Labour party is not just misleading itself but is misleading workers in Scotland.

Mr. Hugh McCartney (Clydebank and Milngavie): Is the hon. Gentleman trying to suggest that the only protests against the closure of Gartcosh and the potential closure of Ravenscraig are coming from the Opposition Benches? The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend who is sitting beside him, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and others including the Church of Scotland, every local authority in Scotland and the mass of the Scottish people, are objecting to the Government's proposals. Why does the hon. Gentleman claim that it is just the Opposition who are protesting?

Mr. Fletcher: My point is that the Opposition do nothing but protest, march and make speeches. My hon.

Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) considers the matter in a much more intellectual manner than any Opposition Member.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has provided welcome and independent information supporting the Government's policy of maintaining five major steel plants in the United Kingdom. He has also confirmed the Government's commitment to Ravenscraig. That is welcomed on this side of the House, but not by the Opposition. These two pronouncements provide cautious hope for the future, but the only long-term guarantee is the continued ability of the BSC in Scotland to win orders and be viable, just like any other industry.

I well understand the feelings of the workers at Gartcosh and their families. I am aware that none of the facts about world markets can bring satisfaction to them today. There is much to be done by the BSC and BSC Industries to assist the Gartcosh work force and to help in the area generally. Other hon. Members referred to that today.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) referred to the need for the BSC to explain itself and speak up for Scotland — at least I believe that that was the gist of his speech. I agree with him on that point. I told the chairman of the BSC that the corporation is too silent and leaves too much of its case to be presented by others.

For example, I was asked to do a radio programme at the week-end with Mr. Brennan and the hon. member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), I asked who was to represent the BSC on the programme and was told that nobody would. The BSC had, however, made a statement. I said that if BSC was not going to speak on the radio and defend a decision that is essentially its own, I could see no reason to do that for the corporation.

I conclude by once again asking the BSC to make its case, to contribute to the debate in Scotland and, above all, to make clear what the future of the workers and their families at Gartcosh will be.

6.37 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): This debate is probably as important for the future of Scotland and the Scottish economy as it is for Gartcosh and the workers at Gartcosh. I have rarely encountered an issue that has so united the Scottish people. The Scots feel very strongly on this issue, and many believe that they have been abandoned within the British state.

The results of an opinion poll in the *Glasgow Herald* are significant and bear out what was generally believed. The STUC sent a letter to the Prime Minister stating that as a result of that poll 80 per cent. of the Scottish people wish Gartcosh to be retained. The poll showed that 64 per cent. of Conservatives, 83 per cent. of Labour supporters, 91 per cent. of the Scottish National party, and 86 per cent. of the alliance, all voted in favour of retaining Gartcosh. That is clear recognition that Gartcosh has a Scottish context and is extremely important.

There may well be complex arguments about the future of the Scottish steel industry within the British context. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) mentioned that earlier, but that point was properly exploded by the measured, useful and helpful contribution of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) on the basis of his experience in the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. He was able to relate the benefits of retaining Gartcosh as part of the Ravenscraig complex.

Mr. Hickmet: The position of the British Steel Corporation cannot be looked at in isolation in Scotland. The whole of the corporation must be examined as a viable national entity. With great respect to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), constituencies such as mine have suffered a great deal because of the cutback by British Steel. Of course, the Scots are not prepared to bite the bullet in the same way as we are.

Mr. Wilson: We are fighting for the retention of the Scottish steel industry, and it is of no value to us if there remains a British steel industry, but none in Scotland. It is our duty as Scottish Members of Parliament to stand up for our steel industry. If, perhaps, the hon. Gentleman had been more effective in his duties, he might still have one in his constituency. We do not accept the hon. Gentleman's defeatism about the future of the steel industry, either in Scotland or in the United Kingdom.

We also do not accept the British Steel Corporation's word on these matters. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) put his finger on the matter when he said that the BSC was not prepared to come out and defend its decision. All the evidence that we have received shows that Gartcosh is an essential part of the complex at Ravenscraig, and if that complex is closed the death knell of Ravenscraig is assured.

I believe that it is the long-term policy of BSC to extinguish the Ravenscraig strip mill and all its ancillary mills. I have no doubt at all about that. That message can be seen in the attacks being made on the other mills, on Clydesdale and Dalzell, and particularly in the threatened cutbacks in capacity at Ravenscraig.

Steelworkers have told me that the management of the BSC is anti-Scottish. They say that the management does not want a steel industry in Scotland and prefers to concentrate and consolidate in South Wales and Lackenby.

There is no future for the Scottish steel industry if we allow Gartcosh to close. The former Secretary of State for Scotland caved in in the Cabinet. I am afraid to say that the new Secretary of State has not directed his mind towards the importance of the issue. He does not appear to have seriously gone to the Cabinet to ask for a rethink.

Mr. Michie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilson: No, I shall not give way. Time is short and I wish to make my points briefly. The new Secretary of State should have gone to the Cabinet and had the matter reviewed.

I do not intend to go over the ground that has been covered about the importance of Gartcosh and its efficiency. I was prepared to believe the Scottish steel industry managers when they came to us with their thick volume of evidence about the slumping export orders and the rise in imports. They gave us their views on what was happening from the information that they had from within the corporation.

The Government are not prepared to listen, even when the arguments are overwhelming and the evidence is clear that BSC will lose its market share of cold rolled steel to the continent. They prefer to do nothing. It is an insult to our intelligence to maintain that Ravenscraig has a future

[Mr. Wilson]

beyond three years. The EEC might be prepared to give some assurances, but it does not run the steel industry. The BSC runs it. From the information that we have had from the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) it would seem that the BSC has no faith in the survival of the Ravenscraig complex.

If Gartcosh closes, it will be much more difficult to regenerate the Scottish economy. I do not believe that the political map of Scotland can remain the same after that betrayal. The attack on Gartcosh and the Prime Minister's contemptuous refusal to meet the marchers shows that Scotland has no future within the Union, and the Union is rapidly turning sour within Scotland.

The House, likewise, has not covered itself with glory. If the vote tonight goes against Gartcosh because of hon. Members who have not listened to the arguments, in future no one in Scotland will be able to look to the House for protection. The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs failed to give a lead and to use its proper political skills to get out its report initially. The debate is one week too late.

We should consider the parliamentary Labour party's role. I regard it as disgraceful that, in pursuit of political opportunism, it abandoned the debate on Gartcosh as the campaign was reaching a peak. It did not just let down the marchers and the STUC lobby. It clearly signalled to the Government that, in United Kingdom terms, the Scottish steel industry was a minor matter.

It is hardly surprising that the Industry Department for Scotland and Scottish Office Ministers who had been let off the hook rushed to issue a statement announcing Gartcosh's sentence of death. If the Labour party is not prepared to accept responsibility for that, the onus remains on it, with all its parliamentary strength in Scotland, to show how it intends to use that strength. I had a dusty refusal from the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland to a proposal that I made about the leaders of the Scottish political parties. It is up to the Labour party to come forward with initiatives to try and save Gartcosh.

I do not regard the fight as over. It is not final. If the work force decides to occupy the mill and fight the closure, it will have my party's support. Tonight's decision is, in many ways, more important than Gartcosh, because the House is on trial. If it betrays Scotland and lets Scotland down, Ministers will find that they have started a crossing of the Rubicon that will take Scotland to independence.

6.42 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): If anyone were to seek to betray Scotland, it would be someone who criticised the conduct of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs whilst refusing to serve on it. The Committee looks after Scotland's interests. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) has a cheek when he metes out such criticism, although I agree with his criticism of the Labour party which, when it had the opportunity to find a bigger stick in Westland with which to beat the Government, cancelled the debate last week and this week prolonged the statement with its endless questions so that we had less time to discuss this subject.

With the Gartcosh mill, we are dealing with a tragic closure of a plant which is out of date, which makes a product which is in surplus, which needs £20 million investing in it and which has a product which is still subject to European quotas. Thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friends, Shotton products are no longer subject to European quotas. Opposition Members ask us to accept the Gartcosh mill as Ravenscraig's lifeline. Ravenscraig's lifeline will turn into a noose.

Ravenscraig serves the most efficient mill in Europe, and 70 per cent of its poducts go to Shotton. Shotton makes a product which is in high demand—coated sheet. Hon. Members keep mentioning Japanese motor cars. The first lesson to be learnt about Japanese motor car manufacturers is that their cars last longer because they use coated steel. Gartcosh cannot produce coated steel; Shotton can. Ravenscraig, supplying Shotton, will be moving its product into a growth market instead of into an out-of-date mill.

The case which has been put is that there will be greatluy increased demand and work for Gartcosh, which is not operating to capacity. At the same time, we are told that demand is reducing. People must make up their minds. The International Iron and Steel Institute agrees that the world economy would have to grow by 3 per cent. every year to maintain the present level of demand, never mind increase it.

I understand the feeling in Scotland, but Opposition Members would serve their constituencies a great deal better if they were more honest and told their constituents that, whichever party was in power, Gartcosh would close. If there were a Labour Government now, Gartcosh would close.

Mr. Lambie: No.

Mr. Forsyth: Yes, it would, because all EEC Governments agreed to end subsidies to their steel industries from the end of last year. Every member of the Community must submit its steel industry corporate plan for scrutiny by the Commission. If the Commission is not satisfied that it is viable, it will not accept it. I am no interventionalist, but the Government's genius is shown by the fact that they managed to put together a viable scheme which maintained Ravenscraig as an operating plant. That is remarkable.

My right hon. and learned Friend has told us what the EEC has to say about Ravenscraig's future. That is good news. The Commission also said that, on any assessment, BSC's assessment of likely sales stretched the limit of credibility. Far from having a pessimistic BSC, the Government and BSC are working hand in hand to save the maximum number of jobs and maintain a viable steel industry that can generate resources for investment to secure long-term employment. What is wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with it. Opposition Members are using the closure of Gartcosh as a stick with which to beat the Government and they deserve the Scottish people's complete contempt for doing so.

There is one other argument which has not been put forward. It relates to the customers. The customers also employ people. Metal Box, Tube Investments and all the so-called domino industries employ people. What will happen to them? What did those industries say to the Select Committee? With one voice, they said that if BSC were not allowed to get down its costs and bring its overcapacity into line with demand they would pay more for their basic products, which were on average, 40 per

cent. of their final product costs. That meant that they would lose market share in the struggle to sell their product overseas, which would mean that jobs would be lost.

Those people who say that they stand against Gartcosh's closure because they are worried about unemployment are hypocrites. They seek to tie Scotland to an industry without a future and to a position where it cannot produce high quality steel at the lowest possible cost, and thereby will put more people out of work.

The most offensive charge made during this hysterical debate was that made by irresponsible newspapers such as the *Glasgow Herald* which did not put both sides of the argument. The most damning charge made was that those of us who are struggling to see a viable and competitive steel industry in Scotland are anti-Scottish. There is nothing anti-Scottish about the closure of Gartcosh. Six major closures are going on south of the border now in the steel industry to meet the same EEC plan from which Scotland is benefiting. Two of those plants are twice the size of Gartcosh and I challenge the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to tell us their names.

The Scottish economy is booming. We are now the second most prosperous region of the United Kingdom. We are growing in manufacturing output at twice the rate of the national average. All that Opposition Members can do is to offer Scotland a future which has more to do with our industrial past. Instead of embracing change and facing the challenge of the future, they go for the soft option. We can all say to our constituents that we are in favour of keeping open Gartcosh, but if we want to serve Scotland and our constituents we must face up to the truth and offer some genuine solutions.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): It is not worth answering the misinformed bigotry of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). I find it difficult to speak of the social consequences of the closure of Gartcosh and the threat of closure to Ravenscraig in my constituency, which would destroy the community. It would cause misery to many good friends.

The financial objective of the British Steel Corporation, which is required by the Government and by the European Commission, has been accepted by the corporation. The financial objective is that the BSC should be viable—that profits should be at a level which give a reasonable rate of return on the capital employed after depreciation and interest. The BSC has adopted a milestone on the "road to viability", so called by the corporation. The corporation calls it "financial self-sufficiency", that is, sufficient profits to cover interest costs, capital expenditure roughly equivalent to depreciation, and increases in working capital, but giving no return on equity.

This milestone of financial self-sufficiency is not sufficient to achieve the viability that the Government are demanding. It is, as BSC has said in its additional memorandum—which the Secretary of State has still not digested—

"only a step on the road to viability".

As the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) said, further milestones and higher profits will be needed.

In the BSC's memorandum, under a paragraph headed,

"Why a cold mill closure is sufficient to meet current objectives and should not be deferred"

it says:

"the required profit for self-sufficiency".—

that is the first milestone—

"can just be reached provided all actions identified".—

that is including the closure of Gartcosh—

"are vigorously pursued."

There will be further milestones, and to reach them further action will be required. This points to the inevitability, in the BSC's view, of the closure of Ravenscraig. The Government have not had the courage to spell that out.

I put forward three propositions of increasing seriousness for Ravenscraig. On the BSC's forecasts, the profits of the BSC will be higher without Ravenscraig. The arguments which the BSC has put forward for the closure of Gartcosh would also justify the closure of Ravenscraig. On the BSC's forecasts, not only could Gartcosh be closed without physically reducing finished steel deliveries, but Ravenscraig could also be closed when current investments at Llanwern and Port Talbot are complete.

The first two propositions depend upon the BSC's forecasts, but the third does not. Without Gartcosh there is no level of demand at which Ravenscraig could be viable, since the finishing mill capacity of the BSC could be almost fully loaded without Ravenscraig. What the Secretary of State said, put at its kindest, is that the BSC will be able to afford the charity of keeping Ravenscraig open. Steel workers know better than to rely on BSC charity.

If Ravenscraig has a future—as I firmly believe it has—it must be by the BSC winning a bigger share of a bigger United Kingdom market, and a bigger share of the European market for finished steel. With Gartcosh, Port Talbot and Llanwern fully loaded, 60 per cent. of Ravenscraig's output could go to the BSC finishing mills. Without Gartcosh, only 20 per cent. can go to the BSC finishing mills. On the BSC's criteria there is no way in which that can be sufficient to make Ravenscraig viable, whatever the level of demand. If the BSC were honest it would say that that is true, but it is irrelevant. It says that Ravenscraig has no future, with or without Gartcosh, because there will not be sufficient demand.

The BSC's abject surrender in the European Community—accepting an increase from only 65·4 per cent. to only 68·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom cold strip market, when the United Kingdom motor industry is only supplying 30 per cent. of the value added in United Kingdom car registrations—is pathetic. It amounts to an acceptance of no recovery in British manufacturing despite the prospect of falling north sea oil revenues.

The sheer incompetence of the Department of Trade and Industry's Ministers and officials, and of the BSC, in representing British steel interests in the European Community is unbelievable. At the suggestion of Mr. Scholey, who expected their commendation, I saw Mr. Cadieux, the chairman of the EC steel task force at the Commission, and his officials. I made sure that Mr. Denham, the BSC head of corporate planning and market forecasting, accompanied me.

The critical question is British cost competitiveness. EC officials talked of the sterling-deutschmark exchange rate as an irrelevance. The EC officials were talking like second-rate Chicago undergraduates who would never make the graduate school. They were like the Chancellor at his most porcine in 1980-81, when he was pursuing monetary targets regardless of the exchange rate, which he said had no relevance to Britain's underlying competitiveness.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

MM. Cadieux, the gentlemen who the Secretary of State has been quoting this afternoon, and who had the responsibility for testing the BSC's future viability, had not asked the Directorate-Generals II, he did not ask Dr. André Louis Dramais, who prepared the economic forecast on which the EC strategic document was based, for an assessment of the effect of a shift in the deutschmark-sterling exchange rate in favour of the United Kingdom. Dr. Dramais confirmed the obvious to me—that it would increase United Kingdom exports and industrial production, and so United Kingdom steel production.

Neither the BSC nor the DTI Ministers and their officials have sought any exploration in the EC of the effects of a restored industrial competitiveness in the United Kingdom. The Minister of State, when I saw him with his officials, was not able to produce a shred of evidence in that direction, whether as a result of falling North sea oil revenue, changed monetary objectives, or improved indu ·ial efficiency.

Hon. Members who saw the magnificent presentation by Austin Rover today of new technology cannot doubt that things are happening in the British steel-consuming industries. The Government, however, have accepted the failure of their own economic and industrial policy. An industrial recovery with proper co-ordination between economic and industrial policy, never mind the further benefits of a degree of international co-operation if it can be achieved, would produce substantial increases in demand for steel which this Government do not bother to investigate.

I believe that the possibility of recovery justifies the rentention of Ravenscraig. If it does it justifies still more the retention of Gartcosh, because without Gartcosh it is difficult to see how Ravenscraig can be retained whatever the level of demand. The incompetence and the scabrous evasions of the BSC, of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish office, have been highlighted by contrast with the remarkable campaign fought for the retention of Gartcosh by Gartcosh and Ravenscraig shop stewards. For the BSC and Ministers to throw away such quality of leadership, wantonly and carelessly by their managerial and political evasions and incompetence, is outrageous.

6.59 pm

Mr. Allan Williams (Swansea, West): With a view to keeping within the time limit, I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I show some discourtesy and do not give way.

I should like to examine two propositions. The first is that the impending closure of Gartcosh is not, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) suggested, the inevitable consequence of a world recession but a direct consequence of the Government's policies combined with an extrapolation of those failures into BSC's projections. The second is that, consequent upon the closure of Gartcosh, when taken in conjunction with the Government's obsession with privatisation, the closure of Revenscraig becomes virtually inevitable if another Conservative Government come to office.

It is important to remember certain background factors about Gartcosh. According to evidence from BSC, 70 per cent. of its sales are made in the United Kingdom and 30 per cent. are made abroad and are mainly unprofitable but just help with overheads. During the past 25 years, the sale of steel in the United Kingdom has had a nearly perfect correlation with the level of manufacturing output. During the past 10 years, the sale of cold-rolled plate and sheet—and therefore the products of Gartcosh—has had an even more perfect correlation with the level of manufacturing output.

The future of the steel industry as a whole, and of Gartcosh in particular, is inextricably linked with the activity of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom. Ian MacGregor emphasised that at a meeting of the all-party minerals group on 19 January 1983 when he said:

"Two thirds of steel goes into capital goods. It directly reflects manufacturing investment."

I argue that it is the collapse of manufacturing investment and manufacturing production that has imposed the death sentence which the Government are now trying to execute on Gartcosh.

If we consider what has happened in manufacturing investment and manufacturing production since 1979, we begin to understand the Gartcosh predicament. Manufacturing investment has fallen year by year. In 1983 it was 33 per cent. below the level that the Government inherited. Even this year it is 20 per cent. below what the Government inherited and it is only as high as the manufacturing investment which the country enjoyed a quarter of a century ago. Britain has lost more than £10 billion of manufacturing investment through failing to sustain the level of investment which the Government inherited. The House should remember what Ian MacGregor said—two thirds of steel sales are directly related to manufacturing investment.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central mentioned the level of world trade and tried to perpetuate the idea that all this is the result of a world recession, but that also does not bear analysis. From 1979 to the end of last year, world trade in manufactures increased by 27 per cent. We do not have even static manufacturing output. Output has fallen back below the 1979 level and below the level of the three-day week in the last days of the Heath Administration, so much so that the chairman of ICI says that 30 per cent. of his customers have disappeared. It is much the same for BSC: about 30 per cent. of its customers have disappeared because of Government policy.

Concurrently with cutting investment and output of manufactures, the Government have increased manufactured imports—steel on wheels—by 45 per cent. The failure of Gartcosh, as they see it, is the consequence not of a world recession but of policy failures, imposed on the country by a series of deflationary budgets, six years of high interest rates leading to six years of high sterling, which has meant that our goods have been too dear and foreign goods have been too cheap. BSC has based its projections on the assumption that the failures of the past six years are to be the pattern of the next 10. That is why we believe that if only we return to the levels attained when Labour left office the future of the steel industry will be substantially different. As it is, we are discussing the possible closure of Gartcosh as a direct result of the Government's commitment to monetarism. When the Gartcosh site is levelled, a headstone should be put there reading, "1986: Gartcosh—victim of an experiment that failed."

The Secretary of State tried to pretend that there were no consequences for Ravenscraig. We should bear it in

mind that Ravenscraig will be judged not just in the context of what happens with Gartcosh but in conjunction with that other arm of Government policy—privatisation of the steel industry. The House should remember that Gartcosh takes 25 per cent. of Ravenscraig's production.

Robert Haslam told the all-party minerals group on 12 December 1984 that his remit was to prepare steel for privatisation, including, if possible, the central core—the strip mill—of the steel industry. He said that, to achieve that, he had to make a surplus of £300 million which could be obtained only if one of the great integrated steelworks was closed. That was contained in options advice that he put to the Government. The Government say that they guarantee Ravenscraig until 1988 and that after that it will be judged on its merits. I am a cynic and I note that that happens to be just the other side of a general election. I cannot help asking what the assurances are worth.

The chairman who gave the assurances how now gone. The Secretary of State for Scotland who gave assurances has now gone. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who gave assurances has now gone. I noticed that the new Secretary of State for Scotland did not lay his dead body on the line assuring Ravenscraig's future. There was no suggestion from him that he will take the chance of resigning if Ravenscraig is closed, as we all know that it will if these policies are implemented.

As for the assurances of the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, well, what are they worth after the events of the past week? A new phrase has been coined — once Britan, twice shy — for promises from that source. The Opposition are not willing to risk the jobs of Scottish steel workers for an IOU written in invisible ink by the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

BSC says that Ravenscraig will not suffer from the closure of Gartcosh because it will rearrange its overheads and it will be part of a profit centre in a division rather than an individual profit centre. Such arguments are valid only until privatisation, but what then? It is not enough to make a profit of £300 million. There must be enough headroom to make a profit that can be distributed to the shareholders as well. If it is sold as a single entity, BSC will, before sale, close one of the great integrated plants to maximise the sale price or, at sale, private owners will close one of the plants to maximise profits. If the strip division is sold as separate plants, each plant will become a profit centre. BSC might try to maximise sale return by closing one in advance to remove surplus capacity, but, once they become independent profit centres, each and every plant — and all of them are nearer to the markets than Ravenscraig — will be competing and exploiting their market advantage.

Mr. Henderson *rose*—

Mr. Williams: I have already said that I cannot give way because I have so little time.

In the context of profit maximisation, which would inevitably follow privatisation, Ravenscraig would operate major disadvantages. It would have lost its 25 per cent. Gartcosh sale, it would have had no serious investment in the years immediately before privatisation, it would incur higher transport costs, other plants nearer the markets would have surplus capacity and be fighting to win them, it would have lost the largesse of BSC accountants spreading its overheads in the BSC structure and it would have to face hard-headed accountants from the private sector. On 23 October 1985, Robert Haslam said:

"I think if you looked at it with private sector eyes, as I do, then you would see that nobody would maintain the kind of product portfolio we have at the present time."

Listen to this:

"We do that deliberately to assist these mills . . . Nobody in private industry could maintain the present product portfolio we have."

That is the future that is being offered in conjunction with the closure of the main market for Ravenscraig. That is why it is time that the Government stopped trying to deceive the Scottish people.

The problem is not only Gartcosh or even Ravenscraig. If the Government's policy is implemented and Gartcosh and Ravenscraig go, what else goes with them? What chance will Scotland have of attracting substantial new industry, when it has no steel making capacity?

Ravenscraig is saved only until a general election, and then it will be saved only if the Tories fail at that general election. I say to Scottish Tory Members that tomorrow the whole of Scotland will be watching to see which way they vote tonight. If they are not seen to have voted to save Scottish jobs, when the time comes, they will lose theirs.

7.10 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said in his opening speech that the debate was bound to be contentious. As some hon. Members know, I was in Scotland when the announcement was made about the proposed closure of Gartcosh. In my original incarnation as Minister of State, Department of Employment I saw the matter unfold. I was moved to my current responsibilities and it was the first issue to which I was asked to address myself. Of course, I am aware that the loss of 550 jobs at Gartcosh and one or two more, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out, is a matter that should be taken extremely seriously. It would be easier to avoid the decision, but if I did so that would be cynical, because it would be a decision taken for purely political purposes. Sometimes, however unpleasant or unpopular, or whatever the political consequences we must take those decisions. If there is over-capacity, as there is in the steel industry not only in Scotland and England, but in Europe, some action must be taken.

The debate has centred on two distinct, but closely intertwined themes. The first is how the British Steel Corporation is managed and how it relates to the Government. The second is how the proposed closure of Gartcosh fits into the agreed strategy. I hope that on the first point—setting aside privatisation of which I am in favour — the aim of a profitable competitive steel industry would be common ground. My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) made that point perfectly. In distinct terms, he said that a profitable and competitive steel industry ensures more jobs.

In 1979-80 the BSC had a loss of about £1·25 billion as a result of written down over capacity, the steel strike, and overmanning. We have come a long way since then. In the first half of the current financial year the corporation made an operating profit, which reflects extremely well on the management and on the work force. During that time there were continuous and serious difficulties in Europe. However, there is still some way to go before the

[Mr. Peter Morrison]

corporation can stand on its own two feet, service its borrowings, provide the necessary capital expenditure and provide a return on the millions of pounds that the taxpayer has put into it.

Dr. Bray: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morrison: I have a time constraint and, like the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, I wish to finish my remarks as quickly as possible.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: There is nothing ideological about wanting to get the corporation onto a sound financial basis. Other countries with Socialist Governments are doing the same. To achieve that aim one agrees a strategy, appoints the board and lets it manage. Last August's strategy was agreed and announced against that background. The retention of Ravenscraig was agreed by the board for the foreseeable future—three years.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said, that strategy has been examined in great detail by the Commission with advice from independent experts. They have confirmed that, with five integrated plants, including Ravenscraig, and taking account of the other features of the strategy, including the closure of the Alphasteel hot strip mill and Gartcosh and assuming reasonable stability in the steel market, the BSC can achieve full viability within that period. The strategy has, therefore, allowed not only the remaining Government finance required by the BSC to be paid under Community law, which is important, but has laid down the path towards full viability, which the Government regard as necessary.

At the same time we must recognise that the corporation has little room for manoeuvre. Plus points are hard to come by in the steel industry. Within the agreed strategy, therefore, what might be quite minor savings, as the Chairman of the Select Committee pointed out, such as those arising from the Gartcosh closure, assume a considerable importance.

If the Government were to prevent the BSC from implementing the closure, without some strategic reason for intervening, how could the BSC confidently implement the other measures, which, together with Gartcosh, will make the difference between success and failure? I assure Opposition Members, who have made the reasonable point that this is a Scottish matter, that the same is happening in other parts of the United Kingdom. Monks Hall and Jarrow have been closed. There have been cuts at Rotherham and, in Scotland, at Clydesdale, and the significant closure of Tinsley park. The decision is in no sense an anti-Scottish manoeuvre.

I hope that we shall not continue to hear the argument that Ravenscraig cannot succeed. As a hon. Member who does not represent a Scottish seat but who has Scottish connections, it depressed me to hear on several occasions the way in which the Opposition talk down Scotland. Scotland's opportunities in industrial terms are there for all to see.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 258.

Division No. 46] **[7.18 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart

Redmond, Martin.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Norman Hogg and
Mr. Allen McKay

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Timothy Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the fundamental importance to Scotland and to the United Kingdom as a whole of the Government's and British Steel Corporation's aim of restoring the Corporation to financial self-sufficiency and sustained profitability; and endorses the Government's decision not to intervene in the Corporation's commercial decision to close the Gartcosh plant.

Schools (Government Policies)

7.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this debate is starting rather late. I have no authority to limit the length of speeches, but I hope that they will be brief, because a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.31 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move,

That this House, deeply concerned about the inadequate supply of books and equipment, the overcrowded classrooms, the poor maintenance and repair in too many of our schools, and the alienation and demoralisation of the teaching profession, calls on the Government to provide extra resources in order to improve educational standards in the United Kingdom and secure a long term settlement of the teachers' claim for proper, professional levels of pay.

The Labour party has chosen this subject for debate in Opposition time because there is now a major crisis in our schools, a crisis for which the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Government are largely responsible. As we know from recent events, including a lobby of Parliament today, parents all over the country are deeply disturbed and worried about what is happening, about the shortage of books and equipment, about the shabbiness and disrepair of many schools, and above all about the impact that the prolonged pay dispute is having on their children's education.

Understandably, parents want to know what the Government are doing to resolve the crisis and when the Secretary of State will take his responsibilities seriously. It is a question that parents are constitutionally and legally entitled to ask. The right hon. Gentleman is drawing a salary as Secretary of State for Education and Science, so it must be he and the Government of which he is a member who in the final analysis are responsible for the state of education in Britain.

I remind the House of the Secretary of State's position, because the right hon. Gentleman now seems to be so remote from the reality of what is happening that he gives the impression that the crisis in our schools has nothing to do with him. Most observers would agree that the high point of the right hon. Gentleman's term of office was in January 1984 when he made his Sheffield speech about raising the level of achievement in our schools. On behalf of the Labour party I welcomed the main thrust of that speech. I said that we shared the objective of raising standards, but I made it quite clear that a strategy to improve standards would not succeed without extra resources. I emphasised that standards could be improved only with the co-operation and support of teachers, and I concluded by saying that we would judge him not only by his words but by his actions.

Two years after that speech, the Secretary of State's fine words and promises have a hollow ring. Far from having laid the foundations for major advances, our schools are in desperate straits. By any standards, the record of the right hon. Gentleman is a disastrous one. Reports from his own advisers, Her Majesty's inspectorate, repeatedly warned the Secretary of State of the damage that inadequate levels of resources were doing to standards and to standards of provision.

The inspectorate's last report presents a depressing picture. More or better books are judged to be necessary

in just over one quarter of schools visited. More or better equipment is needed in about a quarter of both primary and secondary schools. In a quarter of the schools the inspectorate assesses that more or more appropriately qualified teachers are required. The latest information is that 1,250,000 pupils are in classes of over 30.

The inspectorate is particularly worried about the state of the repair, maintenance and decoration of school buildings. It says:

"The continued neglect of the school building stock is not only storing up potentially enormous bills for the future but is also seriously affecting the quality of work and achievement of many pupils and providing a grim evironment for them and their teachers."

Matters would be even worse were it not for parental contributions. The inspectorate emphasises that these tend to

"widen the differences in the level of resources available to individual schools and, by their nature, cannot be relied upon when planning future developments."

Summing up, Her Majesty's inspectorate says that, contrary to what the Secretary of State has complacently told us,

"there is a statistically significant association between satisfactory or better levels of resource provision and work of sound quality, and between unsatisfactory levels of provision and poor quality of work."

The inspectorate concludes by warning the Secretary of State that

"it seems unlikely that present levels (of provision) will be sufficient to enable schools to respond successfully to the national and local calls for improvements in pupils' achievements and in the curriculum."

The simple truth, understood by parents, pupils and teachers, is that when resources are in short supply it is difficult to maintain existing standards, let alone improve them.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): In attacking the Government, is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Labour party has no responsibility in the matter? If he is saying that, does he remember that it is only a few months since Liverpool education authority, which is Labour and Militant controlled, locked the teachers out of their schools and the children were kept out on the streets and addressed by two Labour Militant MPs? The hon. Gentleman sat in a London town hall with the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers militant teachers, and Labour Left-wing councillors, and allowed him to say, "I am delighted that teachers in the schools are on strike in this area, including two special schools."

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind the House that this is a short debate. Interventions make speeches longer, particularly interventions from hon. Members who are waiting to catch my eye.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman would do better to make his own speech when the time comes. The Labour party nationally has made its position quite clear about Liverpool, and Liverpool is not running the country—it is the Secretary of State and the Government who are doing that, and that is what we are debating.

It is depressing that the Secretary of State is planning to continue the cuts in school spending. According to the White Paper, over the next three years the Secretary of State plans to cut spending on primary schools by 7 per cent. in real terms, and on secondary schools by 10 per cent. Overall, spending on education is estimated to be a tenth less in 1988-89 than it is in 1985-86. The Government's order of priorities is demonstrated by the fact that we are spending on education only four fifths of what we spend on defence. The education share of total spending continues to decline. If the Secretary of State was putting up a better fight in the Cabinet for education, we might have sympathy for him. What we, and I think parents, too, find so hard to take is the enthusiasm with which the Secretary of State offers up the education budget for Treasury surgery.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that since 1979 there has been a reduction of 1 million pupils in schools, and that within the next few years there will be a further reduction of 750,000, yet in real terms there is a reduction of only 0·2 per cent. in resources? Against that background, it is up to the authorities, including Labour-controlled education authorities, of which my constituency, Stafford, happens to be one, to allocate priorities. In the constituency of Stafford the district auditor has just stated — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be very brief.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman has made the case for me not to give way. By two long interventions, he and the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will have prevented other Conservative Members from getting in tonight.

It is true that at a time when the numbers of pupils are falling spending per pupil has risen, because the fall in spending has not been so rapid. However, if we consider the difference between 1983-84 and 1984-85, we find that spending per pupil is falling. In any case, the Government should have been taking the opportunity of falling rolls to use the extra resources to try to tackle some of the problems to which the inspectorate has been drawing attention.

As for the teachers' dispute, from the Government's complacent inaction I can only presume that they do not fully understand the damage that the dispute is doing to the education of the nation's children. Already millions of pupils have had their schooling disrupted for 50 weeks, and in Scotland, which will be covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), the dispute has lasted for 14 months. For many secondary school pupils, one fifth of their education has been affected. If there is not a settlement soon, attitudes are likely to harden even further. As we saw at the conferences of the two biggest teachers' unions last week, proposals to disrupt examinations were defeated only narrowly. It would be a tragedy if later this year examinations were disturbed.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman should not encourage them.

Mr. Radice: I am not encouraging them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear my last sentence. I accept that he does not listen carefully.

Many parents are also anxious about the impact which the dispute is having on the new general certificate of secondary education examination, which informed obervers believed in any case is working to an unrealistic timetable. The longer the dispute goes on, the more lasting will be the damage. The Secretary of State's handling of the teachers has been disastrously inept. Indeed, he is one of the main reasons why the dispute has lasted so long. It is time that he had the honesty to acknowledge that.

[Mr. Radice]

There have been appalling blunders. It was typical of the Government's sense of timing and fairness that at a critical moment in the negotiations last July they announced massive increases for top people while telling teachers to hold back. As I know from personal experience, that announcement effectively scuppered the talks. It was also typical of the Secretary of State that he should have been such an enthusiastic supporter of the Government's decision on top salaries.

It was characteristic of the Government that they refused to fund the local authority employers' structure package and only revealed how much they were prepared to offer at the beginning of August, six months into the dispute. Also, of course, the sum of money was significantly less than the amount behind the local authority package. Since his initiative five months ago the Secretary of State has been content to go on repeating his offer — an offer which the unions, of whatever sort, have rejected.

We have had the appointment of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) as a kind of public relations consultant in residence to the Secretary of State, but slick presentation cannot make up for a failure of policy.

There have also been leaked reports, authorised or otherwise, of Cabinet Committee meetings to discuss the teachers' dispute, but nothing but leaks have come out of the meetings. The only intervention from the Government in recent weeks was the extraordinary briefing by the celebrated Bernard Ingham to Sunday newspaper correspondents outlining a Prime Ministerial "get tough" plan. The local authorities were told to take teachers to court. Not surprisingly, that met with an almost uniformly hostile reception, even from some Conservative councillors. I must give the Department of Education and Science credit, even it was embarrassed. A DES official was reported as saying that that was not the Department's view.

Throughout the dispute it has been the Labour party which has worked to bring peace. With my active support, Labour took the chair of Burnham and made improved offers in July and in October. As we speak, the Labour local authorities, using the good offices of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, are trying desperately to reach a settlement, but with a conspicuous lack of assistance from the Government.

The problem of the local authorities throughout the dispute has been that the Government refused to provide enough extra resources to meet the legitimate aspirations of the teachers. Indeed, the Government's unfair public sector pay policy and their policies on local government expenditure are at the heart of the dispute. It is no good Conservative Members expressing sympathy for the teachers, as I understand many of them have, and badgering the Secretary of State for action—apparently at a meeting last night they did that — if at the same time they back levels of rate support grant which make a settlement almost impossible to achieve.

The position of the Labour party is clear. We know that the teaching force is one of the main determinants of the quality of education. We know that good teaching involves great commitment, energy and skill. We fully understand that many of the reforms that are needed will not only make fresh demands on the teachers, but cannot be effectively implemented unless they have the support of teachers.

There is a strong case for assessment to improve teacher performance. A Labour Government would strongly support such a development. We are right to expect much from our teachers, but we should know by now that we will not get the best from the teaching profession unless teachers are paid a proper professional salary. It is no good asking teachers to behave as professionals unless they are paid as professionals. It is a widely accepted fact, even inside the DES, that teachers have fallen behind significantly.

The Secretary of State told the House in 1984 that good candidates were still coming forward at the existing salary levels. I remember that famous remark. If that is the case, how is it that applications for teacher training courses are down by nearly 30 per cent.? It is a tragedy for the nation when, as I know—I am sure other hon. Members know also—potential candidates are being advised by teachers not to go into teaching. A Labour Government would make a new long-term deal for the profession a priority. If we were in power we would provide the extra resources —and it would not be a great deal extra—to enable the negotiators to reach an honourable settlement of the 1985 claim. We would then immediately set up a quick-acting, independent inquiry, whose findings the Government would be committed to fund.

Mr. Greenway: Inquiry into what?

Mr. Radice: Such an inquiry—if the hon. Member will be patient—would look at how teachers' pay had fallen behind that of comparable professions. It would take account of the changing demands on the profession since the Houghton report, and it would propose mechanisms —and I know that the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has said sensible things about that—for ensuring that the real value of the new salary levels were maintained because we cannot have this kind of disruption every two years. It just is not good enough for our children. We have said that, because the salary increases are likely to be substantial, they would need to be phased in over the first few years of the next Labour Government.

We are proposing a new deal for teachers and a new deal for education. Parents and teachers know that the school system is in crisis. They know that the Government are responsible, and have the main responsibility for resolving the crisis. They will no longer accept — nor should the House—the worn excuses and tired alibis of the Government and of the Secretary of State. The Government must now provide the extra investment in schools which is so desperately needed if educational standards are to be raised and if there is to be a long-term settlement of the teaching dispute. Investing in the future of our children makes good sense. If the Secretary of State does not understand that simple fact, he should make way for one who does.

7.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes Her Majesty's Government's policies to improve the standards and quality of school education for children of all

abilities; notes that expenditure per pupil is at record levels; support the Government's efforts to secure better value for money from that expenditure in future; and urges Her Majesty's Government to continue to work for a lasting reform covering teachers' pay, pay structure and duties, facilitating the recruitment, retention and motivation of teachers of the quality needed to underpin these policies.'

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) supported his party's motion by listing a series of shortcomings that are also referred to in the motion. I want to remind the House that the facts are that spending per child in real terms in schools is at a record high level, that the pupil-teacher ratio is at a record low level, and that the proportion of over-sized classes — still regrettably too large—is at its lowest level ever and had been coming down.

I should like the hon. Gentleman to be more honest even in quoting shortcomings, as he did, from HMI's annual report. I do not contradict his references to HMI's cataloguing of some shortcomings. It is not the practice of Members of the Government Benches to deny what is true. The hon. Gentleman would, however, have been more honest if he had also mentioned the references by HMI, in precisely the same report, to the reason for many of the shortcomings — that many local education authorities choose to deploy the large sums of money available to them for schools in relatively wasteful ways.

I refer the hon. Member to the HMI report. What HMI says is that better management of resources by a number of local education authorities would enable the shortage of equipment and of books and the backlog of maintenance to be subtantially reduced. I am not saying that it could be totally removed, nor am I saying that that is true of all local education authorities, but I certainly accept some shortcomings and I hope that Opposition Members——

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke) *rose* —

Sir Keith Joseph: No, I am sorry; I must make progress to leave time for hon. Members to make their speeches.

I should be grateful if Opposition Members would recognise from the same HMI report that there is scope for redeployment in many local education authorities through better management of resources.

The hon. Member for Durham, North teased me with not fulfilling any of the tangible implications of my speech on behalf of the Government at Sheffield two years ago. I remind the House that the Government have maintained real spending per child at record levels, that we have improved the pupil-teacher ratio, and that we have reduced the number of over-sized classes. As further evidence of the acceptance of the implications of that Sheffield speech, I will quote the substantial increases in money for in-service training — an indispensable part of the improvement of career prospects and of professional development that we offer to teachers—and will call in witness the very large sum that we have conditionally made available for the increase of teachers' pay.

The hon. Gentleman has once again taken only part of the evidence when he refers to the declining trend which he identifies in future spending plans for schools. The fact is that after this coming year the Government have, in their public spending plans, made no decision yet on the allocation of money between the different services, including education. So the hon. Gentleman cannot draw any conclusions from that.

The immediate issue behind our present debate is the tragic dispute affecting so many of our schools. It centres not only on pay but on what pay is for. The whole House will surely accept that it is tragic that so much damage is being done to pupils, to parents and to head teachers who have the extra burden placed upon them, and in terms of the strain in many classrooms, as some teachers seem militant and without a care for the pupils while many others must be in agony of mind about the disruption that they are helping to cause.

I want to pay tribute to those many teachers who, whether grouped in one union or members of other unions, are refusing to disrupt. I want to pay tribute to the heads and their deputies who are bearing such an intense burden of responsibility.

One of the main ingredients of the dispute is pay. Up to two years ago — I understand that this is common ground—there was an abundance of candidates of the right quality for teacher training. Even at that time, there had been for many yars a shortage of candidates with certain skills—mathematics, physics, craft, design and technology, and, in some cases, religious education and business studies. Moreover, two years ago there were very few, if any, anecdotes of good teachers quitting the classroom.

Sadly, I have to say that during the past two years those three factors have deteriorated sharply. There is an adequacy of candidates of the right quality for teacher training vacancies, but and adequacy in numbers only rather than the abundance of two or more years ago. The shortage of certain teaching skills is even more serious. There are ample anecdotes about good teachers quitting the classroom.

The Government, however, recognised early on in the past two years that it would be necessary for the total pay of teachers to be increased in real terms, to enable local education authorities to recruit, to retain and to motivate people of the right quality as teachers.

In 1984, on behalf of the Government, I offered local education authorities and the teachers an opportunity to put together a bargain that I should find good for children's education and that could be afforded by the nation. I promised that if such a bargain were offered to me I should take it to my Cabinet colleagues and ask for the money. The local education authorities honourably tried to put together such a bargain, not every detail of which pleased me, but it was possible that during negotiations it could have been improved. Alas, in December 1984 the National Union of Teachers walked out of the negotiations.

In 1985 I filled the gap in the quantity and offered a specific sum of additional money for teachers' pay on condition that the teachers' unions accepted terms on duties and a new career structure, coupled with much more promotion. When the local education authorities embodied that extra conditional money in their offer, the National Union of Teachers led the teachers' unions in rejecting the offer after a mere 20 minutes.

Let it be understood, therefore — I say this in response to the challenge by the hon. Member for Durham, North that the Government should act — that the Government have acted. They have shaped that request into a bargain that would benefit the children. The Government were ready to recommend that the additional money involved should be paid two years ago. For more than half a year the Government have offered further

[Sir Keith Joseph]

additional money, but the teachers' unions led by the National Union of Teachers, have refused even to discuss it.

The Government have acted. Extra conditional money is available. The Government recognise, by this conditional offer, that more money is needed in real terms. We made an offer that would be in addition to the annual negotiated pay award. However, we have deliberately made the additional money available only on condition, because we believe that it is essential that if education is to be effective teachers should accept a defined range of duties in return for decent pay.

When the hon. Member for Durham, North said that his party's policy would include the setting up of an inquiry, I was interested to note that the catalogue of items to be dealt with by the inquiry did not include teachers' duties. Does the hon. Gentleman accept on behalf of his party that in return for a reasonable pay structure, a promotion structure and in-service training, teachers should accept a range of duties associated with their contracts, or is he at one with Mr. Jarvis, who was recently reported by the Press Association as saying that the employers were seeking to persuade the teachers to "surrender their weapons"? Does the hon. Gentleman believe that acceptance by the teaching profession of duties in return for reasonable pay is not correct? Does he challenge the Government's request for a range of duties to be accepted by the teaching profession in return for reasonable pay, or is he at one with Mr. Jarvis in viewing the duties of the teaching profession as merely weapons of disruption?

Mr. Radice: The Opposition are not in government, although some people believe that we are because the Secretary of State has been doing too little. The inquiry ought to concentrate upon teachers' pay. That is the main reason for teachers being so alienated. That is why they feel so demoralised. The Secretary of State would be well advised to follow that advice. I am not the mouthpiece of the NUT or of any other teaching union. The Opposition speak up on behalf of education.

Sir Keith Joseph: We must all hope that the discussions that are being held under the auspices of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service are able to help the local education authorities and the teachers' unions to reach a satisfactory conclusion. ACAS, the employers and the teachers' unions know what is the Government's position.

Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I hope the House will reject the motion and support the amendment.

8.5 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I am not going to trade figures tonight. We are going to have, I fear, the usual debate, with this side repeating what are by now well-known facts about Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the NCPTA reports, and so on. From the other side there will be well-worn excuses to the effect that spending per pupil is higher than ever. We accept that, but we also realise—and the Secretary of State must realise it, too—that the expectations of parents are higher now than they were. There seems to be a genuine gap between perceptions and statistics. This may partly be because falling school rolls cannot be translated as quickly as the Secretary of State for Education and Science would like into savings. The economies of scale in the classrooms just do not work like that.

It is ironic that in this situation the Government should be happy to boast about high per capita expenditure and lower pupil-teacher ratios when these facts not only go against the whole of their previously declared economic policy but when many of the facts that make up their statistics are created by local education authorities whose policies are officially disapproved of——

Mr. Hunter: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Freud: No, I shall not give way, so that the hon. Gentleman will have time to make his own speech. But a more significant reason for the disparity between the two sorts of information coming out of the education service is that expectations have been rising. Sometimes it seems as if we expect our schools to solve all our other problems virtually single handed. Certainly many Conservative Members would be prepared to blame our schools for what they perceive to be the problems and the evils of modern society. It is more than the fact that many people now regard schools as a complete child minding service, or that the demands on teachers, for instance, to be able to teach computing have grown. The pressures that are thus loaded on to the education service are therefore immense. The scale of the crisis to which the motion refers is well known to the hundreds of parents who came today to central Hall, Westminster. Their pressing concern, and ours, is for a resolution to the teachers' dispute.

Let me say first of all that this problem has been almost wholly self inflicted by the Government. The dispute is a product of the assault on local government which has restricted the freedom of the employers to negotiate and of the erratically enforced and unfair public sector pay policy. there will be counties that will be unable to afford the 30 per cent. contribution on education support grant. They will be unable to afford to bid for their own money to supervise school meals or they go into penalty. I should like to know what the Secretary of State has to say about this.

Cash limits are not some immutable law. They reflect the political priorities of the Government. They say clearly to me, as they said to those London parents and to all of us this afternoon, that this Government do not value the education service. I do not want to say a great deal about the dispute——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I bet the hon. Gentleman does not.

Mr. Freud: —because it is currently at a very delicate stage.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is backing both sides. That is typical Liberalism—backing every horse in the race.

Mr. Freud: I believe that it would be wrong to say too much about the dispute other than to wish all parties in it well. I hope that what ACAS is doing will give us a short period of stability in which we can arrive at a long term settlement.

I wish to tell the Secretary of State that, on free market criteria alone, teachers' pay is too low. He knows it and he accepts it, and something will have to be done. There

is increasing evidence that the problems of recruitment, retention and motivation, which were said to explain the top people's award, are true of teachers.

The Secretary of State talked of the adequacy of supply. I ask him to read the advertisements in *The Times Educational Supplement* any week if he does not believe that teachers are being tempted out of the profession. In the last few weeks the paper has reported that, for the first time, ILEA primary headships are going to be advertised outside the area. In the Midlands a respected tertiary college — a place where people think it is good and interesting to teach — is having enormous trouble recruiting its teaching staff.

I wish to quote from a few letters which I have received from people in the last week. The first is from a teacher in Cambridge whose children are receiving free school meals and who writes:

"It is bad enough having to struggle week in and week out, not being able to afford ordinary things for the family. But when people, with no conception of the demoralising and deliberating struggle to make ends meet in private and put on a brave face in public, take advantage of their privileged position and easy access to the media to tell the country that I am better off than I actually am, it hurts."

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Who wrote the hon. Gentleman's speech?

Mr. Freud: The hon. Lady asks who wrote my speech. A constituent wrote the letter to me about what her Government are doing to education.

A teacher in Hertford writes:

"The children are being down graded . . . I respect children. Their future needs everything we can put into it."

The head of a primary school in Oldham writes:

"To express my sense of frustration through the written word is extremely difficult . . . It is going to take us months if not one or two years to catch up on lost work."

The head of a special school in Southampton writes:

"When teachers who normally give freely and unstintingly of their time (and I can vouch that mine always have) begin to take action which is so detrimental to a school, something is drastically wrong . . . When a leader fails to appreciate the value of those in the team, the team collapses. This is happening in education . . . The Government has lost the trust and respect of teachers."

The chairman of a Northampton parents association writes:

"The sufferers in all this, of course, are our children, and ultimately the rest of us who depend upon an educated population to drive this country forward over the next few years."

It is not Opposition hyperbole to say that the crrisis has never been worse, yet the Secretary of State did have one good, essential idea, to try to make comprehensives genuinely that, by merging the examination at 16-plus and making it a certificate of what a child can do rather that what he or she cannot do. But I say to him now that that good idea is also threatened. Even without the strike, the timetable was too short and the resources too measly. With the strike, the whole scheme is threatened, and a generation of our children is at risk.

We urge the Secretary of State to think again about this.

Mrs. McCurley *rose*——

Mr. Freud: I will not give way, as I told the hon. Lady. All the vision and grand design will never get off the ground unless the basic commitment, the bottom line, is there first.

The right hon. Gentleman's tenure of office will leave a legacy of lost opportunities—of the Government and of the children whom, as the 1944 Act makes clear, it is his duty to educate. Just as he will not solve the teachers' dispute by bludgeoning them back to work, so he will not solve the other problems of our educational system by abrogating power and dictating terms.

I believe that to have any chance of functioning effectively and fairly, the education service must be collegial and co-operative, and this applies above all in this Government's handling of the teachers dispute. We ask the right hon. Gentleman to think again before the crisis grows out of all human proportion.

I said to the parents of ILEA pupils in Westminster Central Hall today "Only the Government can provide the conditions necessary for a long term solution. Only they have the cash." I say now to the Secretary of State that there has to be a lasting deal, via an inquiry—and our amendment, as the Secretary of State will see, links pay and conditions under the terms of that inquiry—via a commitment of central Government money and via a recognition of the worth of teachers.

8.15 pm

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I shall be brief, as many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

The motion is very wide. With regard to the first part, I do not think that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) advances his case if he attempts to exaggerate it or to suggest that it is all due to what has happened since 1969. The fact is that more money is being spent per pupil today than when I became Secretary of State in 1979, and there is a lower pupil-teacher ratio. I think a lot of what the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) said stems from the fact that parental expectations have risen. There is other equipment in schools—audio visual equipment computers—which was not there hitherto. Of course, there are problems in schools. I repeat that I do not think that the hon. Member for Durham, North advances his case if he suggests that the problem ought to be laid at the door of the present Government.

I want to come immediately to the second half of the motion concerning the teachers' dispute. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that this strike is doing much damage to children's education. It is doing damage directly by affecting their opportunities for education. Time lost and opportunities missed at school can never be recovered. It is doing damage perhaps even more seriously indirectly by the example that it is giving. I believe that the blame for that must very fairly and firmly be put mainly on the leadership of the National Union of Teachers. I believe — I have said this before, and I repeat—that the teachers are totally wrong in the way that they have chosen to go about this matter. Teachers ask to be treated as professionals.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I will not give way. I shall be very brief.

Mr. Skinner: They found plenty of money for the top people, did they not?

Mr. Carlisle: I shall come to that in a moment. As I said, the blame must be put very largely on the leadership of the NUT. The union asks that teachers be treated as professionals. I believe that teachers should be so treated. I do not believe that the language of industrial action and strife is the language of the classroom or the language of

[Mr. Carlisle]

the professional. I believe that the teachers' claim, limited to the re-indexing of Houghton is, as it stands, unrealistic. I believe that the teachers are wrong to have pulled out of talks on the re-forming of the structure. I believe that they must accept that pay and conditions must go together. I believe that they are totally wrong to refuse to go to arbitration.

It is ironic that when in 1981, as Secretary of State, I changed the conditions of arbitration by requiring both parties to take part — until then one party had been allowed to go individually—I was attacked and opposed by the NUT for so doing. However, the NUT is now taking advantage of that change in the rules to prevent its own claim going to arbitration. I think that it has much to answer for. The NUT leadership is not only damaging but harming those whom it represents.

Having said that, our real concern must be that we cannot allow actions such as this to drag on. Some definitive proposal must be put forward. We must get away from ann anual dispute over teachers' pay, and the damage that that has done. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agrees that it is vital that teachers should feel secure and that they are fairly and properly remunerated for what they do. I know that the Government accept that teachers need an increase in salary, because they have proposed a package of £1·25 billion.

Clearly, teachers feel that they have a grievance, which I believe is that they feel that they are receiving less remuneration than their qualifications and work deserve and would receive elsewhere. While I fully support the need to restrain public expenditure, it is not possible to achieve savings in public expenditure at the cost of the individual employed in the public service. I have always believed, and still do, that it is reasonable that those in the public service should have a system to examine their remuneration that takes account of comparable salaries paid to people of comparable qualifications and work elsewhere.

Therefore, no doubt to the surprise of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I go on to say that one way in which that may be achieved would be by having a review body for teachers. We have one each for doctors, nurses, police and top salaries, and those review bodies can take account of all considerations. I accept my right hon. Friend's point that either that review body must be able to look at conditions of service as well as pay, or that at least there must be agreement on the conditions of service on which the review body is asked to adjudicate the salary. In the end, the review body does not have the final word — the Government have the right to decide the implementation of the review body awards.

We must have a permanent body that teachers can genuinely feel will take account, in its decision, of what they believe are the legitimate interests in the salaries that they fear are slipping. I urge my right hon. Friend to think carefully of the possibility of such an approach being made.

8.22 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) said that the teachers' dispute cannot go on as it has in the past 12 months, and I am sure that there will be broad agreement on that. However, he avoided the consequencies of his argument. If the industrial action had not taken place, would we have had such broad agreement on some of the parameters of the dispute? For instance, would we have had broad agreement about the decline in take home pay for teachers or about the collapse in morale not just for teachers but for college lecturers and university teachers? Would the Government have been prepared to listen to some of the arguments from Tory benches? We would not, and it is sad that only through industrial action have the teachers been able to move the Government or the Tory Benches towards a settlement.

We have driven a group of workers who regard themselves as professionals——

Mr. Skinner: The Government have.

Mr. Fatchett: My right hon. Friend is right. The Government have driven a group of professionals, people who aim to make a contribution to our society, into taking action that is out of character. The Government must bear the consequences of this. They have the ability to settle this dispute, but sadly they do not have the will. I fear, and I suspect that many patients fear, that the reason why the Government have allowed the dispute to continue is that they feel that they will gain some short-term politial popularity from doing so. They may be desperate for that, but, while they play political games, children are suffering from the Government's lack of activity. It is about time that the Government showed that they have the will as well as the ability to settle the dispute, and made sure that our children enjoy the education that they deserve. There is a way to settle the dispute, and I ask the Secretary of Stte to look for it.

It may also be worthwhile to broaden the debate away from the immediate crisis in our schools and in teachers' pay to the issue of the collapse of morale in education. All those who work in education or who have children in education sense that the collapse is taking place. It manifests itself in various concrete forms such as buildings in need of repair, books in short supply — all the problems that we see in inner city schools as well as others. That has been evidenced by the report of the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations and by the Government's inspectors' reports. That much is clear.

Whatever the Government say, there is damage to the education of our children. I cannot understand an argument to the effect that, if somehow we control the supply of money going into education, children will benefit. It never happens in private education where money seems to be readily available. The state system suffers and therefore the majority of children suffer.

The consequences of that are at last becoming clear to some Tory Members, not just the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South who asked for a settlement of the dispute and made some suggestions about how it could be done. Other hon. Members are beginning to realise that the Government's education philosophy is causing irreparable damage. This week, the leader of the Tory group on ILEA resigned, complaining about the Government's policies. Perhaps even more interestingly, the director of education for the London borough of Hillingdon, which is Tory-controlled, also resigned. He said that he was giving up his job because he was expected to become a damage control contractor and that his job in education was no longer about advancing the service or

furthering children's requirements but simply about preventing and forestalling further damage. That is an indictment not from the Labour party but from people who have been members of the Conservative party and have supported the Government's policies. That is damaging for the Government.

Mrs. McCurley: The hon. Gentleman should not place too much emphasis on the fabric of schools. My school, which I left in 1961, was condemned in 1929. At the end of the sixth form, 95 per cent. of the pupils went on to higher education. It is the quality of teaching that matters and not where one teaches.

Mr. Fatchett: That is a strange philosophy. The logic of the hon. Lady's argument is that we allow schools to fall down around us, which is not one of the most sensible arguments. The image of education is worrying to parents and the prospects are that it will get worse. I hope that those Tories who rebelled against the rate support grant did not do so simply because they were worried about their electoral prospects. They must realise that the RSG will make further inroads into the education system. I believe that some, although not all, voted out of altruistic motives and a belief in the educational system.

Public spending plans will make our education system worse in the future. We have to fight for education. The Government are putting to us the economic doctrine that by making cut after cut in education provision, we are performing a service that will put the country back on its feet economically. That is nonsensical because the best form of expenditure is to invest in our future generations and make sure that they have the right to a good education. Given their philosophy, the Government do not seem able to offer that. I would say that what divides us in this debate is our view of society and the role of our children in it. I believe in the importance of education. Education is fundamental to a civilised society, and has to be provided by a properly funded and supported public sector, not by any other means.

I fear that many people see the Government as having no time, respect or affinity for public education. The Government are in the business of undermining public education to allow the growth of private education and the private sector. We must in the country as a whole get the argument for education and state education back on the political agenda. We believe in education, and it must be given a high priority. That is what divides Labour Members from Conservative Members, who see in education a means of saving money and supporting a particular political doctrine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that what we would expect is a Secretary of State to fight for the education system. That is what parents expect. They are not getting it at the moment, and that is why, if we believe in education, we need a change of Government.

8.31 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) is mistaken if he believes that there is any political capital in the teachers' dispute. It is bad news for parents, bad news for children and bad news for teachers.

I shall refer to two issues: first, the teachers' dispute; and, secondly, to a matter of more continuing importance which was highlighted by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) when he was Prime Minister.

In 1976 the right hon. Member called for a great debate on education. At that time — the period of the last Labour Government — it was recognised that education was facing a crisis.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has detailed the Government's response to the teachers' demands. I believe that there are few Secretaries of State who could have extracted from the Treasury £1·25 billion to be made available over four years for teachers' pay. That gives the lie to those who say that the Secretary of State does not stand up in Cabinet for education. That amount is in addition to all the normal increments that teachers might have expected during those four years.

I am anxious for this dispute to end. I believe that the offer represents a fair deal for teachers. It would enable the introduction of a salary system that would reward better teachers. A fair offer is on the table, and I am convinced that it should be taken up.

My experience of education is confined to the state sector. I therefore understand the importance of providing what my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) described as a ladder of opportunity. It is important that such a ladder is provided for parents who have limited means. In the past, that ladder of opportunity was provided by technical schools and grammar schools. Technical schools have gone, and such grammar schools as remain are under threat. That ladder has now been kicked away. Five of my sons attended Lawrence Sheriff grammar school in Rugby. I therefore have firsthand experience of the positive force for good that comes from a first-rate school.

We should seek to raise the level of schools to that of the best. I do not believe that that can be achieved simply by voting more and more millions of pounds. If it were that easy, the problem would have been solved, because over the past 20 years spending on education has doubled. It is not so much the money that matters, but what is done with it, and despite doubling the money, standards have not improved. As my hon. Friend the Member Dartford (Mr. Dunn), the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, said in a recent speech, despite the fact that funding has increased, the number of young people from blue collar families attending university has fallen. Increased funding does not of itself mean improved standards. It does not guarantee better education.

I am convinced that more parental involvement will help, because nothing so concentrates a parental mind on schools as having a child at school. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has introduced a number of measures to improve standards in schools. For example, he has introduced improvements in teacher training and measures to restructure examinations. Teacher appraisal, with appropriate rewards and parental involvement, will help, but do they go far enough?

There is an interesting benchmark available to us to judge performance. In the past, results in Northern Ireland were less good than in other home counties, but that situation has been reversed, and in Ireland, despite the bombings and the terrorists, examination results are steadily improving and have become some of the best within the United Kingdom. Therefore, I think that the House should ask itself what is going right in the Province. Why do they alone swim against the tide? Can it be—

[Mr. J. F. Pawsey]

shock horror—that it is due to the retention of selective education? Can that be the difference? Judged by the quality of examination results, it certainly could well be.

I wonder whether the House has the courage to accept that perhaps selective schools—and remember they exist in France, Germany and the Soviet Union—hold the key to excellence in education? Perhaps my right hon. Friend should consider positive discrimination to enable the emergence of centres of excellence throughout the United Kingdom. Mainland standards might then stand more favourable comparison with those in Northern Ireland.

Is this, then, the real crisis? Is the problem facing us one of money, or one of method? My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford has referred to this point, saying that there appears to be more interest in what resources go into education than in what actually comes out. It would therefore seem that, despite the best ever pupil-teacher ratio, the best per capitation ever, the added year's education and the doubling of spending, education still causes us great concern, and rightly so.

If the Northern Ireland example is any guide, perhaps a child is most likely to progress in a selective system where there is a variety of schools. More choice is needed. I read only yesterday in *The Guardian* that the Department of Education and Science might be seeking to obtain greater control of educational funding. If that is the case, and if it is able to direct 10 to 15 per cent. of educational funding into new areas, I suggest that centres of excellence represent new areas to which that funding could be directed. That would assist the more academic pupils, and it would help those who have a technical bias. In 1976 performance failed to match the rhetoric, and I trust that that will not be the case on 1986.

8.39 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): About 10 days ago, a new Secretary of State for Scotland was appointed. The right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) came to the Scottish Office with the reputation of a man who thrives on crises. During his political career he has benefited from various Government crises. The Falklands crisis in 1982 catapulted him out of the Scottish Office into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Westland crisis has helicoptered him back to the Scottish Office. The right hon. Gentleman has come back to a Department that seems to stagger from one crisis to another.

I said publicly at the time of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's appointment that a new Secretary of State would present an opportunity for someone to take a fresh look at these crises and to solve some. Earlier today, he shirked his responsibilities with regard to the crisis facing the Scottish steel industry. He is now attempting to wash his hands completely of the gravest crisis that Scottish education has ever faced.

The teachers' dispute in Scotland has been dragging on for about 18 months—even longer than the miners' strike. Although it is not all-out strike action, selective strike action has reduced the learning week of some children from five days to two or three days. Work-to-contract action has had an adverse effect also, resulting in a lack, or even the non-existence, of curriculum development, threatening examinations and limiting sports, recreational and the extra-curricula activities that enrich a school.

Mrs. McCurley: The hon. Gentleman talked about curriculum development. Is not the union that is prolonging the strike the same union that encouraged the Government to accelerate the introduction of the new system in Scotland and is now grumbling about it?

Mr. Canavan: The blame must lie with the Government. A partnership between local education authorities, teachers' unions and the Government is needed in curriculum development, as well as in other aspects of education. The major fault must rest at the Government's door.

Many parents are worried about the damage done to their children's education by the dispute. I blame not the teachers but the Government. The Secretary of State for Scotland has responsibility for education in Scotland. The intransigence of the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram)—are largely to blame for the crisis in Scottish education.

It is more than 11 years since the last major independent review of teachers' salaries. A Labour Government implemented the Houghton report, giving teachers the largest salary increases that they have ever been awarded. For most teachers, the increase was about 30 per cent. Since then, teachers have fallen massively behind in the earnings league table. It must be frustrating for young people who, after leaving school, spend four or five years at a college or university studying to be teachers to find that if they had gone straight from school into the police force they would have been earning more. It must have been even more frustrating for young teachers to note, a few months ago, that the Government were handing out increases of 17 per cent. or more to the so-called "top" people, none of whom do a day's work as valuable as a teacher's.

I have always claimed that one of a Government's prime duties is to ensure not just the maintenance but the improvement of educational standards. It is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that adequate resources are channelled into education. The most valuable education resource—I may be in at least partial agreement with the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley)—is not the bricks and mortar that make up a school, or chalk, blackboards, books, audio-visual aids and computers. The most valuable educational resource is a good teacher.

An adequate supply of good teachers will not enter the profession unless there is a reasonable degree of job satisfaction and remuneration. Teachers rightly feel that that is not the case at present, so there is great dissatisfaction and low morale in the profession. That is why there is an overwhelming demand in Scotland for an independent review of teachers' salaries. The majority of Scottish teachers, Scottish people, representatives of Scottish local education authorities and Scottish Members of Parliament want such a review.

The Secretary of State is firmly against such an independent review. Scotland is lumbered with a Secretary of State who does not represent the views of the people of Scotland. He is just a puppet, with no mandate from the Scottish people to implement his policies on education or

anything else, as he was rejected by more than 70 per cent. of the Scottish people at the last general election. Since then, his support has dwindled to an irrelevent rump. If this puppet of a Secretary of State and his colleague the Under-Secretary of State — the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South—are too afraid to stand up and fight for Scottish jobs, industry and education, the honourable course is to do what the former Secretary of State for Defence did. The future of Scottish education and Scottish children is much more important and precious than the future of all the helicopter companies in the world.

8.47 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The Labour party invites us to accept the proposition that there is a crisis in our schools, and I think that all of us can readily do that. We are witnessing a disruption in schools that has been continuing for 11 months in England and Wales and for longer north of the border. We are witnessing a sharp decline in the respect in which the teaching profession is held. We are witnessing acute anxiety by parents and pupils. The leaders of the National Union of Teachers are engaged in a kind of self-caricature, sulking in their tents, refusing even to sit in the same room with their fellow teaching unions in the negotiations.

It is curious that the Warwickshire representatives of the NUT declined to allow me to see the ballot papers the union had used in balloting its members on the 12 September offer and this January. It is difficult to believe that all the NUT's members have been made objectively and fairly aware of what has been put on offer.

Mr. Hunter: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that the propaganda issued by the NUT about £1·25 billion being a non-sum has been the height of dishonesty?

Mr. Howarth: It is extraordinarily unrealistic.

We are witnessing an appalling example to pupils by those charged with the responsibility for educating them. We are seeing militancy, aggressive self-interest at the expense of others and hypocrisy. The British people are rather good at hypocrisy, but this is the worst case yet. Teachers' representatives are arguing that it is in the interests of the education service that they should disrupt pupils' education.

It is not only a crisis in education but in politics, because the Labour Party refuse to condemn the disruption in unambiguous terms. It is extraordinary that the official education spokesmen for the Labour Party have tabled an early-day motion explicitly supporting disruption in universities.

It is a crisis of passivity on the part of the British people that they are prepared so meekly to put up with the disruption. It is extraordinary and disappointing. It is unimaginable that such a crisis would have been allowed to persist in France or Germany.

All these events are a manifestation of a more profound crisis in education in the country. I believe that the crisis dates from a time when the Labour Party and the Left decided to subordinate educational values to political purposes.

At the north of England education conference in 1966 Tony Crosland urged in favour of comprehensive schools that the central and irresistible argument against the 11-plus lies in the field of social justice and equality of opportunity. I think that both sides of the House would strongly believe in social justice and equality of opportunity but we would not accept that an ideology or theory should be allowed to ride roughshod over the immediate interests of the children in our schools.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I would like to continue, because we are short of time. The strategy of the Left has been to exploit that bridgehead and it continues to unfold. Mr. Peter Hain told a fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference in 1982 that the Left must go into the community, into the estates. We have seen how they have done that in Tottenham and Handsworth. He said the Left must go into the schools—we saw how they did that at William Tyndale and recently at Daneford—and they must go into the work place. We have seen that in the coalmines and News International.

Mr. George Nicholson, Labour member of the Inner London education authority, and designated as authorised member for political education, has written:

"I regard my job as mainly an organisational one. It's like a subversive campaign . . . we are not just talking about History or Geography, we are talking about subjects right the way across, from Music to Maths to English. I don't believe there is any subject untouched by politics . . .

I don't believe in neutrality . . . people who think that they can be devil's advocates and think that they can present all sides of the argument and be objective are just hiding behind their own political values . . . as a socialist education authority . . . the starting point is that we live in an unequal society and political education is about organising and thinking critically for change . . . I think everyone has a big hang up about bias and indoctrination."

The journal *Education*, a trade journal of local education authority officers and administrators, describes the 1985 elections to the Inner London Teachers' Association, the largest branch of the National Union of Teachers—the largest teachers' union in the country:

"For the first time in the turbulent history of the union in London a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party is unopposed as treasurer and the choice for the other offices lies between two groups, Rank and File '83 and the so-called Socialist Teachers Alliance, whose members are composed of either Trotskyists, Maoists, ultra left, hard left or near anarchist . . . (some of them in the Labour party) and between these groups alone. No candidate of more moderate complexion, even Communist party, let alone ordinary left or right wing Labour or Alliance or Tory is standing."

The Times Educational Supplement had a remarkable and disturbing feature in its edition on 10 January. In an article entitled "Ultra Left tightens grips on ILEA schools" Hilary Wilce wrote:

"Heads agree that there are up to a dozen schools in the city which are virtually in the hands of extremists . . . A number of moderate teachers who work in highly militant schools have spoken to The TES about the situation they work in. All refuse to be named . . . They say there is an atmosphere of daily intimidation, verbal abuse and professional harassment for anyone who does not fall in with the prevailing political line . . . In one school a militant NUT representative told the staff room he wanted to see the head 'gassed in his bog'; in another a staff room notice was pinned up after strike action saying 'We feel a great sense of power and excitement at being able to disrupt the school'."

I do not want to get this out of proportion. We are talking about a minority, but they have captured the Inner London Teachers Association and they have a significant voice in the National Union of Teachers.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right to pay tribute to the professionalism, dedication and skill of the great majority of teachers. However, I think all of us, I hope the Opposition agree, will be disturbed by what

[Mr. Howarth]

I have recounted. Over the past 20 years we have seen centuries of slowly nurtured educational tradition uprooted. We have seen the abolition of the grammar schools. Since the recent county council elections when I am afraid some of the citizens of south Warwickshire were soft-headed enough to vote Liberal and let Labour into control in shire hall, even the grammar school that Shakespeare attended is under threat because they propose to abolish it.

There are only 150 grammar schools left in the country and how enormously important it is to preserve them and their sixth forms. The old sixth form tradition is being eroded. For example, we have seen the development of the teaching of peace studies. We have seen organisations such as Teachers for Peace and Schools against the Bomb increasing their influence in schools. They argue some extraordinary things. There is a theory about structural violence. It is not just about banning the bomb. The scope of peace studies is extended to suggest to children that the structures of our society are violent because they are oppressive. All that is intended to inculcate an attitude of, to use the term of the Labour party motion, "alienation" from our society. It is not a matter of responsible open debate based on facts. It is a matter of subversively seeking to influence the perceptions of children and it is the antithesis of genuine education.

The proponents of peace studies ignore history. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right to emphasise the importance of the study of history in our schools, because it is only by studying history that we can gain a profound sense of why certain groups within a society or even countries themselves reach the point of antagonism at which peace breaks down. Do the teachers of peace studies tell the children about the history of the peace movement in the 1930s? Do they teach them about the contemporary history of eastern Europe and the Gulag Archipelago? If Opposition Members can cite any instances where they do, I will be relieved and I will certainly be surprised. Do they ever put the case for having an army or a police force? I think not.

In the document "Teaching London Kids" there are a series of articles by lesbian and male homosexual teachers who have, using the jargon, come out. They argue that it is their duty to encourage children to challenge society's norms of sexuality. I do not think the parents of those children see that as the duty of teachers.

We have multi-cultural education. We have seen the disgraceful hounding of Mr. Honeyford in Bradford. Educational values and honest analysis were subordinated to aggressive political ideology. He was the victim of abuse, vilification and intimidation. It was his persecutors who intruded politics into the education of the children at Drummond middle school, not Mr. Honeyford, who had the intolerable courage actually to challenge some of the orthodoxies and nostrums of the Left.

What has happened to educational standards over the past 20 years, against this background? One of the disturbing developments is that people do not read any more. A Euro Monitor survey found that even in the so-called A-B category, 64 per cent. acknowledged that they did not read books. That is portentous for the future.

We are appalling linguists in this country. As for mathematics, it is interesting to contrast the experience of Germany with that of this country. By now, only some 3 per cent. of German school children are in the equivalent of comprehensive schools. Some 50 per cent. are in technical schools. In Britain, there has been a movement in the reverse direction. Technical schools were developing promisingly and successfully in the late 1960s. They were then destroyed in the name of a social theory, and the consequence is that the average German school leaver is now two years ahead of the British school leaver in mathematical attainment. That does not stop us from continuing to award ourselves pay increases very much larger than the Germans in relation to our productivity. I welcome the initiative by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), in proposing that some technology schools should be established in the urban centres. However, much has been destroyed that we could ill afford to lose.

Complaints about the paintwork are superficial. Complaints about money, even if they were justified, miss the point. The amount of cash input is an extraordinarily crude measure of an education system. By that measure, the Government have done well. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State justifiably explained, expenditure per pupil is at speak, and an extra £1·25 billion, which rightly has been made conditional, has been offered for teachers' salaries. By other crude criteria — by Mr. Crosland's criteria—the system has failed. In 1968, 31 per cent. of working class children went on to university. In 1981, only 19·4 per cent. did, as my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary recently told us.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has led a true debate about the real questions to which we should be addressing ourselves. Other hon. Members have referred to his Sheffield speech two years ago. However, how has the profession responded to the propositions and challenges that my right hon. Friend has put to its members? In the past year, it has responded by abdicating responsibility and undermining the principle of authority, which is profoundly damaging to our children's education. It tempts one to the conclusion that education is too fragile and precious to be left to educationalists.

I hope that we shall have a reasonable, honourably negotiated solution to the dispute in the near future. However, if the teachers representatives are not willing to come to a reasonable and honourable settlement, we might have to consider much more radical reforms. I hope very much that those reforms will move in the direction of making schools more directly accountable to parents. That will be the mark of a mature society in which parents can exercise proper choice and influence on schools.

It is interesting that Professor Halsey, Tony Crosland's political adviser, who was closely associated with him when circular 10/65 was issued, by 1981 was recanting and arguing at the north of England education conference and later in an article in *New Society* that the way forward had to be to strip away a great deal of the bureaucratic superstructure of the education system and go for a direct grant system, whereby schools would receive a direct grant related to the numbers of pupils that the school attracted. That way, parents would be allowed to bring to bear the pressure, which they long to bring to bear, of their aspirations for better standards of learning for their children.

9.3 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It would not need much skill to link the prejudices of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), which he has just aired at length, with the amendment on the Order Paper. I could not tell what he was talking about, except that he seemed to expect the Russians to attack at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

Let me get back to the reality of why we are here and try to forgot the nonsense to which we have just been listening. In yesterday's edition of *The Guardian* there was a leading article entitled "Tighter rein on cash for schools". When one reads the article, one realises how much centralisation there is under the Government and how dangerous they are becoming, especially in what they are doing with the rates. In today's edition of *The Guardian*, John Carvel says:

"Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, yesterday faced a barrage of protest from Tory MPs that he should act quickly to settle the teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith attended a private meeting of the Tory backbench education committee at which about 100 MPs made it clear that opinion is mounting in their constituencies against the Government's refusal to make further concessions to the teaching unions."

A question has been asked about tying teachers' conditions of service to the Government's offers. The answer has been given to the Secretary of State by me at least 20 times. This is a routine wage demand by teachers and the teachers are not willing to delay it by having it tied to new conditions of service. They are willing to discuss conditions and service after the present wage demand is fulfilled.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I shall not give way as I want to make certain points and time is getting on.

The teachers are a moderate, middle-class section of the community. They have had a union for about 115 years and the Prime Minister, as well as my lowly self, attended the teachers' union centenary when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science in the Heath Government. It was almost 100 years before the teachers who are being attacked took any action.

Teachers have been provoked beyond measure by the wretched Government. The extent of that provocation is shown by the fact that such a group of middle-class, white-collar people have stuck out for such a long time and have, whether the Conservative party likes it or not, absolutely massive support from parents throughout the country.

Mr. Key *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: I am sorry, but I will not give way. I want to finish my remarks.

What has happened? It is pointless to ask Conservative Members or the Minister as they have no correct answers. The Opposition have been asking questions for some time. The Government fear that if they open the floodgates with money for the teachers, no matter how impecunious the teachers are, it will cause a lot of trouble.

The Government continue to say like an incantation that there is no money and that the wicked teachers are doing dreadful things to the children and education. There is the biggest ever crisis in education and it has been caused by the Government's parsimony and their refusal to give enough money to allow the schools to be run properly.

Meanwhile, the teachers have watched the major Houghton increase of 10 years ago being steadily eroded and their standard of living deteriorating. Teachers are well-qualified, professional people who have been grossly undervalued, and they have raised and improved academic standards enormously, despite the endless draconian cuts in education.——

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North) *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: —that are becoming more and more deadly all the time.

Let us be clear. The reason why there are not more children entering universities — I have asked the Secretary of State to explain that over and over again— is that the Secretary of State has cut on a grand scale the numbers of young people entering universities. Higher qualified young people who have the right to enter university have been prevented from doing so by the Secretary of State. However, many have gone into the polytechnics to be educated no matter what. That will worsen as time goes on, although education is expanding and examination results are splendid compared with what they were.

Nevertheless, it is our children, the children in state schools, who are suffering. The children of Conservative Members are not suffering; their children are in private schools. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) has told me at least 20 times in the Chamber, not only about his virility but about all the children he has in different schools.

At the same time as the Government are holding our children down, they have their assisted places scheme where by they siphon off taxpayers' money, as they call it—the public's money—and give it to their private schools while cutting down on our schools. They have cut down on building improvements, on books of which there are now insufficient, and on equipment which we cannot buy because of the low capitation allowances. We therefore do not need lectures from the Conservative party which knows everything about making money and which will have the best for its children. It is not interested— except for its prejudices—in the education of ordinary children.

The Secretary of State admits that teachers are leaving schools and not entering the profession because of the pitiful wages. We are short of maths, music, science and many other teachers because of the Tory Government, and that fact is coming home to roost.

There were 3,000 teachers in Sheffield city hall today. Parents were there on a grand scale complaining bitterly and supporting the teachers. It is not true that the parents do not support the teachers. The local education authority supports the teachers, but it does not have enough money to pay them. The Secretary of State will not give it money in the rate support grant to increase teachers' pay. LEAs want to give the teachers more money.

Education is in deep crisis, although not as deep a crisis as the one in which the Government are, as they revealed earlier. When the Secretary of State said that the Government are acting, he is right. I wish that the Government would come off the stage, stop acting and face reality.

Teachers have no overtime. They do voluntary duties. There are clubs and groups of every kind for which they stay behind for hours. There are lunchtime choirs. They

[Mr. Flannery]

do voluntary lunchtime duties, although they have withdrawn from them. They cover for sick and absent colleagues by taking more children into their classes. They take part in Saturday sports and events of all kinds. Teachers have withdrawn their good will. They are desperate because their standard of living is so low.

Teachers, as I do, regard the Secretary of State as a disaster. He is the most unpopular Secretary of State for Education and Science in the country's history. He lacks knowledge of the state education system. He reveals his ignorance in nearly every speech. He is obdurate, intransigent and doctrinaire. He is a worthy representative of a Government and a parliamentary party whose members nearly all went to private schools and the so-called public schools. They even name them incorrectly.

The teachers want an increase in the 1985 settlement at least equal to the increase in the cost of living. That will leave them in the same pitifully low position.

Secondly, teachers want an increase which does not further erode their salary levels. Thirdly, they want more new money from central Government. Let us stop the nonsense about the £1·25 billion. That is for four years. It is well below the rate of inflation and will not solve the problem. Teachers also want a commitment to a move towards the Houghton relativity, which has been completely eroded.

Teachers in England and Wales are completely opposed to an inquiry during the dispute. Those people who put forward that suggestion as a panacea are wrong. Teachers would fight such an inquiry. English and Welsh teachers deeply appreciate the Scottish teachers' struggle. They support the English and Welsh teachers, but have a separate demand. They are in turn supported by their English and Welsh colleagues.

This debate is too short. We cannot do full justice to the problem. It is the Government and not the teachers who are attacking the children in the state sector. They would never do it to their own children. They are doing it to the 7 million children whom we want back at school. The Secretary of State could get them back tommorow morning if only he would pay the money. The struggle will continue unless the Government give more new money. I call on the Secretary of State—it is a pity that he is not here—and the Government to act responsibly. They have grossly underestimated the determination and misery of the teachers who have the low living standards which were caused by the Government.

The teachers ask only for a just settlement. The 1985 and 1986 salary claims must be settled honourably with more new money from central Government. That is the only just and fair way to help our children, the teachers and education.

The teachers' morale is low, but they are determined to fight for an honourable and just solution against this wretched Government and to get the children back into the classrooms where they can teach them. That determination is paramount. The Government should take it into account or the struggle will drag on and on, because the public is moving towards support of the teachers.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) could possibly be forgiven for forgetting that the Houghton award to teachers in 1974 was totally eroded in value by the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979. By the time that that wicked, wretched, miserable Government went out of office, teachers were worse paid than when Labour came into government. Although teachers are not paid at a level at which we should like to see, they are better paid now than they were under the last Labour Government.

May I disclaim the myth about public schools. I gave 27 years devoted service to teaching in comprehensive schools at all levels. Conservative Members have children in state schools. The debate was opened by a Wykehamist and sitting one along from him is an Old Etonian—we do not need lectures about public schools.

Mr. Hunter: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is either deliberately misleading the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No hon. Member deliberately misleads the House. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that?

Mr. Hunter: I will re-phrase that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw it."] I will certainly withdraw it, and apologise to the hon. Member for Hillsborough. The hon. Member said that the 12 September offer was less than the rate of inflation. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is utterly misleading?

Mr. Greenway: Yes. Many Labour Members have children at public, independent or private schools. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] The main ingredient in improving schools which the Labour party motion has chosen to ignore is the tremendous improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio. The official figures show that improvement. In nursery schools the pupil-teacher ratio was 26·6 in 1970 and 21·7 in 1983-84; in primary schools the ratio was 27·1 in 1970 and in 1983-84 it was 22; and in secondary schools it was 17·8 in 1970 and 16 in 1983-84. These are substantial figures of improvement.

These figures have three substantial and beneficial effects upon the schools and pupils. The more teachers there are in a school, the more contact there is between teachers and pupils. There is less pressure on teachers which must release them to work more effectively. It gives teachers more time for in-service training, lesson preparation and marking. It is enormously to the credit of this Government that the pupil-teacher ratio has improved so substantially.

The main problem and reason for the current dispute in our schools is that the Labour Government, way back in 1964, chose to take away the discussions on teachers conditions of service. Has one ever heard of anything more lunatic or more calculated? It was a political calculation of the wickedest kind to damage schools. The Labour Government said that they would discuss teachers pay but not the conditions of service or how the schools were run. That has not been beneficial to teachers. I was in a school for 15 years between 1964 and 1979 and during that time schools were progressively damaged. We have now reached this position with a tragic strike and children out on the streets. In London, schools were shut for Christmas for three weeks because the teachers had called for lightning strikes of 20 minutes. The children were sent home, but the teachers went in to mark books or prepare lessons on fully pay. That was tragic for the children and no good for teachers.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): It is the Secretary of State's responsibility.

Mr. Greenway: The Labour Front Bench is trying to shout me down, so I shall take this opportunity to say that Labour's Wykehamist education spokesman went to a London borough town hall a few months ago where he addressed about 40 people. He shared a platform with Labour Militant, Left-wing Labour councillors and the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers. The hon. Gentleman did not restrain the general secretary of the NUT when he said:

"I am delighted that 14 schools — including 2 special schools—in this area are closed by striking teachers.

The hon. Gentleman accepted and liked that. The Labour party has a lot to answer for in the present strike. I condemn it and it condemns itself.

Improvements in the curriculum in primary and secondary schools is of enormous potential value. I am certain that teachers will co-operate more and more with its implementation and with the improvement of schools. However, there is many a school where there have been no games for two or three years. There is many a school where there has been no prize giving, which is useful for children, for two or three years. There is many a school where there are no team games and no teaching of children out of school hours. That is a great tragedy and the reason for it must go back to the separation of pay and conditions in 1964. Those two issues, which are central to schools, to teachers' organisation and to their motivation, have gradually fallen apart. The Labour party must take responsibility for that.

Team games are being stamped out in many Labour-controlled authority areas because it is said that they foster a competitive instinct in children. When will the Labour politicians come to some sense of reality? It is enormously serious that the Labour party does not accept its responsibility and tackle extremists in some parts of London. It does nothing because it can do nothing. It has no control over its supporters who are driving schools into extreme problems and seriously damaging children.

It is time that Labour Members forgot their rhetoric and went into the constituencies of London, Liverpool and the rest and got some realistic thinking into employees in local authorities who are damaging children's education and should be persuaded to do better.

9.23 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I should like to draw attention to the appalling complacency of the Secretary of State's speech. He congratulated the Government on spending more per child than in 1979 and on the fact that the teacher:pupil ratio is better than when they came to power. He knows that school rolls have fallen. He must also recognise that the fact that there are fewer children in schools does not mean that the costs of education have fallen proportionately. Half-empty buildings have stayed open and fixed costs remain. Moreover, parental expectations have risen in the past five or six years, as have the expectations of children. He should respond to that.

There is an even more serious problem. I am convinced that a comparison of expenditure on education or of pupil-teacher ratios with other industrialised countries would show Britain falling seriously behind. The other day I heard some interesting evidence that compared performance in Britain with that in Germany. The research was undertaken under the auspices of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. That evidence is deeply disturbing for the future of our industrial competence and our success in competing with other industrialised countries.

Much has been said about the teachers' dispute. I wish only to quote from two letters that I have recived in my mail bag from constituents, which are typical of hundreds of letters that I am sure other hon. Members are receiving. The first letter is from a parent. What he writes typifies the mood of the meeting that many of us attended in Central hall. He states:

"As a constituent of yours with three children in state education, I am increasingly concerned at the failure of the Government to provide adequate resources to resolve the present strike by teachers."

I am sure that the parents at the meeting, which took place under the auspices of the All London Parents Action Group, would have agreed with that view. A letter from a teacher in my constituency is even more disturbing. This is the second letter that my constituent has written to the Secretary of State and he has not yet received a reply to either letter. He writes:

"I work in an SPA in what would generally be termed a 'tough school'. But I am beginning to believe that it is useless to have any commitment to children and the profession at present because my commitment is undermined by the actions of you and your colleagues. The temptation to leave the profession is getting stronger every week."

Many years ago I was a teacher. In the schools where my children have been taught, teachers are giving more in terms of service than I or the average teacher gave when I was an active teacher. The amount of work that is done out of school hours is exceptional. Many teachers, justifiably, regard the trade-off between a pay increase, and terms and conditions of service as an insult to the devotion and commitment that they have to their jobs and the amount of voluntary service that they give on the children's behalf.

The Secretary of State repeatedly refers to the misleading way in which the National Union of Teachers is led and the way in which the leadership leads teachers to do what they should not do. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) I was present at the Wembley conference centre last Saturday. I witnessed the debate in which the conference overwhelmingly carried a motion to stage a one-day strike at the earliest opportunity in defiance of the National Executive committee of that union. The union is moderately led, but the teachers' anger and frustration has led to that decision. The fact that the NUT and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers had a relatively narrow vote on the possibility of withdrawing co-operation in examinations shows the desperate position that we are facing. My children are about to take their O and A-level examinations this year. Many hon. Members could point to similar pieces of evidence. The teachers in the staffroom, in their anger and frustration, believe that that is the only way in which to go forward. Ford workers are refusing a wage increase of 15·5 per cent. If one compares the increasing wages in private industry with the way in which public sector workers are being squeezed out one can understand the anger that is felt by teachers when they see their comparability with other jobs being adversely affected.

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

Teachers work in buildings which are deteriorating. Some hon. Members may have read the report in *The Standard* today about the position in Brent. It stated:

"Schools in a London Borough (Brent) could close unless millions of pounds are found for repairs, education chiefs have warned."

Although £6·5 million is needed, Brent seems capable of affording only £1 million. The Inner London Education Authority, which has a considerable bill for repairs, improvements and extensions, again had its budget severely cut.

Those factors lie behind the dispute. My constituent feels that his work and commitment is being undermined by the Secretary of State, and that is the reason for the desperate position that our schools face.

9.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): With only a few minutes to go, I shall leave unsaid most of what I hoped to say. I shall briefly comment only on the teachers' dispute.

First, I must confess that 14 years before I became a Member of Parliament I was a school teacher, admittedly in the private sector. That may earn me some derision from Opposition Members, but they will discover the irrelevancy of that derision if they bear with me. During that time my wife taught in a primary school. My experience has led me to accept utterly and unequivocally that the level of teachers' pay is unacceptable. Historically and traditionally we have undervalued and underpaid our teachers. That must be put right.

I accept and applaud much of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been trying to do since he came to office. The three basic principles of his policy have been: to improve standards and quality in education; to increase parental involvement in schools; and to achieve greater cost-efficiency. These are acceptable to all reasoning people. Sadly, there is one inner flaw, which is that we have suffered from a lack of a perceived acknowledgement that the providers of education are the supremely important entity within the provision of education. The "work force" of teachers started in 1979 and again in 1983 broadly in sympathy with the objectives of the Secretary of State, and it is a tragedy that over the years ill will has replaced good will.

Opposition Members will be disappointed if they expect me to continue criticising my right hon. Friend. On 12 September—a significant date—the teachers lost my support. There were inadequacies in the 12 September offer, but they do not justify the strike action that is being taken. The National Union of Teachers is primarily responsible for that. During the past month I have come to despise the NUT national leadership. It is a catalyst for disaster within our education system, and much of the responsibility for the present position lies with that union.

For me, 12 September was the breaking point. My latent sympathy for the teachers was severed. I agree with my right hon. Friend about the fundamental principle that is at stake, and on this point I beg to differ, with respect, from the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett). The Government acknowledge that teachers are underpaid and that there should be an injection of more money into teachers' salaries. The principle of greater contractual obligation and appraisal stands absolutely. That is the inner flaw in the case made by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and his hon. Friends. It is not unreasonable to demand greater contractual obligations from teachers for improved performance.

Clearly much is wrong and has gone wrong over the years. It would be easy for the Secretary of State to give way, to concede, to buy peace for a short time. If he concedes to a demand for more pay with no terms attached, but an agreement to talk later, he will inflict not on another generation but on parents and children next year exactly the same trauma as is being suffered now.

I support and admire my right hon. Friend for his stand and for his endeavours.

9.36 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The weakness in the speech of the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and in speeches by other hon. Members on the Government side is that they fail to appreciate that teachers in England, Scotland and Wales have been pushed beyond the limit of endurance by this Government. The Government are not dealing with the legitimate grievances presented to the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is against that background that we face a crisis in schools.

It is not in my nature to be unkind, but seldom during 15 years in the House of Commons have I heard a more complacent speech from a Secretary of State that the speech made today by the right hon. Gentleman who has responsibility for education in England and Wales. The Secretary of State did not even do the House the courtesy of listening to a major part of the debate. How on earth he can expect to comprehend the anxiety in the constituencies if he does not take the time to listen to the debate is completely beyond me.

I condemn the Secretary of State for the content, tenor and complacency of his speech, and for the insult he delivered to the House in absenting himself from great parts of the debate, but there is one speech I will not criticse the right hon. Gentleman for missing. His Under-Secretary had the good sense to miss it as well. I am talking about the speech of their hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) who from the beginning to the end of his speech tried to smear the teaching profession. The Secretary of State and his Under-Secretary are to be complimented for missing that speech, because if all of us had been wise we would have gone out and refused to listen to it. The Secretary of State has missed parts of what has been an important debate and he must accept criticism for that.

Sir Keith Joseph: I missed 40 minutes out of 140 minutes. I shall carefully read the speeches that I missed and I am quite sure that I shall find the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon well worth reading.

Mr. Ewing: Knowing the Secretary of State's background and track record, I am quite sure he will find his hon. Friend's speech worth reading. There are similarities between what is happening in Scotland and what is happening in England and Wales over this crisis in our schools. We both suffer the same accommodation problems. There are schools throughout Great Britain that were built in the last century and were expected to last throughout the present century and, no doubt, well into the

next century. There is little capital available for much-needed modernisation of our school accommodation. In Scotland the criterion for accommodation is based on a report that is eight years old. The accommodation discussion document was published in 1978. Yet in 1986 the Government, who have been in power since 1979, have not published their own accommodation discussion document and we are still working on the basis of the 1978 document.

The other similarity between Scotland and England and Wales has been the constant reference to the fact that more is being spent per pupil. I note that the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), did not say that more per head was being spent on education. I suspect that in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's case it was deliberate although in other cases it was accidental. I issue a challenge to the Secretary of State for Education and Science and also to the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for education in Scotland to publish the details of the increase in the educational content of the spending per pupil in schools. I suggest that if we had a breakdown of the figures it would show that less was being spent on the education element. Everyone knows that it costs just as much to heat, clean and light a schoolroom for 30 children as for 10, 15 or 20 children. I suspect that the Government will not want to publish the figures, because they would show that less is being spent per pupil on the education element than was spent in 1979.

Mr. Skinner: We will have to get them leaked.

Mr. Ewing: As my hon. Friend says, we will have to get them leaked.

That is part, but only part, of the crisis in education. The Government's public expenditure survey forecasts that the pupil-teacher ratio will get worse between now and 1988 or 1989. The ratio has been deteriorating over the last few years, though not to any great extent, but it is significant that the Government public expenditure survey is budgeting in the rate support grant for a reduction—if that is the correct expression—of 5,000 teachers in England and Wales by the end of 1986.

Sir Keith Joseph: How many fewer children will there be?

Mr. Ewing: If I may say so, that is not the best educational comment I have heard; it is a good mathematical comment, but it has little to do with education. At a time when we have an opportunity not only to maintain but to increase resources and take advantage of the reduction in the number of children at school, all the Secretary of State can do is sit with his arms folded and mouth, "How many fewer children?", as if somehow that was relevant to education.

The history of the teachers' dispute in Scotland reveals a disgraceful and appalling story. In June 1984 an application was submitted by the teaching unions in Scotland for the establishment of an independent pay review because in the eyes of all the teaching unions, and not just the main union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, there had been an erosion of 31 per cent. in teacher's salary levels since Clegg in 1979—not since Houghton.

Between June 1984 and November 1984, a period of six months, the then Secretary of State, now Secretary of State for Defence, dillied and dallied and gave hints that the Government would agree to set up this independent inquiry. Suddenly from nowhere, in answer to a written question one Friday afternoon in November 1984, after six months' deliberation, the then Secretary of State for Scotland announced that he was not going to establish an independent inquiry. Then the Secretary of State asks why teachers are angry. Teachers have a right to be angry because of the way in which the Government have treated them.

If the Under-Secretary would care, when replying, to say something about the position that will prevail as we go into the examination period later on this year, I for one, and parents throughout Scotland, would be very grateful. The Government are, in my view, deliberately misleading parents and pupils—and the new Secretary of State for Scotland was at it again last Friday—by continually giving the impression that, somehow or other, these examinations—and the new Secretary of State says that the 1986 examinations will be on the standard grades—*[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary seems to think not. Perhaps he had better check what the Secretary of State said, that they are going to go ahead with the new standard grade examinations.

I do not believe that even the old grade examinations can go ahead uninterrupted. Certainly, the examination papers can be prepared. Certainly, the pupils can be presented. But the Under-Secretary knows that, because of the different qualifications for marking papers in Scottish examinations from those which prevail in England and Wales, the papers simply cannot be marked. That is a disruption of the examinations in anyone's terms. Once the children have taken the examinations, their ability to go on to higher education or to enter employment, if they can find it, depends almost entirely om the outcome of their examinations. As the Under-Secretary must be aware, they will not be in a position to know the outcome of the examinations for a very long time indeed.

The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary really ought to be a bit more forthcoming on this point. The Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association has only today expressed most serious concern about the examination programme as we go into the examination period.

The Under-Secretary will rightly chastise me if I say nothing about our position in relation to the teachers and the need for a settlement. Our position is quite clear. The sooner this dispute is settled, the better for all concerned. The Secretary of State says that the Government's position is quite clear. It is that they have made practically no attempt to do anything. They did make an attempt towards the end of last year. The Secretary of State keeps talking about the £125 million which is ten per cent. of this year's salary bill only, but not ten per cent. of the salary bill for the next four years. Nevertheless, I repeat that it is for the Government to take the initiative in getting the teachers to the negotiating table. I doubt that the Under-Secretary will concede this tonight, but I understand that overtures are being made. We hope that they succeed, and that the Government, who are wholly responsible for the crisis in education, will respond to these overtures and bring about a settlement. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby to condemn this Government's entire education policy against the background of the crisis in our schools.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): This is a debate on education in both England and Wales and in Scotland. I was therefore astonished that the Scottish Labour Opposition thought so little of the debate and of the motion that when it was tabled yesterday not one Scottish Labour Member signed it. It was only today, as an afterthought, that the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) added their names to the motion.

I listened carefully to the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) and to those of my hon. Friends the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) who made the very important point that the major erosion of teachers' pay took place under the last Labour Government between 1974 and 1979.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will expect me to concentrate upon Scotland. The Opposition have generally blamed the Government's expenditure policies for the inadequacies that they perceive in schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has already demonstrated that the facts do not bear this out either in England or in Scotland where expenditure per pupil has increased substantially under this Government, where pupil-teacher ratios have improved, where we have offered extra money for standard grade and where we have offered extra money for Action Plan.

I agree with the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) that pupil numbers are declining. They will decline by 100,000 in Scotland. This means that authorities must face the need for rationalisation.

In the few minutes left for this debate, I wish to deal with the dispute. We fully recognise teachers' concern and their key, important role. That is why the Government have offered additional resources for a sensible settlement both north and south of the border. A tribute should also be paid to the considerable number of teachers who have continued to work and carry out their professional duties.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East accuses my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland of not making every effort to resolve the dispute. We have tried to do so again and again. The hon. Gentleman's friends in the Labour-led education authorities put forward a package in the summer of 1985 that was rejected out of hand by the Educational Institute of Scotland, despite the fact that the Government were prepared to provide help for that package. We offered to provide an additional £125 million for four years over and above normal pay settlements. The EIS has even rejected the formula offered by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to help to resolve the dispute. Most recently, a personal formula was put forward by Mr. John Pollock, the general secretary of the EIS, but it was rejected by his executive. The EIS has not even put in a pay claim. Some of the members of the EIS say that they are prepared, if necessary, to carry on until the next general election without putting in a pay claim . In theory, that could be until June 1988. All one can say about that is that it shows commendable faith in the success of the counter-inflation policy of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The view of the Government, The employers and many teachers, including the other associations apart from the EIS, is that a lasting settlement of the dispute must involve both pay and conditions. They believe that that is crucial.

May I suggest to the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) that the Labour party ought to get its act together on its education policy. The hon. Gentleman was shot down in flames when he was asked a simple question about the inquiry. He was asked what it should inquire into, but he did not know. I offer him the policies of the Labour party in Scotland. There are at least three. First, there is the policy of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) as reported in *The Times Educational Supplement* for Scotland:

"If the dispute is still running"

and the Labour party is in power

"we will seek to negotiate a settlement and if that is impossible then you can have your independent pay review."

The policy of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was reported in a separate edition under the heading

"Labour won't sign blank pay cheques".

This reports him as refusing

"to give an unequivocal commitment that a future Labour Government would implement the findings of an independent pay review for teachers, which he supports."

At least the hon. Member for Garscadden had the honesty to say what the hon. Member for Durham, North did not, that it is the easiest thing in the world in opposition to promise everything to everybody.

The third policy is the one put forward by some education authorities in Scotland. The Labour-led education authorities in Scotland have been consistent in their view that a settlement must involve pay and conditions. The Government's position is that a settlement must be a basis for the long term. It is wholly unacceptable for the EIS to claim that it is right for teachers on full pay to boycott examination procedures.

We do not seek to impose more onerous conditions and duties on teachers. We recognise the burdens which teachers bear, their hours and their responsibilities. We have no wish to add unreasonably to them. We simply want to see a proper recognition that teachers have duties other than teaching which they have always necessarily had. I am not talking about their voluntary and extra-curricular activities, which indeed are valued, but essential jobs like preparing pupils for examinations and giving progress reports to parents.

There is nothing unique or extraordinary in the idea of linking pay with conditions, as some teachers' representatives would have us think. Rather, it is extraordinary to suppose that they cannot be linked. It is no more than standard practice in other occupations. If this fact could be recognised, the teachers would have the key to unlock the extra resources which the Government have offered with the real prospect of resolving the long and painful disputes.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East asked me about the position on examinations. The EIS decision to disrupt the 1986 examinations is one of the most damaging aspects of the dispute. Teachers cannot pretend that they have no wish to damage the interests of pupils when the SCE examinations are probably the single most important qualification that a number of them will attain.

The Scottish Examination Board has intimated its resolve to proceed with the examinations. That is its legal duty. It does not underestimate the potential difficulties at

every stage at which teacher participation is normally given and expected. The board has met today to discuss its contingency plans, and will be making a statement.

I think that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East should have made clear that the Labour party does not support the boycott of examinations which is being conducted by the EIS. The debate has been overshadowed by these wholly unnecessary disputes. The Government have however, put forward constructive proposals for resolving them.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 259.

Division No. 47] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth

Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes Her Majesty's Government's policies to improve the standards and quality of school education for children of all abilities; notes that expenditure per pupil is at record levels; supports the Government's efforts to secure better value for money from that expenditure in future; and urges Her Majesty's Government to continue to work for a lasting reform covering teachers' pay, pay structure and duties, facilitating the recruitment, retention and motivation of teachers of the quality needed to underpin these policies.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Overseas Development and Co-operation

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Asian Development Bank (Extension of Limit on Guarantees) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Question agreed to.

Charities

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

10.14 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The very essence of Great Britain has been its voluntary sector. Right across England there are vast numbers of charities, large and small, run by men and women of good will. They cannot be professionals in all spheres and are essentially amateurs.

I want to speak about small charities, because they need some extra protection. In many cases these small charities rely on professional advisers of various kinds. If I relate my own experience of the Hampstead, Wells and Camden Trust, it might help to illustrate some of the difficulties that trustees can encounter. The trust has 15 trustees, including a vicar, lawyers, accountants, and others. Some are appointed by the borough council, and the rest by the trustees themselves. They are a good cross-section of local people.

The work is divided into committees. I want to deal with the estate committee, which has the power to manage the trust's property holdings. I stress that neither the chairman of the committee nor the full committee has delegated authority to buy or sell property. The committee considers proposals for sales or purchases and listens to the professional advisers who are present. The committee will then recommend the proposition to the full trustees' meeting. The professional adviser will be present at the full meeting of the trustees, and they will then take their decision.

The trust has enjoyed the services of the same firms of solicitors and estate agents for well over half a century. Although the partners have changed, there was no obvious reason to alter the firms of advisers. From time to time advice was given to the estate committee on various sales, some under the Leasehold Reform Act, some to sitting tenants, and others to third parties. Bearing in mind the condition of some of the properties, the figures given to the trust by its adviser did not seem wildly out of line with current local knowledge. However, the trustees had to rely on their adviser and were secure in the thought that the Charity Commission had to approve such figures, and one assumed that it had the means of checking them.

At the time that I am referring to the then chairman, who was a former Labour councillor, persuaded my wife to take the chair of the estate committee. For two years she was the chairman of that committee and was persuaded by her fellow trustees to continue as acting chairman until a suitable replacement could be found. After about 18 months she was able to get a surveyor to succeed her as chairman.

The trustees gradually became suspicious of the new principal of the estate advisers. They communicated that view to the police and the Charity Commission. The adviser was eventually prosecuted for fraud, found guilty, sentenced to prison and made restitution of about £60,000. That figure was approved by the Charity Commission in all the circumstances explained to it. I have seen some reports suggesting that millions of pounds were lost. Nobody has substantiated a figure of that magnitude nor anything approaching it.

I believe that a way of helping and protecting trustees and their funds would be if the Charity Commission insisted that all sales and purchases figures were franked by the district valuer. Nobody is more impartial or has more knowledge about local values of all kinds—local authority, private, and so on—than the district valuer. I hope that the Minister will ask the Charity Commission to accept that suggestion.

I refer to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). On 18 December he raised the issue on the Christmas recess motion, and brought into his speech in a snide and less than pleasant way my name and that of my wife. He gave me notice of his intention in a letter to mention the Wells and Campden Trust, but not that he would mention any names.

The debate should have started at 3.30 pm, and I received his letter at 5.5 pm in an envelope on the Board, not marked "Urgent". That was when I first came into the House on that day. If the debate had started on time, at 3.30 pm, it would have been half over by 5 pm. The hon. Gentleman said that his secretary telephoned mine that morning, but that is not relevant, as I shall seek to show. I had vital meetings at 6 pm and 7 pm outside the House and they could not be postponed at a few moments' notice. I gave the hon. Gentleman notice that I intended to put these facts on the record tonight—four days' notice.

If the hon. Gentleman was serious and not mischievous in wishing to prevent wrong-doing or errors in charity law, and honourable hon. Member would have come to me and said, "There seems to be a fiddle in a charity in my constituency, and I believe that you have had a similar problem or some sort of fraud in a charity in Hampstead. Is there a common feature? Can we work together? Can we co-operate?" Any normal hon. Member would give the answer that I would have given, unhesitatingly and unreservedly, "Of course." However, the hon. Gentleman did not choose to do so.

I have never relied upon newspaper gleanings or briefs from disgruntled tenants to make my case. However, we all operate differently, although I like to feel that the convention in which the House strongly believes, that we do not interfere in each other's constituencies, is right.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: That is how most hon. Members in the House operate, and that is the way in which the House continues to operate, in my judgment.

Mr. Holland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: By the very detailed——

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not give way now.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not give way on an Adjournment debate. The hon. Gentleman should know better.

Judging by the detailed comments that the hon. Gentleman made, he must have prepared his speech, one, two or three days earlier, and he could easily have given notice of what he wanted to do and invited my full co-operation——

Mr. Holland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall give way in a second. The hon. Gentleman did not choose to do so.

Mr. Holland: With regard to notice of my intentions, my name was down for the Consolidated Fund debate and it became clear only the evening before that I would not be called, in which case, the following day, I said that I should like to speak in the Adjournment debate. I immediately gave notice to the hon. Gentleman through his secretary.

The hon. Gentleman made a point about not interfering with events in other people's constituencies. Will he reply to these questions? Is he, or is he not, a member of the board of ASDA Properties? Did it, or did it not, make a bid for properties to be sold by St. Olave's Charity in my constituency? Does he, or does he not, agree with the brunt of my claim in that debate that there should be a judicial inquiry into both the charity of which he is a trustee and the charity in my constituency? Is he, or is he not, prepared to co-operate with inquiries concerning that?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: A six-column detailed speech clearly had been prepared by the hon. Gentleman. If he was going to take part in the Consolidated Fund debate, he would have had time to give me notice. He has shown clearly that he had no intention of giving any notice.

Let me continue, because it is important that the facts are put on record. If the hon. Gentleman wishes his further snide comment to be answered, let me say that I am a non-executive director of ASDA Properties, and non-executive directors are not consulted about the sort of offer that was made. It was not pursued and not finalised. That is a wholly different matter, but the hon. Gentleman's experience of commerce clearly does not exist.

As I have said, the hon. Member for Vauxhall knew that he was going to speak, if not on the recess motion, in the Consolidated Fund debate. In neither case did he choose to advise me. He had prepared his speech, so he could have given me notice, and my arrangements could have been altered and I could have been present in the Chamber.

All the facts about the judicial inquiry to which the hon. Gentleman referred in connection with the trustees, as far as they knew them, were given to the Charity Commission and the fraud squad long ago. If the hon. Gentleman had been more careful in his reading of the facts, he might have gleaned that.

Any small charity could have found itself in such a position and with that sort of problem. I would have hoped that we could be on common ground on that matter on 18 December, and we might now be on common ground on that issue if the hon. Gentleman were to return to observing the normal conventions of Parliament.

Small charities require help from the Charity Commission to make certain that their assets are not sold or indeed purchased at the wrong price. I would have hoped that that was a matter on which there would be no division, and that could have been established by a 30-second conversation. For reasons known only to the hon. Member for Vauxhall, that was not done.

There will, one hopes, at some stage be further consideration of charity law. I hope that it will not be necessary to wait very long. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say this evening that there is merit in my proposal for the district valuer to check and frank the price. That is, after all, the way in which most sales have to operate in local authority cases and in the right-to-buy legislation, for example, the district valuer comes in and gives his own independent judgment if that is required.

It is not easy for those who have never served on charities or performed unpaid voluntary work to understand some of the problems that may beset trustees doing these jobs at the request of others. With hindsight, of course, it is easy to say what A, B or C should have been done. Hindsight is a commodity given to very few people, but it is not given to what I would call normal human beings.

In conclusion, I believe that my fellow trustees and I or any other similar body of trustees—and I stress this in order to prevent this sort of problem from happening anywhere else—could have acted in no other way. Nobody could have acted more diligently or differently except, as I say, with hindsight. We believe in the competence——

Mr. Stuart Holland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I think that I had better leave time for my hon. Friend to reply.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: We believe in the competence and honesty of our advisers, for the simple reason that —*[Interruption]*—the hon. Member for Vauxhall has been in the House long enough to understand procedures, and he had four days' notice of my speech. Had he asked, I would have provided time in the debate, but he again chose not to do so.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is obviously clear that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) is referring in some depth to my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). He is correct to do if he so wishes, but is it not an abuse of the procedures of the House, notwithstanding the fact that this debate is on a motion for the Adjournment, for the hon. Gentleman, as he is impugning the honour of another hon. Member, not to give way to my hon. Friend?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must remind the House, particularly the Front Benches, that the half-hour Adjournment debate is normally Back-Bench Members' time. It is a matter for the Member who has the Adjournment whether he decides to give way, whatever the content of his speech. I have noticed that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has given way once. It is a matter for that hon. Member, and it is my job in the Chair to protect the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment and to ensure that the Minister has an opportunity to reply to the points that are made.

Mr. Holland: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall listen to the hon. Gentleman, but I must say to him that he is taking time out of the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Holland: Following your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you and the House will have observed that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has not, in fact, spent his time addressing his remarks to the subject of charities. Rather, he has addressed his remarks to the more trivial matter of the length of notice given to him in the debate. Could you not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the Chair, advise him that

if he wishes to gain the consent of the House for his refusal to take the points that I wish to make, he should address himself to the subject of charities and not to other matters?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) is in order, or I should have pulled him up.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I gave four days' notice to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene, which he could have done if he had bothered to take advantage of the practices of the House. He chose not to do so. He cannot expect to intervene at this last moment. He had four days' notice, which I contrast with the 10 minutes or so that he gave me.

No charity trustees could have acted differently. One must believe in the competence, honesty and integrity of one's advisers, until they are proved to be false, and in the efficacy of the Charity Commission. It was a long stop. It is now clear that the longstop needs improving. I hope that my hon. Friend will endorse my proposition.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I am plainly glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has chosen to mention tonight the issue of charities and, in particular, their administration, which events in the affairs of the Hampstead, Wells and Camden Trust, of which he and his wife are trustees, have highlighted. I know that the matters that he has mentioned are of interest to many people in the charitable world and beyond.

My hon. Friend referred to a debate on 18 December 1985 and a speech by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) which related largely to the deeply troubling affairs of a charity in his constituency called St. Olave's. There is no doubt that during the course of that debate the hon. Gentleman referred to the Hampstead, Wells and Camden Trust and my hon. Friend's conduct. I am sure that the House will welcome my hon. Friend's remarks tonight and the clear account that he is given of the fact that his conduct in that matter is beyond reproach.

I wish to make it clear, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall is here, that what he said about the St. Olave's charity is an important matter of public interest. I feel confident that any hon. Member who was told of such an allegation about a charity operating in his constituency would have wanted to raise the matter in the House. I make no complaint about that. I think that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has assured the hon. Gentleman in a letter today that we continue to take that matter seriously.

Mr. Stuart Holland : The Minister is qualifying it.

Mr. Mellor: No, I am not qualifying it. The hon. Gentleman does not want to pick a fight with me. I am surely not saying anything beyond commending what he said about the St. Olave's charity. None of us can read the allegations made about it without feeling grave anxiety. I am constrained in taking that matter any further tonight because that matter and, in particular, the sale of some properties by the charity is now a matter for the courts. Criminal charges have been brought. Four people have been charged with offences of dishonesty, I am precluded from saying any more about the case. I wish to assure the hon. Gentleman that the points that he has mentioned continue to remain under active consideration in the Home Office. In due course, we shall give him a substantive answer.

Mr. Holland: I am pleased that the Minister was able to say that the matters that I mentioned about St. Olave's are such that if they were put before any hon. Member that hon. Member would wish to put them before the House. In the case of the other London charity, it is of anxiety to many of us that similar notice was given several months in advance by at least one constituent of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and that no action was taken. He has wide experience as a former Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, and, while he can claim that charity trustees do not have wide experience, he can hardly claim the same lack of experience himself. I have asked for a judicial inquiry and for the co-operation of those who have experience of these two outstanding and notorious cases in giving evidence to that inquiry. If the Minister cannot tell us now whether he will agree to a judicial inquiry, will he seriously consider having the evidence of his hon. Friend at an inquiry? I should be willing to give evidence at an inquiry.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention by default. I cannot say anything about that except that I have made it clear that there are matters of grave concern in St. Olave's charity—I hope that I have expressed my views about what the hon. Gentleman said with appropriate candour and commendation. What he said became gratuitous and perhaps open to an imputation of some political bile when he linked the matter with the quite separate issues that arose in the Hampstead case. I understand that an official of that charity has been sentenced by the court as my hon. Friend described. I hope that it might be possible to separate those two strands. the first is grave allegations against the St. Olave's charity, which I hope the Crown court will get to the bottom of, and the second is an attack on my hon. Friend, whose probity is beyond reproach, as those of us who have known him for many years are aware.

We share my hon. Friend's anxiety about the activities of certain charities. Our worry about small charities led to our support for the Charities Act 1985, which came into effect at the beginning of this year. The Act was intended to be a vehicle to help trustees modernise their outdated trust and a lever to make them more alive to their responsibilities as trustees by giving new powers to local authorities in relation to charities in their area.

It is important to remember that it is not the Charity Commission or Ministers who are responsible for the administration of charities but trustees. Whatever one might have to say about the powers and activities of the commissioners, the trustees are responsible for ensuring that the objects of their trusts are being achieved, and they, the trustees, must exercise proper control over the administration of their charities.

I should add that the Home Secretary has very limited powers in respect of the Charity Commissioners. He appoints them and lays a copy of their annual report before Parliament. He has a duty which we carry out to the best of our abilities, to answer questions concerning the general functioning of the Commissioners, but we have no express power to give general guidance to the commissioners or to intervene directly in the affairs of any charity. The Home Secretary's lack of powers in this area is no accident

[Mr. Mellor]

but was intended to ensure that the commissioners and trustees can operate free from political guidance or intervention.

The commissioners have the general function of promoting the effective use of charitable resources by encouraging development of better methods of administration, by giving charity trustees information or advice on any matter affecting a charity and by investigating and checking abuses. In the case of any particular charity they must act to promote and make effective the work of the charity meeting the needs designated by its trust. The commissioners do not have power to act in the administration of the charity. There are, however, matters in which they have a more specific role, and consent to the sale of land is such an area. As the House has heard, land which forms part of a permanent endowment of a charity, unless specifically excepted, may not under section 29 of the Charities Act 1960, be sold or disposed of without an order of a court or the Charity Commission.

I believe that there may be some misconceptions about the duties of trustees when they dispose of land, particularly when, as in the case of the south London charity, the interests of tenants must be considered. The tenants are not, however, the beneficiaries of those charities, since the property represents income-producing endowment. The Charity Commissioners say in their annual report for 1984 that, when disposing of charitable property, trustees are under a legal duty to act in the best interests of their charity and to get the best price reasonably obtainable for their property. In that way they will meet the needs of their beneficiaries both present and future.

It is the invariable practice of the commissioners to ask trustees to obtain a professional valuation before considering trustees' proposals for any land transaction, and it is their usual practice to test the trustees' proposed sale by the publication of notices inviting higher offers, or objections. The commissioners may, however, take a different view if the proposed sale is to another charity with similar objects. They may also do so if the circumstances are such as to justify dispensing with further marketing, for example where demand is low, if the sale is to a protected tenant, or on the recommendation of the trustees' surveyors that it is necessary to avoid the risk of further deterioration in dilapidated property.

My hon. Friend's suggestion that the commissioners should refer the agreed sale price of a property to a franking valuation is an interesting one, and I shall ask the Charity Commissioner to consider it. If I have understood the idea correctly, it is by way of a second opinion to verify the professional opinion made before the property is put on the market. My immediate reaction is that such a procedure may well not have prevented the type of fraud carried out in the Hampstead case. One must ask what the value of the procedure would be which in a case such as this is a duplication of one already in existence, involving expense to the trustees and delay which could result in a sale being jeopardised. The matter deserves to be considered seriously, and it will be.

The general effect of section 29 is to restrict the powers of charity trustees in dealing with land. My hon. Friend suggests further restrictions. I should point out, however, that there have been suggestions pointing the other way, notably from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. No doubt this will be a matter for continued debate. Whatever the merits of the case for restrictions, it is important to consider the matter in the context of some 150,000 registered charities, and of roughly 3,000 property transactions sanctioned by the commissioners each year.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Surely that is part of the problem. As so many properties are sold in any one year, the Charity Commissioners cannot adequately supervise what is going on. Will the Minister take account of the further point that I raised in a Christmas Adjournment debate about the powers and rights of local authorities, which have trained valuers and are familiar with local property, to assess properties sold by charities? Given that the fixed costs have been covered by the councils, the actual cost should be negligible.

Mr. Mellor: I certainly welcome any suggestion designed to ensure that appropriate checks and controls exist. We must acknowledge that the Charity Commission is undoubtedly hard pressed because of the large number of charities. In the three years that I have had responsibility for these matters, many areas of discussion on charities have arisen in the House. They show that some of the thinking that went into the Act may no longer hold good in today's climate. Today's chief Charity Commissioner, Mr. Peach, certainly wishes to take seriously any suggestion that will improve the ability of the authorities, and especially the commission, to oversee the way in which charities are operated. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's point is considered and that he receives a proper answer.

While it is not for me to pass judgment on the St. Olave matter, we must examine such cases and draw proper conclusions from them. Obviously, we all have a duty to ensure that that sort of affair does not arise in future. I take the hon. Gentleman's suggestion in the spirit that it was intended.

We are aiming to influence the actions of trustees by education and persuasion rather than by coercion. That has been the philosophy behind the 1985 Act, and I believe that that philosophy is right for the kind of problem that we have been discussing tonight. I hope that the very public airing that the affairs of these two London charities have had over the past few weeks will have had the effect of reminding trustees of other charities of their responsibilities and duties towards their charitable funds, and of the existence of people who wish to do what should not be done and of reminding us all that charities, like other organisations, can be vulnerable to unscrupulous and dishonest dealings. If our awareness has increased, it should make it less likely that similar unfortunate events can occur in other property-owning charities.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 24 January 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Human Embryos

9.34 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I beg to ask leave to present two petitions on in vitro fertilisation. The first consists of 250 signatures of residents of Bolton. The second consists of 99 signatures of the staff and patients at the Bourn Hall clinic in Cambridge. The petitioners believe that infertile couples should have the opportunity to have children of their own and that the passing of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill would have serious effects on the treatment of patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation.

The first petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your hon. House will not support the aims of The Unborn Children (Protection) Bill.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

The second petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your hon. House vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Second Reading.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

9.36 am

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of national officers and chairmen of LIFE regions and groups. The petition is signed in the name of LIFE's members, who total 30,000 nationally. The total number of signatories is 203.

The petition opposes human embryo abuse. It states:

The Humble Petition of officers of the organisation LIFE (Save the Unborn Child) showeth that we

Affirm that the newly-fertilised human embryo is a real, living human being;

Therefore we welcome the statement by the Secretary of State for Social Services on 28 January 1985 that "the Government fully recognises the importance of the ethical and moral questions to be addressed in the debate, including the status of the embryo, and they will guard against undermining the special respect that is owed to the family and children and to the creation of human life."

And therefore we oppose all practices which discriminate against the human embryo or violate his/her dignity or right to life.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the House of Commons, mindful of the Petition for the Protection of the Human Embryo, which was presented to the House of Commons in 1984/85 and bore some two million signatures, will take immediate steps to enact legislation which protects the human embryo from any practices which violate his/her dignity or right to life.

And your humble Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is clear from the volume of comment in the media, as well as the numerous representations received by many hon. Members, that there is considerable public concern at the level of violence and the increasing amount of obscene material transmitted by television into millions of homes, where such programmes will inevitably be watched by large numbers of children and young persons.

Violence on television was the subject of pronouncements by the Annan committee on broadcasting, which reported in March 1977, and of the White Paper on broadcasting issued in July 1978. Paragraph 103 of the White Paper said:

"The programme issue which has caused most concern to the public is the portrayal of violence on television and its effects."

It went on to say:

"The effects of television programmes on viewers are of their nature difficult to determine. However, the Government is in no doubt that the only safe course is for the broadcasting authorities to assume undesirable effects unless convincing evidence to the contrary emerges. This means that the authorities must be cautious in broadcasting programmes, particularly programmes in which violence is portrayed, if these might have effects on susceptible people, especially young people and children."

That of course, is the issue to which the Bill is addressed.

Furthermore, there is disquiet in those millions of families attempting to bring up young or teenage children with proper values so that they in turn may become responsible members of society. There is readily available a new brand of highly explicit sex magazines, sold all too often by local newsagents to which children go to buy their sweets, or at bookstalls where such magazines are thrust before young people.

In a recent publication entitled "Portrayal of Violence in Television Programmes", the BBC asked:

"Why is violence on television thought to be dangerous?"

It went on to answer that question and said:

"The research into the effect of this increased acquaintance with violent happenings suggest several dangers: *(a)* the possibility of imitation; *(b)* the danger of psychological damage, particularly to children or to immature or unbalanced adults; *(c)* the danger of shocking or nauseating to the extent of causing the viewer to misinterpret the intention of the whole programme or to switch off before the situation is resolved; and *(d)* the fear that exposure to constant scenes of violence may blunt the emotions and sensibilities of the viewer, so that he comes to accept violence as commonplace. It is the last suspected danger of desensitisation and erosion of inhibitions that seems to ask the most worrying question about the accusations highlighted by recent research."

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman should introduce this Bill to deal with the problems that he has outlined. Constant violence on television troubles me and seems not to be outlawed by the Bill. The only provision is for vicious cruelty, and that would not outlaw repeated violence, fighting and killing in, for example, police programmes.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to the hon. Lady for raising that point. She should be aware of the primary test of obscenity contained in the Obscene Publications Act 1959. The tendency to deprave and corrupt has been held by the courts to deal with violence. It has dealt to great effect with violence in what are colloquially known as video nasties. That level of extreme violence is covered in the provisions of the Bill, which for the first time will bring television broadcasting within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act.

In addition, as the hon. Lady rightly points out, the Bill provides, in the additional test for obscenity, for vicious cruelty to be held to be obscene. I am the first to recognise that the list contained in clause 2 is far from perfect and susceptible to improvement. Should the House afford the Bill a Second Reading, I hope that in Committee hon. Members will improve on the language that I have set out in that list.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The hon. Gentleman has not understood clause 2. Desensitising is due, not to the individual horrific incident, but to the continual careless portrayal of casual violence, which will escape the Bill. The real obscenity is the continual careless soft porn of our daily lives. The hon. Gentleman does not understand one iota of what he is dealing with.

Mr. Churchill: I understand the concern that has been expressed, not only by the hon. Gentleman, but by millions of people, about the drip, drip effect of the portrayal of violence on television. It is my wish to seek to address that problem more effectively than I have done in the Bill, but that has eluded me. If, during the Committee stage, the hon. Gentleman is able to suggest language which effectively deals with that, it will be welcome.

One of my earlier drafts contained a reference to gross violence. Most people might think they are opposed to gross violence, but that opposition would of course rule out most good Western and war films, and many other forms of entertainment which the majority of people would not regard as reasonable to be ruled out by legislation.

The lower level of violence, for which it is much more difficult for the House to legislate, is a matter properly left to the broadcasting authorities and the watchdog committees. That is what they are there for: that is their job. All that the House can do is to lay down a bare minumum requirement below which standards shall not be allowed to fall in public television transmissions and in sound broadcasting. That is why my Bill seeks to address only the grosser forms of violence and obscenity.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend recall that in a publication entitled "The Portrayal of Violence in Television Programmes", published by the BBC in 1983, the matter of desensitisation was examined? It is clear that what causes problems is not only what he described as the drip, drip effect, but the acute and deliberate acts of violence portrayed on television, and those problems have to be addressed. The publication said:

"Nevertheless a consensus of research suggests that desensitisation can result from an excess of violence and the amount and treatment of violence needs to be carefully examined all the time."

It then gave examples of acts of violence which could be regarded as being desensitising and ought to be stopped.

Mr. Churchill: I agree with my hon. Friend. The drip, drip effect is worrying, but it is much more difficult to provide for in legislation. The specific acts to which my hon. Friend refers—I shall come to one or two in a moment—make a great impression on people who might be thought to be susceptible, because they are young, or are in some way mentally unbalanced, or have a drug or alcohol dependency.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Is not the evidence for what my hon. Friend is saying coming from a different but extremely important quarter, namely, the increasing number of primary school teachers who are reporting that five-year-olds coming to school for the first time are more aggressive and much more difficult to handle than they have been in the past? Such teachers would readily subscribe to the view that the drip, drip effect of increasing violence on television to which many young children are exposed because of the irresponsibility or carelessness of their parents is having a dire effect upon them. It will go on doing so unless it is checked by the kind of legislation that my hon. Friend has in mind.

Mr. Churchill: In the BBC report on the portrayal of violence from which I quoted, reference is made to those likely to watch such material. It says:

"Any programme is watched by a multiplicity of different audiences . . . it may be designed for late evening viewing by intelligent adults, but it may also be watched by unattended children.

In the theatre, cinema or bookshop you pay and thereby choose to see or read what is there. In television you make no such choice . . .

We are aware that the BBC's programmes will always be seen by a handful of disturbed people, who may be further disturbed by what they see on the screen. Large numbers will, however, watch any adventure or 'horror' film, comedy series or popular crime series, even when placed late at night. There are even larger numbers of children among late night audiences at weekends."

There we have it. Although significant numbers of children will be watching at any time of day or night, on the admission of those authorities they see fit to put out X-rated material, or 18 material, as it is now categorised, to millions of homes. If shown in the cinema, that material would be restricted to adults.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I do not know whether my hon. Friend intended to address himself to this question. So far he has addressed himself to the effect of those programmes on children. Will he consider their effect on adults in their dealings with children?

Mr. Churchill: That is also a very important aspect.

There is no evidence that the rising tide of violence and pornography is leaving the youth of our country unscathed, or that there is no link between such material and the horrifying increase in violent crime, including violence of a sexual or sadistic nature, of which most frequently women and young children are the victims. Indeed, there is a powerful and mounting body of evidence suggesting precisely the contrary—that the growing diet of violence and obscenity to which society as a whole, including children and young persons, is being subjected is, to a significant although admittedly unquantifiable extent, responsible for many of the violent and sexual assaults regularly perpetrated in the constituencies of each and every one of us.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): I must admit to a considerable amount of confusion about my hon. Friend's target. At one moment I feel that it is the extreme

programme for which he is going, which every right hon. and hon. Member would like to be off the screen, if it ever goes on the screen, and the next moment he seems to be referring to the drip-drip effect of ordinary programmes. Will he outline some of the day-to-day programmes, which many people watch, which he sees as his target? That would be immensely helpful to all of us.

Mr. Churchill: As I have said, within the ambit of such legislation it is possible to deal only with the more extreme manifestations of obscenity and violence. While I deplore the lower levels of violence which one sees so often on the television screen, and which undoubtedly have a harmful effect, that must be the responsibility of those charged with programming and the watchdog authorities.

The increase in crimes of violence is most disturbing and cannot be separated from the rising tide of obscene and violent material that is thrust before young people and society as a whole. Taking the figures for England and Wales, between 1954 and 1984 crimes of violence against the person increased from 7,506 to 114,187—a 15-fold increase. Notified cases of rape, which, inevitably, are far fewer than the actual total, increased during the same period from 294 to 1,433, a fivefold increase.

It is clear that the children of the nation are at risk. The House has always regarded the protection of children as one of its highest duties, and it is in that spirit that I put my Bill before the House and seek the support of hon. Members in all quarters and representative of every party. The measure is calculated to guarantee that transmissions by the broadcasting authorities are never again allowed to fall below a minimum standard in terms of obscene and violent material without risking the penalties that would be incurred by any other media publishing such material. Furthermore, it would ensure that the more explicit brand of pornographic magazine would no longer be sold in shops and bookstalls to which children and young persons have access, but would be available only to adults in appropriately licensed sex shops.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): What does the hon. Gentleman think about page three of *The Sun*?

Mr. Churchill: Page three of *The Sun* would not come within the Bill. Perhaps the hon. Lady feels that it should. In Committee it will be up to her to move an amendment, if she wishes, to deal with that.

I have no illusions about the fact that in the legislation I am taking on not one but two enormously powerful vested interests: on the one hand, the moguls of the media, who believe that they, unique of all the media in this country, should have a God-given right to be above the law in these matters, and, on the other, the pimps and pornographers of the multi-billion pound sex magazine industry, who feel that they should be allowed to peddle their wares even in local sweet shops.

Those two enormously powerful lobbies are seeking to deploy their muscle to prevent the legislation from reaching the statute book. Not only have they written to every hon. Member urging that the Bill be rejected, but I understand that representations have been made at a high level that the Bill should be allowed to proceed no further. I venture to think that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not give in to such pressure on a matter of such great public concern to the House and the country.

The public may have little appreciation of the extent to which private Member's legislation, as opposed to Government-sponsored legislation, has played an important and necessary role in carrying through many important reforms of the law, possibly nowhere more than in matters relating to obscene publications. It may have escaped the notice of many hon. Members that the Obscene Publications Act 1959 was itself a private Member's Bill introduced by the then right hon. Member for Birmingham, Stechford, now the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins).

In more recent years, other measures have been placed on the statute book. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for the Protection of Children Act 1978, which makes it illegal to take, distribute, possess or publish any indecent photographs of children; to my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) for the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981, which went a long way towards cleaning up the hoardings outside cinemas and other places and the front covers of magazines; and to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) whose Video Recordings Act 1984 has made illegal the showing or sale of what are colloquially known as video nasties, and is leading to the classification of all video material available for sale or hire.

I refer to the detail of the Bill. Clause 1 provides that, for the first time, the Obscene Publications Act shall apply to television and sound broadcasting. Subsection (2) protects broadcasters from vexatious litigation by providing that proceedings under that clause shall not be instituted except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am aware that many people think that that safeguard should not be present and that, as with most other forms of publication, the private citizen should have the right to initiate proceedings. I respect that view, but believe that the safeguard is necessary and that it would be in line with existing arrangements in respect of the cinema, which, though like television and sound broadcasting, has its own watchdog authority in the form of the British Board of Film Classification. It is none the less subject to the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

Videos and cable broadcasting have recently been brought within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, in line with the cinema. Television and sound broadcasting alone remain outwith the Act. They were exempted because, in the words of the then Solicitor-General, Sir Harry Hylton-Foster:

> "Television and broadcasting have their own censorship arrangements, as have films.
>
> The point that we have always sought to make, and I believe it to be sound, is that it is inconceivable that on the full public broadcasting of B.B.C. or I.T.A. there would ever be a programme so flagrantly obscene that it could be prosecutable under this Bill. If it were, it would be very difficult for the defendant to defend himself, because such programmes go out and are published to a very wide audience." — [*Official Report*, 24 April 1959; Vol. 604, c. 835.]

The inconceivable has happened. I believe that the overwhelming majority of my colleagues who watched two recent Channel 4 efforts broadcast last November—"Jubilee" and "Sebastiane"—felt that the transmission of those films represented a flagrant violation of the statutory duty laid on television and broadcasting authorities not to transmit material which

"offends against public decency or good taste".

While certain producers try to push ever further the frontiers of what can be pumped into people's homes,

[Mr. Churchill]

securing notoriety for themselves in the process, the watchdog committees have fallen down on the duties entrusted to them. I understand that in this case they did not trouble to view those X-rated films before they were put out.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): I understand that those films received X certificates for showing in the cinema. Would they have fallen foul of the Bill?

Mr. Churchill: They would, indeed. In the case of "Jubilee", apart from the obscenity of the action, to which I shall not refer, and the four-letter content of the script, from which I shall not quote, it was the way in which the acts of violence were so lovingly and longingly dwelt on that I found particularly offensive. The viewer was shown in close-up the suffocation to death of a man with his head wrapped in a transparent plastic sheet. There was a shot of a young woman being bound to a lamp post with coils of barbed wire which cut into her flesh.

I found the portrayal of the police most insidious. Two police officers dash into what appears to be a youth club where young people are playing snooker. They kick a couple of youngsters in the groin and shoot two others gratuitously. That sets the scene for alleged police brutality and violence and is, no doubt, held to justify the final scene in which a policeman is jumped by a couple of girl punks who chop him up with razor blades. At the end, his body rolls over before the camera and his guts spill out almost into the viewer's lap.

The IBA saw fit to transmit that film within six weeks of the murder by a mob in Tottenham of PC Keith Blakelock, but was surprised at the anger felt in the country and house.

Sir Bernard Braine: And disgust.

Mr. Churchill: Indeed. It was surprised at the anger at its treatment of its responsibilities. It is not enough that the programme controllers, confronted with the whiff of Prime Ministerial grapeshot and the prospect of a little legislation, should be dashing around saying that they will review their guidelines. It is not the guidelines that need reviewing. It is the guidelines that need upholding, implementing and observing.

The BBC and the IBA have announced this week that they will clean up their act still further. In the press only this morning it emerges that a film which they have watched and feel would be too strong will not be put out because they regard it as disgusting. Why does it take legislation or the threat of it to get such action? What business have they planning to broadcast such material or commissioning such material in the first place? Is it not inevitable that, if the Bill is blocked, as the vested interests would like it to be, the authorities will quickly go back to their bad old ways and the watchdogs will go back to their corners and curl up fast asleep in their baskets?

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I did not see the films which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and I have no wish to have them described. Is it likely that if they had been available for viewing in cinemas the DPP would have consented to proceedings being taken against the IBA for showing them?

Mr. Churchill: I think that the hon. Gentleman misinterprets the situation. The films were originally granted an X certificate. When they are shown in the cinema, the audience is exclusively adult. There is a clear difference, or there ought to be, between that and material that is broadcast on public television to 30 million homes in which, as the authorities admit, significant numbers of children and young people will be watching. The films that I mentioned would be caught by at least three of the additional tests of obscenity that I propose. They are the lewd exhibition of genital organs, excretory functions, mutilation and vicious cruelty towards persons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Although the common law offence of obscenity has not been invoked for many years, it applies to broadcasting, notwithstanding the fact that the 1959 Act does not.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. A central element of the Bill, which is long overdue, is that henceforth broadcasters, like newspapers editors and proprietors, film producers and the book and magazine trade, will be subject to the law of the land in matters of obscenity and violence.

Mr. Fairbairn: I understand the difficulty of drafting a Bill of this nature, but it does not apply to Scotland. Why are the Scots to have tartan obscenity, when the English are not to have non-tartan obscenity?

Mr. Churchill: My hon. and learned Friend raises a relevant point. My Bill is not intended to apply to either Scotland or to Northern Ireland, because the original Act does not apply to them. As my hon. and learned Friend knows, both Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own legislative provisions.

The IBA has sent notes to all hon. Members on its view of the effect of the Bill, if it is enacted. The IBA states:

"The Obscene Publications Act is designed to apply to material for which no other regulatory mechanism exists. Public broadcasting is centrally controlled, and subject to statutory standards."

That statement is inaccurate. Indeed, I am surprised that the Solicitor-General has not written the IBA a letter which someone may leak. The cinema, like broadcasting, is centrally controlled and subject to what might be called censorship. Nevertheless, it comes within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act, and the British Board of Film Classification welcomes that fact.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The hon. Gentleman would not wish inadvertently to mislead the House. The old British Board of Film Censors, which is now the British Board of Film Classification, has from the beginning made its position clear. If it is asked to give an opinion on a script it may do so, but it is not a film censor. It classifies whatever is brought before it. Therefore, although the hon. Gentleman may think that the parallel he draws is valid, it is inaccurate.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Lady is not right on that point. I appreciate that for cosmetic purposes the board chooses to be known as the British Board of Film Classification, as opposed to the British Board of Film Censors, but it can and does refuse classification for certain categories of film. The board has effectively censored and ruled out video nasties. It certainly has a censorship role, and films are definitely subject to the Obscene Publications Act. The IBA's statement is factually inaccurate.

THe IBA states in relation to the Bill:

"The inclusion of the broadcasting authorities would seriously impair the ability to provide responsible public service broadcasting."

The IBA has nothing to fear from the Bill, unless it intends to put over material which is patently obscene, and so obscene and violent that a court of law would hold it to be an offence under the Act.

It is high time that the House affirmed the glorious principle enunciated with such eloquence by Lord Denning when, as Master of the Rolls, he declared;

"Be ye ever so mighty, the Law of England is still above you."

I recognise that the tireless campaigner Mrs. Mary Whitehouse and many others would have liked the Bill to go further, and, specifically, to replace the principal test of obscenity contained in the 1959 Act—the tendency to deprave and corrupt. That is beyond the scope of the Bill, and I certainly do not intend to replace that test. However, clause 2 introduces an additional test which will apply to material available in places to which children have access, that is, shops, and bookstalls and, by the fact that it is transmitted to 30 million homes, to material broadcast to homes.

I recognise that the Williams committee expressed great reservations about the concept of a list. I venture to think that that was because at the time the idea of a list was to replace the principal test of obscenity. That is not my intention. It is to be additional to the principal test. The weakness of a list alone is that inevitably people will use their ingenuity to find ever new forms of obscenity and loopholes. That is why I have not seen fit to seek to replace the original test of obscenity.

Most of the anxieties represented to me by the director general of the BBC, the chairman of IBA, the director of the British Board of Film Classification, and representatives of publishers and booksellers, with all of whom I have had consultations, would be met by section 4, on the defence of material published for the public good as being of cultural, artistic or educational merit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A further anxiety is that in a limited number of cases materials that will fall within the excluded list are published for either medical or educational reasons. It appears that the section for defence will not protect such publications. Will my hon. Friend be prepared in Committee to consider amendments to take account of that anxiety?

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. That is precisely the point to which I am coming.

Following the representations that I have received, and if the House gives the Bill its Second Reading, I intend to introduce an amendment to clause 2 specifically to exclude articles which are primarily works of art, history or education, and work concerned with science or medical science. They would in any case be covered by section 4, but that would be clumsy, because it could lead to a prosecution and expensive legal fees before those involved could get shot of that prosecution. I should like an amendment which would exclude those articles from the scope of clause 2.

Following representations from the broadcasting authorities, and as before I entered the House I had the unpleasant task of going to battlefronts and reporting wars on various continents, I believe that an exemption should be made for current affairs news reporting. Many people find reporting from Aden and other battlefronts deeply violent and offensive. Nevertheless, it is proper, within limits, to show that to the public. They should not be cocooned from it. It is above all artificial, synthetic and enacted violence which most people find offensive.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is no objection to the Bill, as seems to be thought by some Labour Members, on the ground that it does not touch everything? It touches some important things, and surely that is what matters.

Mr. Churchill: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I recognise that I have already taken up too much of the time of the House.

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman said that he was not amending the original definition of "to degrade and corrupt". My understanding of the Bill is that the depiction of revolting things in paragraph *(a)* of the suggested subsection (3A) is in addition to the original definition. Therefore, he has slightly misled the House. The test is not whether those things are depicted in a way that would deprave or corrupt, but whether they are depicted at all.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Lady is correct. This is an additional test or hurdle which such material — principally magazines sold in newsagents and bookstalls, and what is transmitted to the home by public television —will have to jump. However imperfect that list may be and susceptible to improvement in Committee, which I fully recognise, the material caught by the Bill will automatically be held to be obscene. There will be no question of calling in expert witnesses to say why something should be allowed. The material will simply be off-limits—something which broadcasters cannot put out or which magazine publishers cannot sell other than in a licensed sex shop.

The protection of children is one of the highest duties of the House, and I respectfully submit that there is a strong case for broadcasting to be brought within the scope of obscene publications legislation and for magazines of an explicit or pornographic nature not to be available in everybody's local newsagent or sweetshop.

I invite the House to support the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It will be clear to the House that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. I hope that those who are fortunate enough to catch my eye will remember that.

10.22 am

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): In response to your request, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall be brief.

I am pleased to be a sponsor of the Bill and, whatever its outcome, I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on giving the House a substantial opportunity to debate this serious and worrying topic. There may be defects in what he is attempting, but at least he is trying to tackle a serious and comparatively new social problem.

My father was a Congregational minister. It was he who coined the phrase that the Labour party owed more to Methodism than to Marx, although I concede that the father of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—the late Morgan Phillips —was the man who put it into current popular usage. I come from this non-Conformist background, and the

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

House may know that recently I paid a heavy price for refusing to budge from the non-conformist views instilled into me in my youth.

Sometimes, we do not understand how very recent the phenomenon of television is. I did not see a television set until I was on leave from the Royal Navy in 1948 when I watched the third day of the fifth test against Australia at the Oval. I had been to the Oval on the first day and I saw England shot out for 52. That was bad, but worse was to come on the second day when Bradman was out for a duck in his last test innings. I could not face going to the ground for the third day. I was nearly 20 and I saw my first television set.

Now, almost day and night, there is a constant stream of programmes on various channels. We do not appreciate its impact on youth because many of us were not exposed to it during our formative years. The impact of the senses on what the mind learns and absorbs is vague. By far the most powerful sense for gathering information and impressions and forming opinions is the visual sense. Repeatedly in research the visual sense has been shown to be all important.

I remember soon after I came to the House conducting school parties around. They were almost anaesthetised by my tedious commentary until they got to the Princes' Chamber. They became alive then because on the walls of the Chamber are pictures of Henry VIII and his six wives, and there had been a recent television series on Henry VIII. They knew all about it, much more than I did—they knew which wives went which way, and so on. It is obvious that television is a most powerful medium and a most impressionable one.

It is self-evident that television has an impact on people or commercial television would not exist. People pay high prices to have their products and services advertised at what are called peak viewing times. That can only be because there must be a substantial impact on the viewers. It is easier to destroy standards in society than to establish them. I am not impressed by some of the material that I have received pointing out to me the error of my ways in being a sponsor of the Bill. It has been counter-productive.

The world is a violent place and we see enough violence in everyday life without having our children exposed to it in this way at young, impressionable ages. I am pleased to be a sponsor of the Bill and I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme on his enterprise in introducing it.

10.27 am

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I contratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on introducing the Bill and am happy to support him in it. I will make it as clear as I can, as quickly as I can, why I support the Bill's limited objectives. If passed, it will do something to reduce the volume of sheer filth with which our society is being soiled. We must do many other things. I was horrified to hear all the interruptions during my hon. Friend's speech. We know that he is trying to do only one of the things that could be done—that is to limit the bringing into our homes by television or bookstalls of the sheer filth that is made available to young children in those ways. That is the lowest common denominator and surely we can all share it. In case anyone thinks I am exaggerating, I point out that I have chosen the phrase "sheer filth" very carefully. It is the mildest description that I can give. If one gets into the degrees of perversion involved, there is a danger of exaggerating; "sheer filth" is the lowest common denominator.

This filth degrades and debases human values and standards and could destroy the very dignity of life itself. I am not talking just about sexual matters. At least as important are cruelty, sadism and sheer crudity. The debasing of sexual values is of great importance in our society. Many aspects of the more open, modern approach to sex are wholly good. But what we are talking about takes all dignity and beauty from that fragile and mystical aspect of our lives, which if shorn of dignity and beauty, and, dare I be so old fashioned as to say, shorn of love can so easily be degraded and debased, so often bringing misery where there should be nothing but joy.

Why do I stress this aspect of sheer filth? I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) is not smiling at what I am saying.

Mr. Churchill: She always does.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Sir Ian Percival: If the hon. Lady can assure me that she is not smiling, then I shall be satisfied.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. I was moved by the words that he used. That is why I was smiling.

Sir Ian Percival: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady. I am glad that I said what I did, because I greatly welcome her assurance.

Why do I stress this aspect of sheer filth? It is because I believe that, happily, most people have no first hand knowledge of the sheer filth that is being propagated, no idea how filthy it is. They do not see it.

Why, then, do I know about it? It is because I had to see some of it when I was Solicitor-General. I was nauseated by it. Why do people produce and publish it? I do not really mind why they do it. Whatever their reasons, it is a gross abuse of the freedoms, privileges and responsibilities of free speech, but what so often makes it even worse is that so much of it is produced and published purely for money, despite the fact that those who make money in this way well know the damage that it must do to some people. To produce and publish this material for money is in my view comparable in every respect with selling drugs for money, despite the fact that it is known that drugs destroy.

Most young people, especially young couples with children, understand the value of adhering, or trying to adhere—none of us is good enough always to adhere—to moral values and standards. They want very much to bring up their children in that belief and for us to assist them to do so. Heaven knows, they are faced with enough difficulties in trying to do so. If this House cannot at least provide them with the limited assistance that is afforded by the Bill, it is not the place of which I have been proud to be a Member for so long.

Let the House also be in no doubt as to the strength of public opinion. The vast majority of my constituents simply cannot understand how anybody could wish to make available this kind of filth or how anybody could stand up to defend the right of anybody to make it available. My constituents would be unable to understand this House if it were to defend the right of people to peddle

and propagate filth, especially for profit. I myself cannot believe that anyone who had seen it could defend the right of people to peddle and purvey the kind of stuff to which I am referring.

I hope that the House will take this opportunity to show that it is in tune with the people whom it represents and that it will do something to help young people, including young couples who are trying to bring up their children to enjoy a good, decent, law abiding life. The Bill will make a contribution towards that aim.

I sincerely hope that the House will give its backing to the Bill and will speed it on its way.

10.33 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I had intended to say that I find the spectacle of the House of Commons lashing itself into a fervour about sexual matters faintly disquieting, but in view of the Bill that we are discussing perhaps that would be an unfortunate beginning.

I care desperately about the material that is seen by young children and about the way that their minds are formed, but I am very worried about the Bill. I came to this debate because I thought that the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) would be able to set at rest many of my fears about the drafting of the Bill and about what I can only describe as its highly subjective phraseology. I am afraid that he has not done so.

When the House frames legislation, we should ensure that it performs two tasks. First, it must be legislation that can be enforced. It must be properly framed, clear to those who have to respond to it and capable of being enforced. Secondly, the legislation must not be in response to a farrago of prejudice. It must grow out of a real need in the community.

I am as deeply concerned as any other right hon. or hon. Member about the increase in the number of cases of rape and violence against women. I should like right hon. and hon. Members to join me today in asking the Home Office to provide proper funding for rape crisis centres and proper training for our police forces. Then we should begin to tackle some of the problems that face so many of our people. However, I am not convinced that the Bill will have any effect upon those problems. The hon. Member for Davyhulme skated very lightly over some of the questions that he was asked. I intend to return to them because they are exceedingly important.

If the House of Commons takes the view that our children and young adults are being depraved because they are able to get hold of unsuitable material, we must be quite clear about what we are saying. If it is felt that the constant repetition of violence on television changes people's attitudes, all real violence must also be included. The hon. Member for Davyhulme did not answer that question. In fact, he said that he did not want current affairs programmes to be censored. That was a welcome reply. However, he did not reply to the question that he was asked about the constant drip, drip of violence that is almost acceptable: people being thrown out of cars or across rooms, or people constantly being shot at and attacked. He did not seem to think that that constituted a problem. He said that we had to be very careful, or we might rule out some of the western films that he likes.

Mr. Jackson: Is not the hon. Lady making the old mistake of making the best the enemy of the good?

Mrs. Dunwoody: No, certainly not. I am saying that those who pass laws in this House have a responsibility to think about the way in which those laws are framed. If we put on to the statute book legislation that is manifest nonsense, far from protecting children all we shall do is to allow any lawyer to drive a coach and horses through it. The result will be the very opposite of what we are seeking to do.

Mr. Churchill: I do not believe that the hon. Lady could have followed me when I made it clear in reply to earlier questions that I was not overlooking the drip, drip of violence to which she referred. If she studied the matter as I have tried to do in recent weeks, she would find that it is very difficult to produce formulas that rule out the lower and medium levels of violence to which she referred, which I fully admit are very insidious, without excluding that which none of us wishes to exclude. For that reason, my Bill is a limited measure. It deals with the more extreme manifestations of both obscenity and violence.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The difficulty about that is that I understand that the Bill would change the definition of obscenity and would add to some of the existing safeguards — *[Interruption.]* I am very happy to be barracked by hon. Members who are lawyers.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am not a lawyer.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon.

Mr. Dickens: If the hon. Lady had listened to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), she would have realised that he made it perfectly clear to all those right hon. and hon. Members who were listening that the Bill did not change the definition of obscenity. In fact, we rely absolutely upon the original definition in the Obscene Publications Act 1959. I do not understand how the hon. Lady can say that to the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. I had not realised which hon. Member was muttering.

The Bill changes the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which specifically exempts any material shown on television or broadcast on radio from the operation of the statutory test of obscenity. The Bill includes television and sound broadcasting, although proceedings would be taken only with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. That does not apply in other obscenity Acts.

Mr. Churchill: Again the hon. Lady cannot have been listening to what I said. That applies to the cinema. For that reason, I thought fit to interpose the DPP in the case of television.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I do not wish to be unkind to the hon. Gentleman, but he is wrong. The old British Board of Film Censors, now the British Board of Film Classification, can continue to exist only provided that it makes it clear to everyone that it is not a censor. That is the central reason for its existence. It has always made it clear that it exists to classify material. If it classifies material in such a way that it cannot be shown in Britain, that does not prevent the material from being produced or from being shown under certain conditions. However, the board has made it clear that it does not censor scripts or films.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) does not understand the problem or his own Bill, which changes the definition when it states that the following list of things

"shall be deemed to be obscene."

The previous definition was that there had to be proof of its depraving and corrupting nature. That is a major change in the definition.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The test of obscenity has always been one of effect depending upon the circumstances of the publication. The Bill grafts on to that provision a different test of absolute obscenity which can be additionally and alternatively applicable in various cases.

What frightens me about the Bill is that the written word is excluded. Presumably one could describe all sorts of things that would not be caught by the Bill. The worries of the hon. Member for Davyhulme have been described by him in highly subjective terms. The right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) constantly referred to sheer filth. One man's sheer filth can be another man's boring and irritating material. The film "Sebastiane" has already been mentioned. It was programmed extremely late at night. I watched half a reel, but I was so incredibly bored that I switched off my television set.

We must have a sense of proportion about the programming of material on television and material that is available on the bookstalls. I have received letters from constituents who are newsagents and who are extremely careful about how they organise their displays. They believe that they would be put in a difficult position because of the extraordinarily wide wording of the Bill. Their worries are real. If the displays have been carefully arranged so that the average young person has difficulty in reaching any material that can be regarded as obscene, the newsagents have taken all sensible precautions. However, the hon. Member for Davyhulme says that his definition is acceptable. If a person under the age of 18 could have access to obscene material, the newsagent is brought within the scope of the legislation. What the hon. Gentleman is doing is dangerous and discriminatory.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Lady's constituency borders on mine. There is no evidence in my constituency that anyone would wish to have that type of material available. I hope that the same applies in her constituency.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Since we are all playing this game, perhaps the hon. Gentleman should have listened to what I said. Various newsagents in my constituency have written to me saying that the wording of the Bill is so defective that they can see themselves being put at risk. I repeat that, because I believe that it is important.

I am deeply worried that, because of the highly emotive terms of the legislation, the hon. Member for Davyhulme is seeking to pander to the worst type of prejudice, and the Bill will not achieve his real aims.

There is much published material that lends itself to the degradation of women. I do not care for nudity in the daily newspapers. The extraordinary physiques that are produced with the aid of silicones and other strangely artificial substances are not attractive. If page 2 was to consist entirely of nude males, many hon. Members would be terribly shocked and would constantly complain in the House that the newspapers had abandoned all sense of decency and had no intention of maintaining the best standards of family life. There is no more reason to look at naked females than there is to look at naked males. They are at a similar level of pulchritude.

Under the guise of protecting children, we could be producing legislation that will not work. That is my real complaint against the Bill. It has been born out of prejudice and fostered by bad law and even by bad advice. The Bill will not be discussed in terms that are important for those who care about broadcast or published material. I believe that, because of the number of hours of broadcasting and the amount of material that is put out, mistakes will be made in the broadcasting community. There is no group of human beings who always have a delicate nuance of taste so that they will not make mistakes or produce programmes that are not offensive to someone.

By ignoring violence, in the broadest sense, the Bill could give the impression that violence was perfectly acceptable. That is the most worrying aspect of the Bill. I hope that the Bill will not be accepted. I believe that it is extraordinarily badly drawn. The hon. Member for Davyhulme has not set at rest any of my objections, but he has confirmed my view that the Bill owes more to the need for artificial moral outrage than a genuine desire to improve the legislation. The Bill is a bad piece of writing, and I hope that the House will throw it out.

10.49 am

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I give my wholehearted support to the Bill and I am proud to have sponsored it. So far in the debate we have not heard enough about the great difference between television as a medium of communication and, for example, page 3 of *The Sun*. Television comes into people's sitting rooms and, as such, is acceptable to children from an early age.

As someone who worked closely with children before entering Parliament and who tried to understand how they build up a view of the world, I believe that what they see on television is as important as what their parents or grandparents do. It is a combination of the visual and the spoken word.

Earlier this week, hon. Members saw episodes from the films "Jubilee" and "Sebastiane". It was deeply shocking that, despite the guidelines and assurances by the broadcasting authorities, those films were shown on television, albeit late at night. I entirely reject any suggestion that children will not see programmes that are broadcast late at night. Anyone who has been responsible for children knows that they often come downstairs late at night because they wake up and are afraid. If they enter a sitting room where such frightening programmes are on television, it can only be deeply damaging to them. What appears on page 3 of *The Sun* may not be to everyone's taste, but they are fairly friendly pictures——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Positively cuddly, really.

Mrs. Bottomley: I could not have said it better myself.

Some television programmes are deeply depraved and meaningless. They undermine people's moral structure and they leave children with a deep sense of confusion about the world.

Not only children but many people who live alone, perhaps in an alienated and unhappy state, can be affected. As hon. Members, we are the least well placed to comment on television programmes, because we——

Mr. Brinton: My hon. Friend spoke feelingly about the effect of television programmes on children. Some

years ago, one of my children — who was then five years old—exhibited similar problems with an episode of "Dr. Who". Does she wish to include "Dr. Who" in the embraces of the Bill?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am bemused by the suggestion that, because the Bill does not cover everything, it should be rejected. It is only a first step. "Dr. Who" has a wide audience, and far be it from me to alienate many of my constituents by saying that they should be deprived of the programme. But that does not undermine the rationale of the Bill, which is to extend the Obscene Publications Act to cover broadcasting on television and to list the specific acts which should be outlawed. I feel more strongly about broadcasting than about magazines. Of course, it is a good idea to remove them from bookshops where they are easily available, but the widespread outcry is about television.

We have had promises that the guidelines will be reviewed and implemented. For the most part, our broadcasting authorities are splendid. However, on this point, hon. Members are constantly approached by parents, teachers and the clergy, who say, "Why is there such an appalling diet of obscenity and violence on television?" Of course, the Bill does not deal with violence.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the hon. Lady consider that the "A Team", which conveys the impression that violence is acceptable because people are subjected to extreme attacks and then get up and walk away, is an acceptable form of television? If she does, can she tell us what is acceptable about that violence but not other forms of violence? I am trying hard to understand what she is worried about. She is not making herself as clear as she might.

Mrs. Bottomley: If when the hon. Lady has the good fortune to introduce a private Member's Bill she wishes to draft legislation on violence, I shall undoubtedly support her. The point about the Bill is that vicious cruelty has been specified for the first time. I accept the difficulties of making definitions, and I applaud my hon. Friend for trying to restrict the list.

Mr. Buchan: Does the hon. Lady realise that this would prevent the showing of "King Lear", that is a play by Shakespeare?

Mrs. Bottomley: I welcome my hon. Friend's acknowledgement that, in Committee, he would be happy to introduce an amendment to allow the broadcasting of programmes for artistic, historic, educational or scientific purposes. Of course, there must be exceptions.

Hon. Members who oppose the Bill deeply misunderstand the mood of the country. There is widespread anxiety and unhappiness about the fact that television shows a diet of programmes which offers children and their families the worst examples of behaviour.

Ms. Clare Short: I agree with the hon. Lady that there is widespread anxiety in the country about the amount of violence on television. I also believe that many people object to page 3 of *The Sun*. However, it is wrong for the sponsors of the Bill to pretend that it will deal with the matter that causes that widespread anxiety. It is not good enough to say, "There is anxiety, so we shall throw a defective piece of legislation at it," because that will not deal with the matters which really worry people.

Mrs. Bottomley: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but I do not share her view.

I believe that this is an important Bill which I hope will begin to redress the balance. For too long, we have emphasised the importance of freedom of expression and under-emphasised our responsibility to the young, the vulnerable and the susceptible in our care. From the previous census returns, we discovered that twice as many people lived on their own. Increasingly, people live alone and are fearful. Many television programmes show sadistic attacks on women, which arouse the fears of many women who live alone. They also fuel the worst instincts in those with vulnerable personalities. All of us must be worried about the increasing number of crimes, especially sexual crimes. It is ludicrous to believe that, with such a constant diet on television, we are not inflaming people's worst instincts and desensitising them.

In "1984", George Orwell recognised the importance of communicating through big brother on the screen in people's homes. We are only beginning to come to terms with the problem. Since nearly all households have television sets, it is essential for the public good that action is taken now to improve what is seen in people's homes. For that reason, I wholeheartedly support the Bill.

10.58 am

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I wish to deal with some of the confusion that is apparent among the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and some of those who support the Bill. First, this is bad legislation, principally because it does not understand the problems with which it is supposed to deal. That makes it unhelpful. Secondly, those of us who recognise that there is a serious problem are among those who criticise the Bill. Those of us who have been involved in this area know that it is a bad Bill. I do not attribute wrong motives to the hon. Gentleman, and I say nothing about electoral advantage, but if he had been seriously worried about the problem he would have dealt with it a little more intelligently.

I share the anxieties of the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) about violence, but when questions are asked in an attempt to place the matter in a broader context it is not enough to say, "That should be left to another Bill", or, "Do not criticise this Bill because it deals with only one aspect." The Bill is bad from beginning to end and will not solve the problem. A long time ago—longer ago than I care to think—I was given the task by the Educational Institute of Scotland of analysing the many horror comics that were being published at the time. Within 48 hours, by approaching two classes in a secondary school, I had literally hundreds of such comics. I came out of the first two months of examination sick and horrified. The children who gave those comics to me were not in the least bit affected as I had been affected. Therefore, there is nothing new in the portrayal of horror and violence directed at young people for profit. Incidentally, profit can often come under the heading of obscenity.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a profound difference between the written word and what appears on television? I am talking largely about children under five who cannot read. They are beginning to understand reality and how the world works. They do not discriminate between what they see on television and what happens in their family. The comic stage comes much later in their development.

Mr. Buchan: I wish that the hon. Lady would not preach to us. We know the problems. Some of us have been involved with them closely. We do not like to be told that two and two make four. Those horror comics were visual. I was not stressing how healthy the children who read them were compared to me—that was a passing point. I have no doubt that they had an effect on the children. For one thing, they gave them a kind or pre-sexual shock before they reached sexual maturity.

I remember one particular example of a horrifying set of visual images. A business man was portrayed making a trip to south America. He distrusted his wife because she happened to be beautiful, so he locked her in the cellar before he left, with a plentiful supply of food, so that no man could get near her before he returned. His plane crashed in the jungle and he took a year to get back, terrified that he might find his wife dead. The last picture showed him dashing down the steps saying, "Thank goodness you are alive, dear." She said, "Thank goodness you have arrived. I was beginning to think that I was turning into a vole." They embraced and suddenly he saw to his horror that she had turned into a vole. I cannot express the bestiality of that particular picture, so I know what we are talking about.

When I see some of the apostles of morality in the House, I reach for my chastity belt. We see a parade of morality from people who have not necessarily always behaved with the best of morality. It may be that they are trying to achieve an inner cleanliness by supporting such a Bill; that they feel that they will somehow recover a kind of purity—a restoration of virginity.

I should have thought that clause 2 would almost be subject to the charge of obscenity. Hon. Members seem to take pleasure in listing such obscene phrases as acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral-genital connection and oral-anal connection. Come to think of it, there is an old word for oral-anal connection which is often used in politics. They take a certain pleasure in this, which I find detestable.

Mr. Churchill: Does the hon. Gentleman really think that the acts that he has read out should be put over on television?

Mr. Buchan: The filthiest piece of film that I have ever seen was at a Scottish amateur film festival. Incidentally, Scotland is excluded from the Bill. We shall not be protected. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am about to answer the question, exactly and precisely in my own way, which is more than the hon. Gentleman did in replying to questions.

The filthiest film that I have ever seen was the portrayal at a Scottish amateur film festival of a film of nothing but a pair of hands writhing in total silence for seven minutes. The audience was on edge in an acute state of erotically aroused embarrassment.

The listing of a number of examples like this does not deal with their effect upon children and others. What is important is the intention of the craftsman or member within the whole context. The worst of all possible films could escape, while the examples used here could be portrayed in such a way that, instead of arousing disgust and horror, they would be an essential part of arousing compassion, yet they would be caught by the Bill. That is particularly true with reference to vicious cruelty.

Under the Bill, vicious cruelty towards animals could not be portrayed, and a film backing up an appeal for an animal charity, for example, could not be shown. Films dealing with the act of war could not be portrayed. If we had had daily television during the first world war showing the carnage and vicious cruelty that occurred, that war would not have gone on for four years. That portrayal of vicious cruelty would have aroused compassion. If one war was stopped by television, it was a war of the most vicious cruelty—the war in Vietnam. It was its portrayal that brought about the end of that war. I wish that the hon. Member for Davyhulme would grow up and think about what he is doing.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is making some ridiculous allegations. He clearly has not read the Bill and the provision which clearly states:

> "Proceedings for an offence under this section . . . shall not be instituted except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions."

If the hon. Gentleman genuinely believes that the Director of Public Prosecutions would take action in the instance that he has just mentioned, he needs to have his head examined.

Mr. Buchan: Perhaps we should have a simple Bill which says that all problems of obscenity will be left to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Bill tells the public prosecutor how he should act. That is the function of legislation, because if it is not, legality is completely arbitrary. Honestly, the inadequacy of thought of the hon. Member for Davyhulme appals me.

Ms. Clare Short: Conservative Members keep trying to correct Labour Members, but they keep misrepresenting the Bill. The consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions is required in matters of television, but in all other areas his consent is not required. Therefore, the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is wrong.

Mr. Jackson: The Bill leaves in place section 4 of the 1959 Act, which provides the defence of public good, covering all the cases that the hon. Gentleman cites. The hon. Gentleman is trying to be philosophical, but he reminds me of what Burke said about those philosophers who "subtilize themselves into savagery".

Mr. Buchan: I am not sure whether I got all the words, but I think that it was the hon. Gentleman who intervened on the best and the good, failing to understand that our criticism of the Bill is based not only on the fact that it deals with some aspects and not all, but that it destroys the present basis of law, including the basis of control that we have over the broadcasting authority and extends it irrespective of intent or anything else.

I wish that the ex-Solicitor-General would stop shaking his head. He made quite a good speech. It was by far the best speech from a Conservative Member. I sympathise with him, but he knows that it is the context in which something is done or shown that really matters.

Sir Ian Percival: I deplore interventions, because I like to hear hon. Members make their speeches, but I must regard that as an invitation either to accept or deny what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I am bound to say that I do not accept it. I deny it. He is talking a lot of rubbish.

Mr. Buchan: I am told from behind that that is a compliment, and I think that it is. We are dealing with serious issues, and I should not allow myself to be sidetracked.

Sir Ian Percival: I did not mean to be as offensive as I might have sounded in an effort to be brief. The hon. Gentleman is dealing with great intellectual questions, but the Bill, as I tried to point out, deals with only one aspect of an enormous problem—filth and getting rid of it. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is denying that there is filth and that we should get rid of it.

Mr. Buchan: I am receiving so much advice from all sides that I am not sure that I have taken it all on board. With private Members' Bills one can take only a small aspect, because they cannot deal with the generality. That is not the case with this Bill, because it is changing the definition of obscenity, among other things. It is laying down a fresh set of laws when a structure of control, practised over the years, already exists. We are dealing with a major issue.

The Bill ignores the main problem because the hon. Member for Davyhulme has not understood the main problem. The main problem of the horror comics to which I referred was not isolated to the picture that I described, but was about desensitising. The real problem is not the display of male genitals, or the display of vicious cruelty, but the context in which those things are set.

The problem that we are facing with violence and obscenity is that to which I have referred. Someone quoted me as using the term "constant drip", but I did not use that term. The desensitising goes on because of the constancy, not because of a specific and horrific act which can frighten or disturb someone. It results from the deadening of awareness through continual careless violence. It is the careless violence of the American pulp serials — car crashes, easy mugging, batterings and so on—that leads to desensitising. A single act of horror can create a more alert and aware community which will react against it rather than for it.

Continual desensitising and betrayal are caused by cheap material, produced and financed by the people whom Conservative Members represent. They are driving to bring such motivation into all the publicity by backing such things as the attempt in the Peacock report to bring financial control, rather than judgment control, into broadcasing. Pulp serials will be the end result for the sort of television that Conservative Members want. If that were not so, they would resist the pressure to move towards the introduction of advertising and financial control and opening up satellite broadcasting to the money boys. That is the problem with which the hon. Member for Davyhulme should have dealt. We object to the Bill because it is a bad Bill, not just because it fails to deal with some of the important problems.

At the end of his speech the hon. Member for Davyhulme suddenly destroyed his Bill. He said that he would be prepared to accept amendments to it. If we allow the artistic definition to supersede all of this by an amendment, there is no point in having it in the first place. If we say that we will exclude news broadcasting, there is no point to the proposed new section (3A)*(b)*, or to paragraph *(a)*. The truth is that the hon. Member does not know what he is doing. He started something that was infinitely bigger than he had understood, and he is now saying that, because he was stupid, he will be prepared to listen to hon. Members in Committee who will straighten the Bill out.

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should seek to bring the debate down to such a petty level. Even if my Bill is passed as it stands, section 4, the defence of public good, will stand. That will mean that there will be a complete defence if the material is published in the interests of science, literature, art, learning or other objectives which are of general concern. Is it a fault that, following representations which I have received from various quarters, I have said I will be prepared to introduce or accept an amendment to clause 2 which will have the effect of not requiring a defendant to go through the rigmarole of making a section 4 defence, but will automatically explicitly exempt certain categories from the provisions of the clause?

Mr. Buchan: It seems to me to be an enormous fault that at the end of his speech the hon. Gentleman said he had listened to pressure and would change his Bill by at least 90 per cent. What about those who have signed the Bill? Did he tell them that he would change it? Did he tell the organisations with whom he has been in touch to support him that he would change it? That is not honest dealing with the people who support him. It is not an honest Bill. We can deal only with the Bill as it is before us, not with what the hon. Gentleman says he will accept when somebody suggests amendments.

The proposed new section (3A) which refers in paragraph *(a)* to

"mutilation or vicious cruelty towards persons or animals"

will prevent films of compassion or nature films from being made. It will also stop most of our news bulletins from being made. It is not just news bulletins that cause desensitising. On the contrary, news bulletins showing vicious cruelty have helped to transform our attitudes. We must think of the response to the famine in Ethiopia. That, to a certain extent, was man-made vicious cruelty. We must think of the response of the American people to seeing the effects of napalm bombing in Vietnam. The hon. Gentleman is now saying that news bulletins will be dropped from the Bill. Thank goodness for that, but it would be better if he were to drop the whole Bill.

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) is being frivolous.

Mr. Buchan: I am not being frivolous. I am deadly serious about this matter. We must consider the effects of the Bill on non-documentary material. The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West seemed surprised when I suggested that the Bill would prevent "King Lear" from being shown. In "King Lear" they gouge out somebody's eyes with the words, "Out, vile jelly." Out pops the eyeball. That is vicious cruelty.

Has the hon. Member for Davyhulme seen "Titus Andronicus", which has an example of cannibalism because he is forced to eat his own children? Has the hon. Member read the plot of "Hamlet"? A man goes mad, there is adultery, suggested incest and a succession of murders, and Hamlet is not content to kill Claudius in one way, but insists on doing it in two ways.

I always remember the comment of Bernard Miles on the script of "Hamlet". The final scene is one of carnage and vicious cruelty in the whole court of Denmark. Bernard Miles comes in as the local constable and says: "'Allo, 'allo, wot's going on here?" That kind of play would also be banned.

Heaven help the Bible. Sodomy, buggery, and incest shock, yet that book has transformed mankind. When we

[Mr. Buchan]

say that the hon. Member for Davyhulme has not understood the dimensions of the problem or the implications of the Bill, we are not being frivolous; we are being deadly serious. If he wants to bring in the changes that he now seems to begin to recognise as necessary, he would do well to withdraw the Bill and go back to his study and think again.

11.20 am

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, may I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and to the House generally for not being in my place earlier. I had an important political engagement earlier in the morning. I apologise also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not having notified the Chair in advance of the nature of my point of order. If I had caught up with the matter in time, I would have done so. I noticed the point only on my fourth re-reading of the Bill a few minutes before I entered the Chamber.

It seems that clause 1(2) is out of order because it is outside the terms of the long title. The major part of the long title describes the Bill as a measure to amend section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, but subsection (2) does not amend that section. It amends by an addition to section 2 of the Act. Therefore, the subsection is outside the part of the long title which refers to section 1.

It is possible for the provision to be included in the long title only if it falls within the definition of making a consequential provision. I submit that clause 1(2) is not consequential upon clause 1(1) or to any other part of the Bill.

We are all familiar with the problems of consequentiality. We have all moved amendments in Committee, for example, only to find it necessary to move a number of consequential amendments. Without a consequential amendment the Bill would be anomalous as it would say two different things in two parts, or it would be incomplete because that stated in one part of the Bill would not be followed through in other parts.

The Bill would be whole and would not be anomalous —indeed, it would be consistent and whole—if clause 1(2) were not included. I believe that the subsection is a good provision to have in the Bill and my point of order is not designed to obstruct this measure because I shall support its Second Reading. The subsection is a worthy provision but it falls outside the long title.

I regret that I am taking so long in raising this point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is a complicated issue and I am doing my best to put it shortly. It is fortunate that the matter can be put right with the tiniest of amendments. I suggest that the long title could be amended by deleting in line 1 "section 1" and inserting "sections 1 and 2". If the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. There is great pressure on time in this debate and the issue that he is raising is one that can be debated legitimately at this stage or at subsequent stages. It is not really a point of order for me.

11.24 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I am glad that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) intends to support the Bill on Second Reading. It is a pity that he did not have the opportunity of talking to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) before the latter addressed the House. In many ways, the speech of the hon. Member for Paisley, South was remarkable. The hon. Gentleman is rather a nice man, but no one would have thought that while listening to his speech. It was one of the nastiest, grubbiest and most ill-thought-out speeches that I have heard for a long time.

I have dissented occasionally from what my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has said, but the criticism of him by the hon. Member for Paisley, South was intemperate, disagreeable and a disgrace. I bear in mind that the hon. Gentleman is the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on the arts. It is lamentable that such an important matter should have been treated by the hon. Gentleman in such a grubby, disagreeable and ill-thought-out manner.

I do not make the same criticism of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I do not think that her arguments are right, but I think that they are worth considering. They seemed to be largely of a Committee sort. She made points that need to be taken into account, but they do not go to the root of the Bill. Her main complaint was that there are disagreeable things published that are not covered by the Bill. That is true, but this is a narrow measure and I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme deserves the support of the House. That is why I am pleased to be a sponsor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme made a clear speech. The Bill is confined essentially to two substantive clauses. Clause 1 extends the provisions of the 1959 Act to broadcasting and television. I find nothing odd or exceptional about that. Why should we not extend the ordinary provisions of the criminal law to broadcasting and television? It is a mistake to suppose that the ordinary law does not already apply. For example, the Broadcasting Act 1981 applies to the standards that are observed by independent television, as does the licence. There are various direct and indirect methods by which the obligations can be enforced. Moreover, the old common law offence of obscenity most certainly applies to broadcasting.

Ms. Clare Short: Why has there never been a prosecution based on the common law offence of obscenity?

Mr. Hogg: To a large extent, that common law offence has been supplanted by the 1959 Act. Secondly, it is an extremely unattractive offence because it is couched in old-fashioned language and stems from a decision that was taken in the middle of the previous century. Speaking for myself and the Conservative party, we like up-to-date legislation rather than relying on judgments made 130 or 140 years ago. The law already applies to broadcasting and television.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the Broadcasting Act 1981. He will be aware that it contains a remedy for viewers who feel that the IBA has fallen down on its obligation to maintain certain standards as it provides that a viewer or viewers can go to the courts and seek judicial review. The Home Secretary has powers to throw people off the IBA and to issue orders bearing on the type of material that shall not be shown. Have any of these routes

been used? If they have not, why not? Does the hon. Gentleman happen to know why his hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who mentioned two Channel 4 programmes, did not seek to use these routes to get the two programmes dealt with?

Mr. Hogg: There are a number of ways in which the 1981 obligations can be enforced. First, we must consider the narrowness of the general obligation under the Act. The obligation is not to publish or broadcast anything which

"offends against good taste or decency."

That obligation is frequently broken. Those who listen to their constituents or who watched "Sebastiane" will realise that there have been breaches of the statutory obligation from time to time.

Members of the authority can be dismissed by Parliament. However, that is a draconian ultimate sanction to wish to invoke whenever there is a breach of the obligation. I am sure that the House would not like to see the sanction invoked too often, because it would undoubtedly diminish the ability of broadcasting authorities to broadcast what they think is desirable.

The remedy of judicial review has been invoked, not least by Mrs. Whitehouse. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) will know from his legal experience and his shadow Home Office responsibilities, that is a narrow remedy and does not apply to most cases. We have to understand that the broadcasting authorities are already subject to statutory obligations. The IBA must not broadcast material that offends good taste and decency, and the BBC has a duty under its licence. There is nothing offensive in principle in extending the ordinary criminal law to the broadcasting authorities.

However, there are two provisos. The first is that the defence of public interest, contained in section 4 of the 1959 Act, must apply to the extension of the law. Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said, prosecutions will be able to be brought only with the consent of the DPP, which will prevent a wanton abuse of the proceedings of the courts.

Extending the criminal law to broadcasting would bring more certainty and more consideration to what appears on television. It is good for people to realise that their actions may be judged in court if they are seriously offensive.

The second aspect of the Bill is clause 2, which I regard as an important provision. The 1959 Act provides that what tends to deprave and corrupt is obscene. That has proved a difficult test to apply, because one is dealing with the effect of what is published and not with its nature. It has been difficult for juries, publishers and everyone else to know whether an action is within or without the law.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Surely the effect rather than the nature is the important aspect. Will the hon. Gentleman consider some of the items in clause 2? For example, if vicious cruelty is depicted in a public place it can have a beneficial effect because it causes revulsion and disgust among those who see it. At other times, it can have a detrimental effect. Surely the effect, rather than the nature, is the important matter.

Mr. Hogg: That is an interesting and tenable view, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is difficult to be certain about effects. We all have gut reactions and our own beliefs and scientific inquiries into the effect of pornography and violence suggest that there is a causal connection between violence on television and the commission of violent offences. However, I accept that that connection has not been certainly established; there is doubt about the nature of the effect.

More to the point, I believe that society is entitled to say that certain matters are so offensive that they should not be published, even if we cannot establish that they have a prejudicial effect. That has been the purpose of Parliament in many other Acts. For example, some of the Post Office legislation prevents the sending through the post of distasteful material, and the Broadcasting Act 1981 prohibits the publication of material that is distasteful or offensive to good taste. That prohibition does not depend on effect. It merely says that something should not be published.

Ms. Clare Short: A jury decides whether it is distasteful.

Mr. Hogg: When there is a jury remedy, that is true, and that is what we are asking for in the Bill. I am glad to have the hon. Member's welcome of the point that I was making.

Under the 1959 Act it is difficult to know the acceptable parameters for what may be published. When I started at the Bar, I had to read material with a view to granting a certificate saying whether it was or was not obscene. The decision of an insurance company whether to cover a magazine depended on whether the certificate was issued.

I contacted the DPP to ask what was acceptable at that time. I received a courteous reply, but it did not help me one little bit. I had the embarrassing experience of going to publishers week after week with a jeweller's glass. We put on the table coloured photographs of various scenes and acts and had to peer through the jeweller's glass to discover how much we could or could not see. A sort of inch rule applied in those matters. The plain fact is that under the 1959 Act nobody really knows what is permissible.

The useful aspect of the Bill is that it says that a category of matters, published in certain ways or broadcast, are deemed to be obscene. Hon. Members should look at the list in clause 2. No one could say that the acts contained in that list are particularly attractive or have many obvious virtues.

As the hon. Member for Paisley, South has left the Chamber, I am entitled to read part of the list:

"acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral/genital connection, oral/anal connection".

What possible merit is there in the publication of such material in a public place?

I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said about the amendments that he would move in Committee, because several Labour Members have said to me that some medical and educational work and, no doubt, some related work portrays such activities and I am prepared to accept that such works should be excluded, as happened in the video nasties Bill. I also welcome what my hon. Friend said about news reporting.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that nothing in the Bill would prevent the full act of sexual intercourse being shown on television? That is the misfortune of this sort of approach. Suggestive heterosexual sexuality that goes over the top and is shown on television in front of children is what most families find objectionable. But such scenes are not touched by the Bill.

Mr. Hogg: That was a perfectly proper intervention. The ordinary act of heterosexual sexual intercourse is not one of the acts prohibited by clause 2. However, it would be subject to the procedure under the 1959 Act, subject to the proviso of a public interest defence.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): But are all the other acts in the list in clause 2 also subject to those controls?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, they are. However, the hon. Gentleman has not grasped the argument. The difficulty is to know exactly what publishers may or may not do. The concept of depraving and corrupting, as the basis of a prosecution, is an inchoate concept. The great advantage of listing acts is that people know what raises a presumption of obscenity.

Mr. Chris Smith: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. I do not feel that he has yet answered the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). The hon. Gentleman is stressing the difficulty of precise definition within the existing definitions of what is depraved and corrupt. Will the hon. Gentleman consider the difficulty involved in precise definition, with which even the list in clause 2 lands us? For example, when is an exhibition lewd? When is cruelty vicious? Will not those qualifications lead to as much difficulty as the present definitions?

Mr. Hogg: That is a perfectly fair point. I am troubled about the definition of vicious cruelty for much the same reasons as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has mentioned. That aspect of prohibited acts should be taken into account in Committee. In the end, these are matters for a jury to determine. Over a period, guidance will be given through court decisions. All we can do now is try to define those acts that raise the presumption of obscenity.

As I understand it, the list of prohibited acts merely raises a presumption of obscenity. It is still open to the publisher or broadcaster to rely on a section 4 defence.

Ms. Clare Short: Reference has been made to this point on a number of occasions. Hon. Members have said that, given that there is a section 4 defence, no one who has good intentions in publishing something will be affected. But that involves those individuals in being dragged through the courts, thereby necessarily incurring the expense, and suffering the discomfort, involved in such a trial. That is very serious.

Mr. Hogg: Of course it is. I think that the hon. Member for Ladywood is making one of the basic mistakes that libertarians make too frequently. They speak of rights and entitlement without taking account of obligations. If people want to publish

"acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral/genital connection"

I shall not cry too much if they are taken to the courts and have to prove that they have a defence under section 4.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend understand also that what is called "dragging" through the courts—I understand that that is the process of fiendish justice prescribed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short)—results, as we saw in the case of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" and "Fanny Hill", in a fortune for the publisher if he is acquitted?

Mr. Hogg: That is undoubtedly true. Many aspects of the criminal law have a disadvantageous as well as an advantageous effect. We must look at this matter in the broad. I do not believe that those people who publish or print material listed in clause 2 have much right to complain—they will not get much sympathy from me—if they are taken to court and prosecuted.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Lady is so appealing, I give way.

Ms. Short: There is a grave inconsistency in the hon. Gentleman's argument. He described at some length how unsatisfactory the present situation is, because people planning to produce pornography might be uncertain about whether it is legal. I do not have much concern for those who make their money from producing pornography. The hon. Gentleman then dismissed the possible concern of people who produce educational or scientific material.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady does me less than justice. I am sure that she does not mean to do so. She will recall that I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme suggesting that there was a specific need to exempt from the prohibited acts material that was published for scientific, medical or educational purposes. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme volunteered the news about broadcasters being subject to the law with respect to obscenity and indecency.

I have detained the House long enough, partly because of interventions, and I apologise. I welcome the Bill. It is a small and useful step forward. I hope that hon. Members who oppose it will appreciate that the points they are making are either Committee points — they are not wrong, but need to be discussed elsewhere — or are based on the premise that, as this is not a comprehensive measure, it should not be passed. I feel that that is an error of judgment.

11.45 am

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on coming so high in the ballot and on producing a Bill for the protection of children. He rightly said that protecting children is one of the primary obligations of the House.

It is interesting that the titles of the first two Bills on today's Order Paper refer to the protection of children. We have met that phrase before in other contexts, and that highly emotive phrase demands some explanation. The protection of children can come about in a variety of ways. I believe that in the last two Sessions that phrase—I hope that I do not do an injustice to those who use it—has been designed to deceive people into believing that children in alleged danger from exhibitions of violence and television programmes need to be protected.

The Bill is sponsored by hon. Members on both sides of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said that he supports the Bill. I therefore assume that there is broad agreement among the Bill's sponsors about protecting children from the evils of obscenity and violence on television and radio, and as seen in bookshops and cinemas. They are exceptional aims. I accept that. I hope that no one misunderstands those who oppose the Bill. We are concerned about the problems that it seeks to tackle.

The House has had a duty in the past century to protect the younger generation in whatever ways seemed desirable

and preferable. In that context, the Bill's aims are thoroughly defensible. However, in my view, they are miles away from tackling the real problems, difficulties and dangers affecting our young children. The Bill refers to young people under 18. That must mean those who leave school at 15 or 16 and do not get a job. They may take drugs or become homeless because of the Government's deliberate policies. Do they not need protection? Those are much more important problems for the House to tackle than the one that we are considering. The hon. Member for Davyhulme has concluded that this matter is more important than others. He is entitled to that choice, but he must accept that we are entitled to criticise him for it.

The Guardian of 22 January quoted Lord Tonypandy, the much respected former Speaker, who is now chairman of the National Children's Home, and referred to the NCH's annual report. Lord Tonypandy said:

"In many areas the problems facing thousands of children in Britain are getting worse. If we are prepared to let this trend continue then undoubtedly the situation will get worse still and our children will pay the price."

The annual report said:

"100,000 children are in care or subject to supervision orders; a third of all 13 to 16-year-olds drink alcohol every week and more than 5,000 children are charged with drunkenness every year.

Drug addiction among under-21s, officially registered as addicts, has quadrupled in five years."

The House would be much more profitably occupied dealing with problems like that than in dealing with this one. That is not to say the problem now being discussed is not serious, of course it is, but I remain to be convinced that legislation such as this will have any effect on the reduction of crime, drug addiction or violence. The exposure of children to television violence has had only a marginal effect on the increase in crime over many years.

Mr. Cash: Much of what the hon. Gentleman says is in its own way important, but will he accept my contention that it has less to do with the Bill and more to do with preventing the next business from coming forward?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman knows that hon. Members have all kinds of motivations. I do not like the next Bill any more than I like this one, and I shall do what I can to stop both of them. That is part of my duty, to do what I think, to accept legislation that I like, and to try to defeat legislation that I do not like. I do not like this Bill or the next one, and I shall do my duty to see that neither of them comes on to the statute book. I need make no apology for that attitude.

The basic purpose of the Bill is to widen the scope of the Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964 by, as the hon. Gentleman says, bringing radio and television within their ambit for the first time. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) says that that is a jolly good thing. I am not saying no to that, but I am anxious about whether it will be effective. The hon. Member for Grantham, or perhaps it was the hon. Member for Davyhulme, said that when people went to a cinema they did that by choice, but with television they have no choice. Of course they have a choice. Parents have a button at their disposal. To pretend that children will be denied access to these things by the provisions of this Bill is nonsense. They will have access if they want it.

Mr. Churchill: The words quoted were not mine, but were contained in a BBC publication. That is the view of the BBC, not my view.

Mr. Hamilton: That may well be, but it does not make it any more right. The Bill will not materially affect in a positive way the problems that we are discussing.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Has the hon. Gentleman ever raised the view that he is expressing to the House with the people employed in the prison medical service? He may be aware that the Select Committee on Social Services is investigating the prison medical service. If he had an opportunity to be on that Committee and to raise this issue with doctors and psychiatrists employed by the prison medical service, he would be left in no doubt that there is a link between violence on television and mindless violence in our society today. Many members of the prison medical service say that it has anaesthetised young people to the effects of violence until it is too late.

Mr. Hamilton: There are widely held views about the evidence available. There is no unanimity on these matters. Some people adhere to the view that it has an effect on children, but that is extremely difficult to prove. I should like to know whether the Home Office has any convincing statistical evidence. I suggest that it is impossible to get such evidence, one way or the other. It is a matter of personal opinion.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Grantham talked about the effects of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman is a lawyer and one of the sponsors of the Bill. His interjection indicated that he sponsored the Bill knowing its deficiencies, but perhaps he did not know them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I plead guilty to this. When I saw the Bill I did not take fully into account the point made by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), who outside the Chamber made one or two cogent points to me which seemed to be right. That is why I made my intervention.

Mr. Hamilton: It is interesting that a skilled lawyer should sponsor a Bill that has such serious deficiencies. Obviously he has not read it. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is also a lawyer, referred in an intervention to the Director of Public Prosecutions. He has obviously not read the Bill either or he would not have made his intervention. The point that I made earlier is worth repeating. A ban on the depiction of vicious cruelty could prevent the showing of many films of an educational nature. I am worried about cruelty to animals, and I am part of the campaign for an amendment and a modernisation of the 1876 legislation. Under the Bill as it stands, certain films will be precluded from television.

Mr. Churchill: No.

Mr. Hamilton: The legal advice that we have received is that some films could be the subject of a prosecution under clause 2.

Mr. Lawrence: I have listened with great care to the observations of the hon. Gentleman. It is perfectly true that there are substantial deficiencies in the drafting of this Bill. Is the hon. Gentleman content to allow the continuation of publications, whether in magazines or on television, which show

"acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral/genital connection, oral/anal connection, the lewd exhibition of genital organs or excretary functions, cannibalism, bestiality, mutilation or vicious cruelty"?

[Mr. Lawrence]

Is it not desirable that the Bill should go through the House and, with its necessary amendments, find its way on to the statute book? Is not the consequence of objection to the bill that acts of this kind will continue to be depicted in magazines on sale in newsagents shops and on television screens and bring suffering to our children? Surely the hon. Gentleman cannot support any of that.

Mr. Hamilton: I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's view, but I will not be lectured to by Government Members. All the things that the hon. and learned Gentleman is talking about are the consequences of what Conservatives call the magic of the market. There is a market for those things. Every Conservative Member, without exception, says that one must not interfere with profit-making and the magic of the market. Those things would not be produced unless the producers knew that they could be sold for profit. That is the counter-argument to what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying. There is nothing to stop these things from being produced on the continent and smuggled in. That is one of the problems that we face, and with which the Bill cannot deal.

Mr. Dickens: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if somebody makes a profit out of the magazines and television programmes which we are seeking to ban—that is, the hard pornographic material—it is possibly at the expense of the children? That is why, today, we earnestly want the legislation to go through, as a start to rolling back the frontiers. We really need it as a start.

Mr. Hamilton: I find some of these interventions nauseating, coming as they do from particular quarters in the House. I shall say something about that later, but I do not want to personalise the case too much.

Mr. Cohen: Before the interventions by Conservative Members, my hon. Friend was making an excellent point about cruelty to animals. Does he acknowledge that the Bill includes in the list in clause 2(1)

"mutilation or vicious cruelty towards persons or animals"?

Such cruelty will be banned from being shown. Does my hon. Friend agree that that will stop all the animal rights campaigns, which deliberately depict such acts of cruelty to build up public support and shock the public so that such activities can be banned?

Mr. Hamilton: That is right. We are all aware that almost every week we receive magazines in the mail showing the fiercest cruelty towards animals, produced by the people who want to reform the legislation on experiments on animals. I am not sure whether that would be illegal under the Bill.

I should like to refer to the Home Secretary himself. He has written novels with considerable violence in them. I have not read them, but I have read reviews. I understand that they are likely to be filmed. I should be interested to hear what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has to say about that. Will those novels be caught by the legislation? Of course they will if they show

"vicious cruelty towards persons or animals".

The Home Secretary had better watch himself. We have had one resignation, and another pending, perhaps two. Then there will be another.

The more I look at the Bill, the more I am astounded that so many lawyers support it, except that the language is so vague and so incapable of definition that it will be a goldmine for the lawyers. That is why many of them are sponsors, I suspect.

Much of the erotic and violent pictorial material apparently would be confined to places to which persons under 18 do not have access, such as licensed sex shops and private clubs. There are many private clubs, mostly Tory, which engage in such activities. However, what can stop adults from passing on the material? That is one of the problems. We cannot legislate on how adults deal with their children when they are watching television, or on passing on erotic material to their children.

My overall objection to the Bill is that it would be unworkable and would greatly extend censorship. I speak as an individual. I do not want anybody to tell me by legislation, or in any other way, how to deal with my children or what I should read or look at. There are many do-gooders telling me what is good for me and my children. I do not want that. The more individual freedom there is, the better. I shall be the judge, for good or ill, of what is good for me. I do not want anybody to tell me what is good for me and my family.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assertion that he does not need anybody to tell him what he and his family may do. Why did he support the Government's decision to put fluoride in water, on the basis that unless it was done people would not protect their children's interests?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman is a very persistent man on this matter. He was roundly defeated on free votes. I think that his party had the Whips on. He knows very well that that is a diversion, and I do not want to detain the House.

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): Am I right in thinking that fluoride is an aphrodisiac?

Mr. Hamilton: I would not know that. In any case, the Bill was passed and fluoride occurs naturally in many parts of the world. It does no harm and there is much evidence to suggest that it does a lot of good. However, it has nothing whatever to do with obscenity or publication.

If the Bill is enacted, the magazine *Penthouse*, which I do not read, but it might be in the porn cupboard in the Library——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Nobody reads it.

Mr. Hamilton: Years ago we used to have a porn cupboard in the Library. It was kept under lock and key and those who wanted a read had to get the key, which immediately identified them. Many Tory Members said, "Well, in the course of my duty, I have to read that book." I do not know whether the cupboard is still there. Somebody might go and find out. *Penthouse* is on sale throughout Europe and the Bill would make it illegal.

Mr. Churchill: No, it would not.

Mr. Hamilton: It would cease to be on sale publicly.

Mr. Churchill: No.

Mr. Hamilton: The ban would cover the serious treatment of manifold sexual problems. It would encompass sex education. I suspect that many Conservative Members dislike the idea of sex education in schools. Many people try to stop it because it is open to

abuse, and so it is, but that is no reason why parents, schools, television and radio should not attempt to tackle such problems sensibly.

The war in Vietnam has been mentioned. The hon. Member for Davyhulme said that if the events covered are real it cannot be unacceptable to show them, that if it is a real war it does not count in terms of the Bill. Real war is more obscene than anything that can be invented. The film "The War Game" was a pale attempt which tried to convince people of what nuclear war would be like, but many people tried to stop it getting on to our screens.

The violence against millions of children in Africa is obscene. It has aroused a multitude of people, but the Bill will not stop that obscenity. The Bill deals with what is shown rather than with why it is shown. A whole range of things should be shown, although they might disturb millions of people.

Finally, I come to the wretched clause 2, which the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) called in aid. I have neither seen nor wish to see its list of exhibitions, but some, such as masturbation, are perfectly normal activities, especially in public schools. Apparently it is to be illegal only if one takes a picture of it.

When I look at the Tory Benches, I see the hon. Member for Davyhulme, who is well known for his sturdy defence of morality and our standards of behaviour, and others like him, but when Tory Members lecture us on those matters it makes us angry and nauseated. I have seen many Bills produced by Tory Members on similar issues. They try to convince our people that the Tory party stands for morality, good behaviour and high standards. Yet there are more rogues on those Benches than in Brixton prison. Nevertheless, they preach to the House and to the country that if those matters were left in their hands everyone would behave, the country would be marvellous and the crime figures would decrease. By God, save the British people from the Tory party.

12.11 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) in his final diatribe attempted to uphold the strange principle of Opposition Members by saying that masturbation was a normal function and only wrong if one took pictures of it. Excretion is also a normal function, and, indeed, an inevitable one, but it is not something that anyone wishes to see anyone else doing. It should be done in private and not publicised.

The hypocrisy of Opposition Members that I find most offensive is that, while they want to take the credit for alleging that they object to what is shown on television for its effect on children and adults, they wish to adopt the concept of Socrates that, because the Republic is incapable of discovering philosopher kings of sufficient wisdom to draft a Bill that is not in some form defective, there should be no Bill. If they were honest, they would say to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), to whom I give the greatest credit for introducing the Bill, "We have thought of a better Bill".

Ms. Clare Short: I intend to say that in my speech.

Mr. Fairbairn: They do not say that. Instead, they say, "We are all against the Bill", and adopt the intellectual fantasies of the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan). They make remarks that imply that obscenity must be allowed into every living room of every house in the country, and must ride on the back of William Shakespeare because if one shuts out obscenity, one shuts out Shakespeare. That is one of the most false and eternal defences of obscenity which Opposition Members, who pretend to object to it but who do not, constantly advance to torpedo legislation that will inevitably make those who publish and make such articles pause and look about them before they do so.

Mr. Brinton: How does my hon. Friend feel about "Titus Andronicus" by William Shakespeare in which cannibalism is simulated on the stage? What is the difference in terms of the public good between that and some play written by a respectable writer of today? Why should they be different? That is my problem.

Mr. Fairbairn: I can see my hon. Friend's problem. However, all the writings of man, whether "Benjamin Bunny", "Peter Rabbit", "Squirrel Nutkin" or "Titus Andronicus", involve certain acts that might be said to be sadistic. It is the manner of their presentation and the structure of the act within the play or book that is relevant.

I make one structural point. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), I find it astonishing that the obscenity legislation in England did not apply to television long before it applied to anything else. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) correctly said, there is a great difference between visual experience and the experience of reading or hearing. Visual experience requires no intellectual effort to absorb, translate, comprehend or interpret. The literal and auditory experience requires intellectual discipline so that one can understand it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. and learned Gentleman used the word hypocrisy—a word that lies ill in the mouths of many hon. Members. The hon. and learned Gentleman has made the point that we were making. The present definition of obscenity relies on where the act happens and its context. The hon. and learned Gentleman destroyed the case for the Bill in the answer that he gave to the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton).

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not accept anything that the hon. Lady has said, and if it is not hypocrisy, I do not know what is.

It is important that the House should understand and that the message should go out about one matter. As a Scotsman I regret that it was a Scot who invented both television and the telephone, which are the only two intrusions into private houses that anybody can make without permission. [AN HON. MEMBER: "What about Labour party canvassers?"] When Labour party canvassers come to the door, one does not open it. However, television comes into the house and the argument that one can press the button to turn it off is fallacious. In most houses there is only one common living room and if one person wishes to see a programme, say the father or the mother, the children have no say about what is going on in the only room in which they are allowed.

Ms. Clare Short: I agree that many people are disturbed by what is on television and I am also not, in principle, against extending the Obscene Publications Act to television. However, has the hon. and learned Gentleman ever seen on television anything such as that set out in clause 2? I have not. The Bill would not solve the problems.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have seen some things that come under what I think are the most important matters. For many years the concepts of obscenity and sexuality have been inter-confused, which has enabled libertarians of the worst kind to accuse people like me of being puritans. I do not regard obscenity as having much to do with sexuality. The words "mutilation, or vicious cruelty" are the nub of the Bill. That is the most important part of clause 2.

Some years ago, I was involved in the defence of what was said to be one of the foremost notorious homicidal criminals in Scotland, in the case known as the Porterfield riots. One afternoon when, for some reason, my services were not required I went into an Inverness cinema and saw the film "A Clockwork Orange". It was being adulated as frightfully sophisticated, clever and funny. In effect, it was the worst form of manipulated and institutionalised sadism that I had ever seen. It was beaten to the post only by the even more notorious film, which the libertarian critics said was so marvellous, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in which people took it in turn to be sadistic to one another. I went to see these films——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: In the course of duty.

Mr. Fairbairn: No, not in the course of duty but in the course of intellectual inquiry into what made the critics regard sadism as glorious. I could have avoided that sadism, but I cannot avoid what is canned into my house every day. It can be turned off, but that is not a realistic proposition. We should not protect only children from seeing that which neutralises all forms of manners and humanity. We should prevent adults from seeing it, too, because eventually the humanity and the equilibrium of adults is neutralised. That is passed on to the child in the form that good and bad are merely opposites in a scale and that they are of equal weight. If one watches television night after night the good and the bad appear one after another in succession. No distinction is made between their excellence and their "execritude". No distinction is made between what is good, bad, glorious, blessed or trivial.

The Bill is at least a start. The reason for the increase in criminality is that society, through television, has come to believe that morality and the love-thy-neighbour-as-thyself concept is a neutral stance, that morals and ethics are neutral. My first lesson in the law when I read jurisprudence was most important: that one's right to sing at the top of one's voice in one's garden contradicts the right of the neighbour to read in silence next door. One right will always impinge upon another right. The duty of this House is to adjust those rights.

One of the rights that this House must adjust is to prevent the younger generation from believing that liberty is licence and that they are not put at risk if they do as they please. We train young people not to touch something or not to go near to a fire, for their own safety. The Bill enshrines and resurrects a principle that for too long has been forgotten: that on our public broadcasting system, which is probably the most influential form of contemporary experience, the principle should be enshrined of doing unto others what we wish they would do unto us.

12.24 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): When I first heard that the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) was to introduce a Bill of this kind, I hoped that it would try seriously to tackle the problem of the image of women that is depicted in magazines and newspapers. I agree that that is a difficult problem to tackle, and no one has yet been able to do so, but when I received the Bill—we have had it for only a week or so—I found that it did not attempt to tackle the issue.

The Bill has gone completely over the top in other areas. It has not tackled the violence, to which I object, that we often see on television. It concentrates on the articles that are listed in clause 2. I have not yet heard from Conservative Members whether they have seen those things on television. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) challenged the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) to say whether he had seen any of those things on television, but he did not answer. I am not a great watcher of television because, like other hon. Members, I do not have time, but if these things do not appear on television, I do not understand why the Bill is necessary.

For my purposes and for the edification of hon. Members, I should like to list some of the provisions for protection which I believe are probably sufficient. The Broadcasting Act 1981 has been mentioned many times. Under the Act, the Independent Broadcasting Authority is required to ensure

"that nothing is included in the programme which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling."

That is a perfectly comprehensive and sensible definition of what we are trying to tackle today.

The IBA has programme guidelines on sex, nudity, violence, extreme suffering and distress. The BBC is similarly bound by the 1981 licensing agreement. The BBC and the IBA are careful to screen unsuitable programmes after 9 o'clock, or even after 10.30 pm, if they believe that the programme may be of harm to children.

Everyong is talking about the film "Sebastiane". I do not know anything about the film. I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) did not know anything about it either, but every hon. Member appears to have seen it, except us.

Mr. Buchan: They must be corrupt, while we remain pure.

Ms. Richardson: I do not know what the film is about, or how offensive it is.

Apart from all the provisions that are laid down by law, there is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, a procedure of appeal through the courts. That procedure is hardly ever needed, because of the diligence of the broadcasters in dealing with the matter. There are also the Indecent Displays (Control Act 1981 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which restrict the significant sale of sexual material to licensees and the over-18s. By 1 October of this year all videos on display will carry one of the four British Board of Film Classification's categories that are applied to the cinema.

Mr. Fairbairn: The argument of Opposition Members is that the Bill will not work. The legislation mentioned by the hon. Lady significantly does not work. Does she consider that the Opposition should take the advice which the grandfather of the promoter of the Bill gave to those

who said that the Mulberry harbour would not work—do not argue the difficulties; the difficulties will argue for themselves?

Ms. Richardson: I do not understand the point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman. It is a little too obscure for me.

With all the provisions that we have, the Bill is unnecessary. If it goes through, even amended, I am not sure whether it will do the job that the hon. Gentleman intends. I do not doubt his good intentions. I am sure that he believes that television, newspapers and magazines need cleaning up and that our children need protection, as we all do, but I fail to see how the Bill will do it.

Although the Bill adds broadcast material to the purview of the Obscene Publications Act, it also seems to bypass the Act. At present, obscenity must

"tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it".

Obscenity is determined in terms of effect, but for the first time the Bill lists a variety of acts which, no matter what the circumstances, are deemed to be obscene if seen by a young person.

That laundry list—if I may call it that—has been borrowed from the United States, where the legislation states that the act must be patently offensive. The word "patently" is not included in the Bill. It provides no such let-off. Do not the hon. Gentleman and other Conservative Members agree that what is acceptable or unacceptable changes constantly? If all of us reflect on our lifetimes, we can see those changes. What we would have accepted as immoral 10 years ago may be seen in a different light now. It is wrong to deal with the problem by tacking a constant string of short Acts on to the end of the original Act, because the result will be a hotchpotch that will satisfy no one. Indeed, it will only provde a field day for the lawyers.

The list of acts in clause 2 put the fear of God into me when I first read it. Indeed, I am sure that it sent shivers down all our spines. I deplore mutilation or vicious cruelty towards animals. That is why I deplore Government scientists firing bullets into monkey's skulls. The public have been exposed to that largely through pictures. Public perceptions are formed by seeing pictures of animals being treated violently. They bring home to the public what is happening to the poor animals.

Some hon. Members have mentioned the Vietnam war. It would not be stretching matters too far to say that the atrocities shown in pictures of the Vietnam war helped to bring it to an end.

Ms. Clare Short: I understand from press reports that Mrs. Mary Whitehouse had something to do with the drafting of the Bill, although the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said that she was not entirely happy with it and would have liked it to go further, I remember reading that she argued that we should restrict the reporting on television of wars such as the Vietnam war because that led to resistance in the United States to the Vietnam war. Is that not a dangerous argument for restricting publication?

Ms. Richardson: Absolutely. It was the depiction of the famine in Ethiopia which started everybody saying, "My God, we must help. We must send money and materials." If moralists such as Mrs. Mary Whitehouse lay down for us what we should be looking at, goodness knows who will suffer throughout the world in all sorts of different directions.

Mr. Buchan: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way again. She seems to have slipped into the same problem. I am beginning to be irritated with the suggestion from some Conservative Members that we are the libertarians and that somehow they are the moralists. I deny both. There is a great difference betwen talking about freedom of speech and other things and those who practise libertarianism, which we never hear about, and I resent it. It is because I take a fairly strong moral stance on the question that I recognise the flaws in the Bill.

Ms. Richardson: I welcome what my hon. Friend says.

Let me deal with the effect of television violence and the idea that it necessarily means that it causes young people to behave violently.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that during the Falklands war, and indeed many other wars in which British Governments have been involved, the Government quickly resorted to censorship to prevent people in Britain and elsewhere seeing the horror and effects of violence? Indeed, there is censorship in south America and other places at the moment to prevent people from discovering the horrors of the violence that is being committed.

Ms. Richardson: I agree. The hon. Member for Davyhulme did not deny that, and he was a war correspondent. He recognised that there is merit in war correspondents and photographers coming back with information. Those are things that people should see.

Research is inconclusive on whether what is responsible for violence in youngsters comes from videos or television. In the long term exposure dulls the senses, but scientists disagree on whether exposure makes a person violent. The Bill leaves alone the less glamorous long-term violence. A distinguished American doctor called William Belson provided the best evidence of such a trend. Yet even he was mystified by the quirk that those watching the most violence on television were most likely to act less violently.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Is not my hon. Friend in effect saying that the cause of the problem is definitely multifactorial and something about which we know comparatively little? If we go ahead in this piecemeal way, we could make the situation worse.

Ms. Richardson: That is the point that I am trying to come to.

After two and half years of deliberation, the Williams committee rejected any statistical evidence that pornography led to violence against women. I emphasise the word "statistical". It also added that pornography was likely to reinforce the taste of the viewer or reader, and that if those tastes were deviant that might be dangerous for society. Therefore, all sorts of standards are set.

I wecome the fact that the hon. Member for Davyhulme is trying to do something about depicting sex, but the Bill will not solve the problem, as I see it. He has not tackled the whole question of the sexually passive presentation of women which is thrown at us all the time and which does more harm to how people view women and women's independence than what we are considering.

[Ms. Richardson]

Some hon. Members have referred to the words in clause 2. I find the many references to the anus in that clause, indirectly or by name, almost obsessive. In many respects that can be seen as a thinly disguised attack on any visual depiction of a homosexual relationship. That is what those words could lead to. It could become an example of gay bashing, in which I do not think the House would want to involve itself. It might feed the prejudice against gays and lesbians which exists and which some of us are trying to eradicate because gays and lesbians should be treated as the ordinary people that they are.

There are two films on in London—I do not know whether they are on elsewhere. I have not seen them, but members of my family have and I am told that they are very good. One of the films is called "My Beautiful Launderette" and the other is called "The Kiss of the Spiderwoman". Both films are available to people over 15, and they try to promote some understanding of what it is like to be gay. I understand that the films are very popular. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Davyhulme has seen them, but I should like to know whether such films will fall under the Bill if it becomes an Act.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman does not know.

Ms. Richardson: If the hon. Gentleman does not know, that makes it even worse, because I like to know what legislation we are passing in the House, and I like to know that the public understand.

The hon. Gentleman has said that he is prepared to accept an amendment which would exclude such things as sex education. I am glad to hear that, and I am sure that many organisations and individuals outside will also be glad. However, it might not be easy to draft an amendment for that, because there are many worthy organisations and individuals who have written good material for different groups of people.

I should like to know whether the hon. Member for Davyhulme intends the Bill to cover material concerned with pregnancy or abortion as part of sex education. The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head. I do not know what that means. The book entitled "The Pregnancy Book", which is published by the Health Education Council, would presumably be excluded. There are some extremely good but explicit photographs which some people might find disturbing and some might even classify, in some senses, as obscene.

Mr. Churchill: I draw the attention of the hon. Lady to section 4 of the main Act, "Defence of public good," which says that any items, whether RSPCA films or sex education, are excluded if

"it is in the interests of science, literature, art or learning, or of other objects of general concern."

I am planning to go further and specifically exempt those items from the application of clause 2.

Mr. Buchan: Who decides what is to be excluded?

Ms. Richardson: That is precisely my point. The section of the Act to which the hon. Gentleman referred could exclude many things, or include many things, but it does not list the items.

Mr. Chris Smith: A specific example is material relating to the dangers of the disease known as AIDS and the way in which that can be avoided, especially by those who engage in homosexual relationships. Perhaps my hon. Friend will consider the "Horizon" programme which was directed to that issue, which has been withdrawn from television because of the explicit nature of some of the scenes in it.

Ms. Richardson: I did not see that "Horizon" programme, but I take my hon. Friend's point. There are many who are extremely concerned about AIDS and it is an issue which needs careful and sensitive handling if we are to educate people so that they do not contract the disease.

I have seen the expressions of shock and horror on the faces of Conservative Members when masturbation has been mentioned. A document has been produced for the mentally handicapped entitled "Sexuality and the Mentally Handicapped". It is the work of a distinguished writer and it is educational. How can we be sure that such publications, which are designed specifically for those under 18 years of age in most instances, will not come within the terms of the Bill?

Mr. Buchan: The Bill's provisions are changing all the time.

Mr. Mikardo: It is good that the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has said that he envisages certain changes being made in the later stages of the Bill's passage through the House, which means in Committee and on Report. Of course, he will have no control of that process. When the Bill is in Committee, he will have only one vote. The members of the Committee will pay attention to what he says, as he is the promoter of the Bill, but he cannot guarantee that any of the amendments which have been suggested, and which he says he will accept, will be made.

Ms. Richardson: That is right. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said in a sedentary interjection, the Bill is becoming a different measure from the one which we began to consider at half-past nine this morning. This is a manifestation of the difficulty of dealing with such a subject.

The provisions on access seemed at first to be good, but then I became rather worried. How many Members can tell the difference at a glance between a 17-year-old and an 18-year-old? I suspect that practically none of us can do so. When we describe a young woman or a young man, we often say that he or she is about 17 or 18 years old, or we describe them as late teenagers. We know that children have access to videos, television, radio, cable television and books. In theory and in practice, everybody has access to everything. However, the Bill does not attack those who provide access for young people. The Bill refers specifically to young people, and not to those who make material available to them. At least, that is how I read the Bill. This is another subject for amendments.

A young person who is on a YTS course and under 18 years of age might find himself or herself at a publishing house. This young person might be helping to edit a film. It could be a sex education film or a film of a different nature. He, or she, will be exposed to that which the Bill says young people should not be exposed to——

Ms. Clare Short: As I read the Bill, it provides that a young person under 18 years of age need not have any engagement with such material. However, if a young person works for a publisher, he or she could have access

to the sort of material to which the Bill is directed. That would be instantly illegal even though the material had been designed carefully for an adult audience.

Ms. Richardson: Absolutely. Are we to say that someone on a YTS course, who is supposed to stick with the course, should leave? He would not be able to claim supplementary benefit if he did so.

The Bill is studded with difficulties and fraught with problems. We ought to think again. In the past two or three weeks I have changed my mind three times about whether to support the Bill. That is not because I am an indecisive person, but because the subject is so difficult. I have decided, on balance, to vote against the Bill.

The Williams committee said of the law on obscenity: "the law, in short, is a mess."
I do not believe that the Bill, even if it is amended in Committee, will clear up that mess. It will merely turn the mess into a heap of rubbish.

12.50 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I start by referring to the words of Edmund Burke who said in his Bristol constituency 400 years ago:

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Today, we have a good man — my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) — who is prepared to do something. The Bill may not be perfection or everything that we want, but it is certainly a step in the right direction of controlling the filth on bookshelves and the filth that comes into people's homes.

Hon. Members should remember that people often do not suspect that the filth is coming into their homes. They switch on a programme and do not know that the contents will be explicit. Suddenly, they are faced with a scene that embarrasses them, their in-laws and certainly their children if they are in the room. [*Interruption.*] We are witnessing another barrage from the Opposition. It is easy for them. Whenever we put through such legislation from the Conservative Benches we expect a barrage from the Opposition. It is despicable.

I remind the Opposition that Back-Bench power alone has put through some important legislation and amendments to legislation in recent years. The Obscene Publications Act 1959 was a Back-Bench measure. Acts on the protection of children, the control of indecent displays, the control of video nasties and, more recently, the control of kerb crawling were all Back-Bench measures. Good people felt that they wanted to do something to pull the reins.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that bookshop owners in her constituency were in a dilemma and were pleased to put magazines on high shelves, out of the reach of children. That is nonsense, because those magazines have been put out of children's reach and the covers have been improved because a Back-Bench Member pushed through an Act to control indecent displays. That is the only reason.

We are not after magazines such as "Mayfair" and "Penthouse". We would be prudes and stick-in-the-muds and we would not reflect public opinion absolutely if we did that—although many people wish to see even that sort of magazine disappear.

Some serious explicit material is appearing on the grubby shelves of book shops. The police say, "We find it almost impossible to bring a prosecution, but from time to time we swoop in and confiscate." That goes on in shop after shop and district after district. We see the charade of confiscation, but it does not control publication.

Under the Bill, however imperfect it may be or however inadequate the Opposition may think it, the police will be allowed to bring prosecutions if that sort of explicit material appears on bookshelves.

The obscene publications legislation came into being more than 25 years ago, in 1959, but we now live in a different world. It is common knowledge that reception teachers in primary schools say that the little five-year-olds were the loveliest children to teach—they always did as they were told, always paid attention and always wanted to please — but five-year-olds now come to school as angry, often undisciplined, little people. One can see a link, therefore, between what children see on television and their general behaviour.

To say that these programmes are put on late at night is not an excuse. In this day and age, almost every home has a television, whatever else it goes without, because television provides a wonderful form of entertainment. In some homes, children have television in their rooms. In some homes, when mummy and daddy are out and the babysitter is in, the children creep downstairs to watch late night programmes.

If one cannot control viewing by little children, one must control the broadcasts that they might see. We do not want to be stick-in-the-muds—we want to stop the filth and degrading material that has been described in the debate. We are protecting children. [*Interruption.*] The Opposition can make as much fun of me as they like. They have done so for many years on this subject.

Mr. Brinton: My hon. Friend has asserted that many families allow children to creep down the stairs late at night to switch on the television set. What is the basis of that assertion? Does my hon. Friend have statistics?

Mr. Dickens: My hon. Friend was a former newsreader and is still very much connected with the television profession, so I recognise his motives. If television companies are pleased to tell potential advertisers that a 16-second advertisement can reap wonderful benefits in terms of sales—so persuasive are the advertisements going into the lounges of families—how can we and those companies, with hands on hearts, deny that children are not influenced by the material that comes into their homes, even if those children have not reached the reading and writing stage? The children can see what is happening. They associate it with their family, with what mummy and daddy might do.

This is an important issue. The television companies cannot have it both ways. The BBC is as guilty as the IBA in a sense. The BBC advertises in the *Radio Times*, uses theme music to advertise its films and publishes cookery books, and so on. The BBC knows the value of advertisements going into the homes, just as the IBA does. I do not single out the IBA.

The Opposition have been crafty. They know jolly well that parents and grandparents are angry and upset about child abuse and the material that influences children. Hon. Members know that if they say, "Although we are interested in the legislation, we shall vote against it, because it does not go far enough", that clears them with the parents in their constituencies. It does not clear them

[Mr. Dickens]

with people like me. I notice the hon. Members who try time after time to defeat decency. Many of them are sitting there looking at me.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I am a supporter of the Bill. I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman a question that to some extent might enable him to appreciate why there have been a number of sedentary interventions from my hon. Friends. Will he tell the House on what basis he was able to build a reputation as a pontificator on public morality?

Mr. Dickens: Some of the subjects that we are debating are very unsavoury and are not the sort of thing that is nice for the people in the Strangers' Gallery or the BBC or other hon. Members to hear, but such things have to be said because we are debating an important matter.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Answer the question.

Mr. Dickens: The answer is that I have taken it upon myself. Hon. Members will remember that in this House I named a titled diplomat who was involved in child pornography and I got a rough time afterwards. Letters and petitions came pouring in to me and as a result many people were prosecuted. People write to me because they have depended on me for years.

The main thrust of my argument is that this Bill, despite its imperfections and despite improvements that we can all make to it in Committee, is certainly another step in the right direction by Back Benchers who are trying to check the slide in morality, who are trying to maintain standards in the United Kingdom and further to protect our children. Public opinion demands that hon. Members, like my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, should put forward matters for legislation that they feel is necessary. That is exactly the purpose of this Bill, and shame on any hon. Member who votes against it.

1.2 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): So far this has been a reasonable debate, and I shall try to continue it in this way. I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his success in the ballot. I say that with some feeling, because I was lucky enough to do the same thing some years ago. I also thank him for the opportunity he has provided for the House to discuss these important matters.

As the hon. Gentleman said when he opened the debate, the background to this Bill is that Britain has become a much more violent place. Since 1979, there has been a rise of two thirds in offences of violence against the person, and over the same period there has been a two thirds increase to 500,000 in offences of criminal damage. All hon. Members, irrespective of their views about the Bill, and especially those of us who are privileged to be parents, must be alarmed by these trends.

The Bill deals with the protection of children. The prime responsibility for the protection of children rests firmly and squarely with parents, not with this House nor, indeed, with Ministers. In a modern society, just as parents quite properly make decisions about the food that children eat, the clothes that they wear, the schools that they attend, the books and publications that they read and the television and video programmes that they watch and hear, so should they also have the major, overriding responsibility for guiding their children about watching television.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) made the valid point that perhaps those of us who are no longer children need to ask more questions about the impact of television on young minds and young lives.

My distinguished hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) was absolutely right to remind the House of the "Children Today" report published by the National Children's Home early this week, which shows the desperate, urgent need for better protection to be given to many of our children. A total of 100,000 children are in care or subject to supervision orders, one quarter of a million young people a year go before our courts or are cautioned, 5,000 are charged with drunkenness, every year, in London alone, 400 people under 18 disappear — vanish — and thousands of our young people are hooked on killer drugs. I say frankly that I regard the protections that are needed as much more vital and compelling than anything that the hon. Member for Davyhulme is proposing to do.

I am surprised — although I think I understand the reasons for it — that the hon. Gentleman should have chosen, of all the vehicles to use for what he wants to do, the Obscene Publications Act 1959. It is widely regarded and acknowledged across the political spectrum to be a shambles and a mess. The Bill wants to extend the already largely discredited test of obscenity in that Act to the more difficult area of television. It proposes a new test of obscenity, which either covers ground already covered by existing legislation or will create the most enormous problems to artistic integrity, educational material and news and current affairs coverage and reporting. I heard what the hon. Member for Davyhulme said in response to an intervention about how he would seek to exclude some of those things, especially news and current affairs coverage and reporting, from the Bill. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said, there is no way in which he can undertake to guarantee that the Committee will deliver that, nor is there any way in which any one of us can guarantee what will happen to a Bill when it comes out of Committee and back to the House.

As several of my hon. Friends, and, indeed one Conservative Member, rightly said, the Bill makes no attempt to deal with the broader areas of bad taste or the normalisation of violence. A much better way to raise and maintain television standards is not by legislation but by internal flexible broadcasting authority guidelines and proper accountability of the BBC governors and IBA members.

I find it very difficult to make a sensible distinction between Shakespearean artistic violence and non-Shakespearean "Rambo" violence. In reality, I fail to see how that distinction can be made. As I said in an intervention, under the present rules for commercial television, there are facilities for viewers who feel that the IBA is improperly discharging its duties in relation to obscenity to seek a judicial review through the courts, and it has been confirmed that the Home Secretary has fairly draconian powers to deal with members of the IBA who are not properly carrying out their duties. He can tip them out of the door, in short.

I refer to the weakness of the test of obscenity in the 1959 Act. Had television been included within the scope of the 1959 Act, I wonder how often in the past 27 years the Director of Public Prosecutions would have consented to the broadcasting authorities being prosecuted. I wonder how often it would have been proven beyond all reasonable doubt that the broadcasting authorities had fallen foul of that discredited Act by showing material that could be demonstrated to

"tend to deprave and corrupt".

The prosecution would have to show that an item had affected someone to

"make morally bad, to pervert, to debase or corrupt morally"—

which is the definition of "deprave". To "corrupt," an item would have to be shown—

"to render morally unsound, or rotten, or destroy the moral purity or chastity of, to pervert or ruin a good quality, to debase or to defile".

The item must not merely be

"repulsive, filthy, loathsome, indecent or lewd,"

as the judge in the famous Oz trials suggested before being accused by his superiors of

"a very substantial and serious misdirection".

The prosecution must show that material has had the earlier described effects on a person.

The line of defence is obvious. If a television programme maker is charged with having depraved or corrupted an individual or individuals, he or she can point to millions of other viewers who presumably have not been depraved or corrupted and say that the unfortunate individual or individuals have been subjected to other depraved or corrupting influences. It is lunacy to contemplate that as protection against many of the risks and evils about which we are all worried.

If the programme maker was accused of depraving or corrupting people in general — anybody who saw the item — it would be practically impossible to secure a prosecution. I do not doubt that there is a lawyer who will help me with this, but I have to ask whether, if the Bill were enacted, a judge or jury would be allowed to witness the alleged obscene item if it was obscene as defined by the 1959 Act or the Bill. I wonder whether they run the risk of being corrupted.

Some of the weaknesses of the definition of obscenity in the 1959 Act were recognised by the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) when he attempted to reform the law in the wake of the failure of the 1959 Act to secure a prosecution against the publisher of "Inside Linda Lovelace". He wanted to bring television and radio within the scope of the obscenity laws. His Bill made little progress, but he had the sense to attempt to abolish the phrase, "deprave and corrupt" and to avoid trying to replace it, or add to it the wording in clause 2.

Mr. Mikardo: My hon. Friend is right, but if we project that forward, are we not left with the following: if the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) felt that he could provide a definition of obscenity that would stand up and avoid the troubles that we have had with the existing definition, it would have been much more sensible for his new subsection (3A) to replace rather than supplement the existing definition?

Mr. Corbett: There is great merit and wisdom in what my hon. Friend says.

Lord Whitelaw described the law on this subject as "in ruins". There have been two cases involving Lord Wilberforce and Lord Bridge. Lord Wilberforce said:

"Well might they"—

the courts—

"have said that such words"—

"corrupt and deprave" in section 1(1) of the 1959 Act—

"provide a formula that cannot in practice be applied . . . I have serious doubts whether the Act will continue to be workable or whether it will produce tolerable results."

There has been some implicit, if not explicit, criticism of how the BBC and the IBA carry out their duties in regard to obscenity. I must therefore ask how many times the House has collected evidence of acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral/genital connection, oral/anal connection, cannibalism or bestiality being broadcast?

The hon. Member for Davyhulme and others mentioned a couple of films, extracts of which Tory Members were invited to see. I have not seen them, so I cannot comment, but I am prepared to accept the general view of them. However, in any human organisation people will make mistakes. That applies as much to broadcasters as to Members of Parliament and others.

Let us assume that it is acknowledged to be an error of judgment to have shown those films on television. I would be surprised if those who allowed those films to go on television have not learnt a lesson.

Mr. Cash: The problem is that the borders are being pushed forward, which is why this sort of legislation is required.

Mr. Corbett: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. With great respect, the great difficulty is that it is not enough simply to make that assertion. We must acknowledge, as both broadcasting organisations have acknowledged, that tastes will change. Few hon. Members present would have thought 15 years ago that what claims to be a daily newspaper published in London would make a major feature of the breasts of young women. I certainly find that extremely surprising, but apparently it is now acceptable.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): It is not.

Mr. Corbett: I am glad to hear the hon. Gentleman say that. It was pointed out earlier that *The Sun*, which is registered at the Post Office as a newspaper, would not be caught by the Bill's provisions.

Mr. Churchill: Would it be the hon. Gentleman's judgment that *The Sun* should be caught by the Bill's provisions? Does he believe that the broadcasting authorities should, uniquely of all the media, be exempt from the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act 1959?

Mr. Corbett: No, Sir. How that is best dealt with is a matter of judgment for the broadcasting organisations. There are adequate protections in the Broadcasting Act 1981 to achieve that. I do not object to the pictures in *The Sun* on the grounds of so-called obscenity. My main objection is that I find them degrading to women. They belittle and patronise them. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) pointed out that, in distorting their image, women were depicted as pliant and passive partners. That is degrading. Obviously, the immediate answer for purchasers is to buy something else.

Mr. Buchan: May I bring to my hon. Friend's notice the fact that the photographs were described as "friendly" by one of the Bill's sponsors?

Mr. Corbett: I know that the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) was being extremely sincere in her view, and I understand her point. Nevertheless, the smile on the face of the tiger does not make him friendly or answer the points about the way in which women are portrayed for no more than commercial gain.

Ms. Clare Short: The pictures in *The Sun*, besides being demeaning to women, distort and corrupt men's idea of sexuality and their conception of the sexual relations that they may have. They are damaging, and possibly affect the climate that allows the incidence of rape to increase. That is my objection.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She can speak better on this subject than I can because of the difference in our sexes.

The Bill mentions the lewd exhibition of genital organs, and so on. I am no great fan of the House shoving through legislation and then letting the lawyers sort matters out. To do that is not to carry out our duties properly. However, under the Bill, interpretations of what is or is not "lewd", "vicious" or "simulated" can send people to gaol for three years. I am not being fallacious about this. The problem flows from the definitions. For example, what would happen about the televising of boxing and angling? I find the televising of a man being systematically hit for the sole aim of knocking him senseless dreadful. I believe that it would be caught by the Bill's phrase

"vicious cruelty towards persons".

Similarly, the televising of steeple-chasing or fox-hunting would be caught by the "vicious cruelty" to animals provison. Pictures of struggling or recently killed fish I find unacceptable, and one could argue that they came within the definitions of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme and some of his hon. Friends changed their minds about the provision of educational and medical information. There will be almighty problems about defining what is and what is not medical. One may say that if the Health Education Council or a similar body has issued a document, that is fine. However, where does this leave *Forum* magazine, which, as I remember from distant memory, describes itself as "The Journal of Human Relations"? It describes actions covered by clause 2. According to one's judgment, it may be done in an educational way.

Mr. Parris: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's catalogue. He will not have seen the February edition of *Playboy*, but if I give him a reference, he can look it up afterwards. In the centre pages is a picture of Miss Angella Jensen, and if that is not a lewd display of genitals, I do not know what is.

Mr. Corbett: I was about to say that I had not had the advantage of seeing it, but perhaps I should say that I have not had the disadvantage of seeing it.

It could be argued that programmes such as "Your Life In Their Hands" might be caught by the Bill, or the BBC "Newsnight" programme which last week went into the astonishing phenomenon of people bursting into flames. That is mutilation. The programme ended with a picture of what was left of a human being after that had occurred, and there were limbs scattered about. Is that caught by the Bill's provisions?

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman mentioned magazines such as *Forum*. The Bill specifically makes no reference to, or provision for, the printed word.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Ms. Clare Short: There is a book called, I think, "The Joy of Sex" by Dr. Alex Comfort, which is a responsible book about people enjoying their sexuality. It is illustrated——

Mr. Churchill: Section 4.

Ms. Clare Short: This is a serious question. Is that educational? The problem that my hon. Friend has outlined will arise.

Mr. Corbett: The problem is that of definition. I do not believe that it is sensible to leave the definition to lawyers.

There are inferences about the governors of the BBC or the members of the IBA board not taking their responsibilities seriously. Reference has been made to the Wyatt committee, which reported in September 1983. It looked at the portrayal of violence on television programmes and said:

"we believe it to be essential that the BBC's news bulletins should attempt to reflect what is going on all over the world and they cannot flinch from a proper coverage of war and massacre, torture and urban terrorism . . . They are likely to include pictures of destruction and casualties, including horrifying pictures of the loss of life and limb."

The hon. Member for Davyhulme has said that he will try to exempt such material from the Bill's provisions, but that is by no means the end of the matter.

Let us suppose that a programme maker says to the BBC that he wants to make a programme to try to persuade fewer people to support the objectives of groups such as the IRA or Black September. In the course of the programme, he wants to show acts of appalling and extreme violence carried out by those and many other organisations. My hon. Friends have referred to the coverage of wars and events in such places as the Lebanon, the Falklands, Afghanistan and Vietnam. Before our very eyes, in full colour, we see in our sitting rooms what can be described only as vicious cruelty towards people. Unless we seek to exempt that kind of programme from the Bill, everything will be left almost exactly as it is now. The Bill will not provide the protection that it seeks to provide. Far more vicious cruelty is to be seen in current affairs programmes than is to be seen in specialised programmes.

The Bill would prevent the portrayal of masturbation and sodomy or their simulation, but it makes no specific mention of rape, the most appalling crime that can be committed against a woman. The only influence that, if passed, the Bill would have is if the act of rape were automatically accepted to be vicious cruelty towards a person. Many people would accept that argument. However, will no visual simulation of rape be allowed on any television programme? The House will recall that a public awareness film was made with the co-operation of the Thames Valley police force in which rape was simulated.

One of the most useful recent guides to the complicated obscenity laws is the Williams report which was published in 1979. It said:

"The existing variety of laws in this field should be scrapped and a comprehensive new statute should start afresh."

I agree wholeheartedly with that view. I am deeply opposed to the notion of "deeming"; the Bill deems certain material to be obscene. That material is spelt out. I am advised, and I am happy to hear it, that deeming clauses are rare. They remove from the judge or jury the ability to come to a decision on the individual merits, reasons or designs of the case. That is not a road down which we should go.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I acknowledge that there is great public concern about violence in our society, much of which is portrayed on our television screens. However, I repeat that the legislation is in a shambles. If the Bill were added to it, it would turn that shambles into chaos. Instead of trying to improve faulty legislation by means of potential still faultier amendments, my view is that it would be better to start afresh with an entirely new and radical approach.

1.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have the opportunity to follow the seriously considered contribution of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

I join those who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his good fortune in drawing such a high place in the ballot and on taking advantage of that happy fact to introduce a Bill on a subject that is of great concern to many people. I especially congratulate him on the skilful, clear and conciliatory manner in which he presented his Bill. No one could have been more reasonable or accommodating to the contrary views that have been expressed in the debate. I hope that that will guide the actions of those who wonder whether the Bill should progress. I hope that the Bill will progress, because it is an issue that is sufficiently important to be considered, not only on the Floor of the House, but in Committee, so that we can make a determined effort to overcome the difficulties.

Very few people today, although there were many in the late 1960s and early 1970s, would claim that society should impose no restrictions on the publication of pornographic material. There is general agreement that some material should not be available at all and that some material should be available only in restricted circumstances, so that those who do not want it can avoid it without making any special effort to do so. There is also general agreement that we should look with special care at the material available to children and young people, whose healthy development we all have a duty to protect.

At the same time, we must face the fact that this is an especially difficult area of national life to address by means of law, for many reasons. This is relevant to the point on which the hon. Member for Erdington ended his speech. There is no general agreement on what is acceptable and what is not, partly because we are discussing matters of taste and manners as much as readily identifiable moral effects. Even if everyone in a room agrees that a picture is objectionable or harmful—which is asking a lot—it is still difficult to encapsulate what is objectionable about it under a provision of law.

Enforcement is a difficult problem. In the Home Office we receive many letters about this issue, which I hope give me some insight into public concern. Some of the material is not only disgusting, but is in contravention of the existing law. For example, we receive catalogues which people have received from the Netherlands, which seems to have become a sink of paedophile filth. The difficulty is not one of obscenity, but of enforcement. Other material is believed by many people to be outside the range of what should be legally permissible, but the prosecuting authorities do not believe that it is within the range of what the law prohibits. Other material again is felt by my correspondents to be acceptable for adults, but they are concerned that it has fallen into the hands of their children. More generally, there is an increasing feeling that, leaving aside whether a particular article should or should not be prohibited, there is simply too much violent and sexually provocative material in circulation.

Few people can feel happy about the 1959 Act. I have heard what has been said about the Act, not only in this debate, but by several distinguished people over the years. However, it has served us better than some of its detractors appreciate. The words "deprave and corrupt", although put on the statute book only 25 years ago, now sound quaint and redolent of another era, rather like that celebrated remark of the prosecuting counsel in the Lady Chatterley case, which again was only 25 years ago, although it seems much longer:

"Members of the jury, would you let your servants read it?"

Those words are of another era, because even in what we now regard as the less complex world of 1959 the proposers of that Act could not devise a new definition of what was obscene. They had to reach back to a definition containing the magic words, "deprave and corrupt", which emanated from a Lord Chief Justice as long ago as 1868. Thereby hangs the problem that bedevils us today.

Mr. Mikardo: If the Bill is passed as drafted, those words will be retained and prosecutions can be made in relation to them. That is what is wrong with the Bill.

Mr. Mellor: I do not take issue with the hon. Gentleman on that point. I was about to say that, in the absence of the consensus that is necessary for change, and in the absence of the sophisticated drafting that would enable those points to be cast on one side, the Government, like their predecessors — I make no apology for this, because none is needed—have steered clear of proposing outright replacement of the 1959 Act.

We take that view for a variety of reasons, the most notable of which are the interlocking difficulties of identifying and setting forth with precision an improved set of legal prohibitions that would attract widespread support throughout the community and make the law honoured and respected, and readily enforceable when not honoured. The absence of those criteria has led us to approach the matter by taking specific action to deal with specially troubling manifestations of unacceptable obscenity, or by lending support to those hon. Members willing to take the opportunity afforded by their good fortune in the ballot to introduce the necessary changes.

Since 1979 the Government have introduced or supported four measures designed to strengthen the law on obscenity. The first was the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who has now left the shop floor and gone into management. It prohibits the display of indecent

[Mr. Mellor]

material in a public place or where it can be seen from a public place. Then there was a Government measure. Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, which is adopted by local authorities, enables the number of sex shops in an area to be controlled by a licensing scheme. Many local authorities have taken up that entitlement and fewer than 100 sex shops have been licensed, so it is a valuable control measure.

The Cinematograph (Amendment) Act 1982 was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), who by one of those interesting coincidences has also gone into management now. It removed the exemption granted to bogus cinema clubs from licensing controls in the legislation on cinemas, and thus did a valuable job. The fourth Act was one with which I was closely associated. The Video Recordings Act 1984, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), prohibits, subject to certain exemptions, the supply of a video recording containing an unclassified work. The House can take pride in that specific measure because it not only created a workable law which is now steadily coming into force, but helped to create a climate in which, even before the new law came in, most of the video nasties have been taken from the shelves and are no longer a feature of our high streets, as they so objectionably were two or three years ago.

Breaking the problem down in that way also recognises the complexities that often make an across-the-board approach undesirable, however readily it may be mentioned in speeches. For example, to deal with the urgent problem of video nasties, we supplemented the general law on obscenity by establishing a system of pre-publication scrutiny and classification. That approach would not be practicable, and in all probability would be unacceptable, if applied to the written word or to pictures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme — I congratulate him on it—recognises those points and his Bill seeks to amend and supplement, not to replace, the 1959 Act, and that is the right approach at this stage.

Mr. Mikardo: That is what is wrong with it.

Mr. Mellor: I respect the hon. Gentleman. He has strongly held convictions on this matter and always participates to considerable effect in these debates. However, it is not a practical proposition in the matters that we have already discussed where the House has taken action—it is for the House to decide whether what my hon. Friend proposes is one of them—to wait for a general reform, which in the present climate most would believe is simply not capable of achievement, and thus to stop improvements from being made to the law. The House must determine whether what is proposed constitutes an improvement. That is what my hon. Friend is inviting the House to make its judgment on today, and, I hope, thereafter in Committee.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not what is wrong with the definition of "tendency to deprave and corrupt" the fact that in too many cases material which is to the overwhelming majority of people disgusting is nevertheless allowed because of the acquittals that take place because juries do not understand the complexity and involvement of the law that surrounds the test of "tendency to deprave and corrupt"? Therefore, is not the strength of the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) that it sets out and distinguishes in a category form most of the items that most disgust the public and is most likely to protect children if the law legislates against them?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. and learned Friend puts effectively the case of those who, like himself, support what my hon. Friend is trying to do.

My hon. Friend is right to be particularly concerned about the effect of pornographic or violent material on children. Material which may be within the borders of acceptability if shown to adults may well be damaging to children, and that is an important insight that unites hon. Members on both sides of the House. In retaining the basic framework of the 1959 Act my hon. Friend recognises the central virtue of that Act, which perhaps I should spell out.

The test of obscenity in section 1 of the 1959 Act depends on the effect on those who are likely to read, see or hear the article concerned. Therefore, material may be obscene if supplied or shown to children, but not if supplied or shown to adults only. That means that if a film which has an 18 certificate for showing in an age-segregated cinema is shown to children, whether on terrorism or otherwise, it might well be found under the 1959 Act that that material was obscene.

Let me turn to the detail of the Bill, which I have looked at with care. It might assist if I set out briefly our thoughts on its specific provisions. As we know, the specific test which the Bill would set up for articles published in places to which persons under 18 have access or shown on television is in the form of a list. Material published in that way could automatically be regarded as obscene — deemed to be obscene—if it depicted any of the matters set out in clause 2.

It is argued in favour of the list that thereby it establishes straightforward and clear-cut guidelines for courts. That is what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, but the list system has been rather powerfully criticised by those who have examined it in detail. For instance, it was among the proposals carefully examined by the Williams committee. The committee concluded that a list would mean ignoring the contribution which the context or the manner of presentation would inevitably make, that to base a law on an explicit statement of what is prohibited requires that the statement also be exhaustive, that it was far from easy to cover all the ground, and that there was a danger that the enterprising pornographer would be able to develop from any explicit list a blueprint of what could be got away with. My hon. Friend's proposal recognises that and is not vulnerable to all of those criticisms, because his list in clause 2 is without prejudice to the present definition of obscenity and therefore does not try to be exhaustive. That is plainly an advantage.

The second major difficulty identified by the Williams committee was that lists tend to cover material that is relatively innocuous. That is rather more relevant to the Bill as it stands. As many hon. Members have said, the list in clause 2 seems to catch certain material which, set in a proper context and presented in a proper manner, may well be unobjectionable. That is particularly true of the way in which the Bill seeks to deal with violence. I shall not repeat the examples that have been given. However, I am grateful, and I believe the House will be, for the clear

recognition that my hon. Friend is alive to the difficulty and that he has demonstrated his wish to address the matter in Committee. Obviously those who do not care for the list approach will doubt whether it is possible to devise a list that does that. I say to the House that my hon. Friend has taken the point on board and is willing to make the attempt, and surely we should give him a chance to prove it. I want to do my best to assist him in cutting his way through that thicket.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Minister accept that, although the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has rightly demonstrated that he wishes to protect items of public interest, he has not taken on board the problem which in a letter to Conservative Members he said he wanted to avoid, which is that he will catch magazines such as *Mayfair* and *Playboy*? The list, as it stands, will undoubtedly catch quite a large proportion of items which are at present in those magazines.

Mr. Mellor: That is a good point. I shall come to that later and make what I hope will be a helpful suggestion.

One of the things which I think my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme has recognised, and which I would encourage him to consider, is that if some amendment were not made his approach would place a great strain on the public good defence and on the readiness of the prosecuting authorities to enforce the law in a discretionary manner. It is a little difficult to argue that a list would lead to greater certainty and that the law would be applied so that prosecutions would be brought in respect only of objectionable material. There is an inconsistency there which we want to explore and which my hon. Friend wants to remove.

I come now to the matter concerning the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). There is a definition of obscenity which the House will want to examine carefully in Committee, namely, that the list in clause 2 should apply to material published in a place to which children have access or to programmes shown on television.

The effect of the Bill will be that material will automatically be regarded as obscene if it is supplied in a shop or other place to which children have access, even if it is not supplied to children and, moreover, even if it cannot be seen by children in the shop. That means, in effect, confining such material to sex shops and similar establishments. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme may wish to consider in Committee whether his purpose would adequately be served by confining his new proposed test to material supplied to children or published in such a way that it can be seen by children on the premises concerned. There might be some troubling law and order implications by giving sex shops a highly profitable monopoly over a wider range of material than at present.

I do not want to outstay my welcome, but I must comment on broadcasting, because that is an important and sensitive part of my hon. Friend's proposals. Many hon. Members will undoubtedly think it strange, and have said during the debate, that here we have a serious criminal offence which at present applies to every member of the community and to every kind of activity, with the single exception of broadcasting. There can be few precedents for a selective application of the criminal law of that kind, and most of us would think that there would need to be exceptional circumstances to justify it. However, our predecessors in 1959 considered that broadcasting merited such an exception. It is worth pausing to consider the reasons that led them to reach that view.

In the United Kingdom we have a system of broadcasting which goes back 60 years, and which has operated, not only well, but I believe better than that in almost anywhere else in the world during that period. Unlike any other form of publishing, the arrangements are that broadcasting is the responsibility, not of individuals, nor of private companies, nor of the State, but of what we call "broadcasting authorities", which are responsible to Parliament for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting. These are the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority. They are independent public bodies, comprising men and women of integrity and with a record of public service who are appointed on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. They are answerable, not to the Government, nor to shareholders, nor to those who make their programmes, but to Parliament. That is why the importance of discussing the issue in this way seems to be established.

Although they are independent in their day-to-day operations, Parliament has placed upon the broadcasting authorities strict and precise obligations regarding programme standards. To give effect to these, both organisations have produced detailed codes of guidance. On violence, they discuss matters such as the influence of television on behaviour, especially on young or susceptible people, and the dangers of such things as imitative violence or "copycat" events following news programmes, such as the coverage of riots.

The BBC's code was last reviewed in 1983 and is to be reviewed again. The IBA's code was reviewed in 1985. It seems that no one in the Chamber challenges the assertion that the codes are drawn tightly, but there are many who question how effectively they are being implemented and how responsive broadcasters are to public criticism when things go wrong. It was about these matters that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary asked for a meeting on 17 December with the chairmen and directors general of the BBC and the IBA, who agreed to give further consideration to the depiction of violence on television and how their codes had been implemented in the past.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): If the Bill were to be enacted in its current form, would prosecutions be brought against the makers of programmes, or against the boards that permitted certain programmes to be shown?

Mr. Mellor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that depends on who is deemed, on the facts of each case, to have published the item in question. That is an important issue that will need to be considered. That which would apply to a live programme and to the programme maker may not apply to a recorded programme. These are some of the complexities that we shall come across when treading in this area, and we shall certainly need to address them.

The obligations that I have described that bear on the broadcasting authorities—I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) has been leaning towards this in his interventions—are much

[Mr. Mellor]

stricter than anything in the present Obscene Publications Act 1959, and so they should be. Broadcasting has the power to deliver its message into the heart of a family in the intimacy of its own home. That is precisely why such strict and clear-cut obligations on programme standards are placed upon the broadcasting authorities.

In considering whether we want to go back on the 1959 settlement, we must ask ourselves whether extending the criminal law in this area will help or hinder the maintenance of standards. Will it help clarify the responsibility of the broadcasting authorities and programme makers, or will it leave them uncertain which set of obligations to follow? Will it help reinforce the trust which Parliament has laid upon the broadcasting authorities or will it throw that trust into doubt? Will it strengthen the respect in which the broadcasting authorities are held by producers and directors of programmes, or will it weaken it? Above all, will it make it easier for the broadcasting guidelines to address the "drip, drip, drip" effect of cumulative violence, or will it give producers who are anxious to kick over the traces a basis on which to argue that if their programme is within the much more permissive ambit of the 1959 Act it is all right? Of course, we would all say that it is not.

Those are just some of the questions that are fundamental to the principles on which broadcasting has been so successfully based in this country for so long. They deserve the fullest consideration before we seek to extend the criminal law into this area.

The test that the BBC and the IBA must apply to the standards of their programmes is much stricter than that in the Obscene Publications Act. There may be times when some of us think that the broadcasters have overstepped the mark of good taste or have produced programmes that are offensive to many people. But let us be under no illusion: that is very different from establishing that the material is obscene under the 1959 Act.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme wishes to address two issues. The first is the occasional individual programme, sometimes a film, which contains scenes or language which many people consider distasteful and offensive and which is unsuitable for the broadcast media.

Mention has been made of two recent films, "Sebastiane" and "Jubilee", which were shown on Channel 4 last year. I have not seen either film, but many people felt that, however late the hour of showing, those films were an unwarranted intrusion into people's homes. It is not for me to judge whether those films breached the normal conventions that apply to broadcasting, but many people believed that they did, and my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme spoke eloquently and tellingly on the subject.

Whether we fall on one side of the question or the other, let no one be under any illusion. The issues raised by the showing of those films are important enough to detain the House for more than a moment.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): My hon. Friend referred to the occasional film. The important point is that such films are the thin end of the wedge. We must not allow matters to escalate.

Mr. Mellor: A number of hon. Members share that view.

The second problem addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme is different and much more frequent. It is the daily diet of crime series, often at times of the day when children will almost certainly be watching, which seem to promote a view of society in which virtue and success lie on the side of the violent, the unprincipled and the foul mouthed.

Those programmes are undoubtedly popular, but many people feel that their effect is corrosive, especially on the values and behaviour of young people. Those who know their geology understand that the steady drip, drip, drip wears its way through the hardest rock as surely and efficiently as does a diamond-tipped drill.

Mr. Cash: I think that I get the drift of what my hon. Friend is saying, which seems to be that he is not sure, at least at this stage, that this sort of legislation is required to deal with matters affecting the broadcasting authorities. The code includes reference to, for example,

"the gratuitous exploitation of sadistic or other perverted practices".

I hope my hon. Friend will accept that what was on television the other night transgressed that code. We are concerned about the people who are regulating themselves.

Mr. Mellor: I hope that what I have to say to the House is clear. We should think long and hard before we throw over the principles that led to the broadcasting exemption, and we should not assume that the 1959 Act would offer immediate relief, because it sets wide parameters.

I think that many hon. Members are asking that the broadcasting authorities should extend reassurances to them so that they may be satisfied that the guidelines are being properly enforced. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, in concentrating the minds of broadcasters, may bring about that helpful process. I am sure that the process would be assisted if the Bill went into Committee.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: I think that I ought to make progress.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: I have given way a great deal. If I keep giving way, I shall never finish my speech, and I think that it would be to everyone's advantage if I did finish.

A private Member's Bill provides an ideal means for Parliament to consider all the matters that have troubled us. We have had a useful debate, which has been conducted in a constructive and non-partisan manner. I warmly applaud the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme in bringing forward the Bill. I very much hope that the House will grant it a Second Reading so that we have the opportunity to consider its provisions and, no doubt, alternative proposals in Committee. These issues are too serious to be thrown on one side after a few hours' debate in the House. I shall be ready to do all I can to assist the Committee in its deliberations in any way that it thinks helpful. I look forward to those further discussions. Meanwhile, I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in voting to give the Bill a Second Reading.

2 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The basic motive that the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has put before the House in this private Member's Bill is an entirely praiseworthy one with which

I agree. He defined that motive as being the highest duty of the Housee — the protection of children. As the intention behind the legislation, it cannot be faulted. However, my complaint with the Bill as drafted is that it does not take us any way along the road towards that aim. I fear that it will create a number of problems.

The problem of violence depicted on television, where it is available to children for consumption, is far more important and serious than the problems of sex to which much reference has been made. The problem of violence on television was discussed at considerable length some weeks ago in the debate on a motion tabled by the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). During that debate, I drew attention to the fact that often it is not the particularly cruel, vicious or explicit depiction of violence that causes the greatest damage. That depiction can lead to revulsion in the viewer as was the specific intention of the person who made the film. The greatest damage is often caused by those who depict violence in a more acceptable, routine, run-of-the-mill fashion.

I must confess that I saw the "Jubilee" film to which the hon. Member for Davyhulme drew attention. I found it boring and not particularly acceptable to my taste. I believe, however, that much more potential damage could be done to children by the almost daily depiction of violence in television series, such as "The A Team", "Starsky and Hutch" and "The Professionals", where acceptable acts of violence are depicted on our television screens. I am afraid that the Bill will do nothing to tackle that specific problem.

My charge against the Bill is that it misses the major point of concern to many people, including me.

Mr. Buchan: The legislation may exacerbate our main problem. Once a list is made, anything not in it will, by definition, be deemed to be all right. That is the problem.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. By specifying a list of activities that are regarded as being within the scope of the Bill, the assumption of television producers and programme purchasers must be that anything not on the list is acceptable and approved by the House.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme has honourably said that he will seek to amend the Bill to include a provision for the public interest. A problem alluded to by many of my hon. Friends is what constitutes the public interest, and what sort of tests must we apply to ensure that something is acceptable under the educational, historical, artistic or learning qualifications that the hon. Gentleman seeks in his Bill. Must we ensure that it goes through the courts in order to provide a test? That appears to be the case according to the original clause in the 1959 Act.

A worry that I raised in an intervention was about important documents, either in written or film form, that warn about the dangers of diseases like AIDS and which because of the nature of the disease needs to be most explicit. Will such publications be caught by this Bill or will they be excluded under the provision about the public interest criteria which the hon. Member has said he will include.?

Mr. Fairbairn: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that the private law which the broadcasting authorities have printed for themselves but which they do not obey should be made part of the public law in this statute. There is the criterion: make it subject to criminal sanction.

Mr. Smith: I am not sure whether the hon. and learned Gentleman's point has answered the question that I asked. Many issues require explicit depiction in order to have their medical or communicational significance expounded, and I am worried about the nature of the public interest test that the hon. Member seeks to include in his Bill.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is almost impossible in word definitive terms to draw a distinction between education and entertainment?

Mr. Chris Smith: My hon. Friend is right and he points to one of the many grey areas which will be affected if this Bill reaches the statute book. Perhaps I could look at some of the grey areas. There is the problem of what precisely constitutes a place to which a person of 18 years or under might have access. The proposal from the Minister might well go some way towards solving the problem, but the Bill leaves open the definition of a place.

There is also the problem of why the hon. Gentleman has chosen the age of 18. A person of 16 or 17 could be at work in a publishing house and if that house is publishing material which might be caught under this Bill that person could well have to give up his job. That problem could perhaps be dealt with if the age of 16 were to be substituted. That can be considered in Committee.

This Bill seeks to change the definition of obscenity. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) made that point. Changing the definition of obscenity would leave on the statute book the 1959 definition of "deprave and corrupt" but the Bill adds to it in a way that relies entirely on the content of the material and not on its effect. It ignores the context in which the material is published: it ignores the intention behind the publication. It ignores the impact that that publication may have in the circumstances in which it is produced. I would far rather have a definition that relied on impact and effect than a definition of content, such as in the list in the Bill. The items in the list can be caught by the Bill, whether they deprave or corrupt. The House should be wary of that before proceeding towards legislation.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I am conscious of the time, and I have given way a few times. I want to press on.

It seems odd that the list in clause 2 excludes several acts in sexual relationships and includes others that might be regarded as discriminating against some sections of the population. I am concerned about the possible implications of the selection of items in the list that the hon. Member for Davyhulme has made.

I have no criticism of the intention behind the Bill because I am sure that, in putting it before the House, the hon. Gentleman has the highest motives for the protection of children. I am sure that all of us in the House would wish to ensure that that principle, assisted by legislation, reached the statute book. However, I fear that the Bill as it stands will not achieve that end.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I call Mr. Churchill to speak again, with the leave of the House.

Mr. Churchill: With the leave of the House, I thank the sponsors of the Bill and those who have spoken in support——

Ms. Clare Short: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know the procedure, but I have been in the Chamber since 9.30 am and I should like to make a speech. I should be interested to hear what the promoter of the Bill has to say, but I should like to make my speech. Therefore, I do not give my leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) does not have the leave of the House, he may not speak again.

2.7 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I have listened with interest to the debate. I was disappointed by the speeches of Opposition Members because they had a hollow ring about them. Despite the ambitions of Labour Members to make the world a better place, they do not seem to accept that the passage of the Bill will be a small stepping stone in that direction.

I have always been fairly open minded about violence on television, probably because I do not watch a great deal of it, but over the years I have noticed how much more prevalent violence seems to be on our screens. Furthermore, at the back of my mind, like others, I have wondered what the influence of the violence has been on the more susceptible viewers who have been watching the programmes, whatever age they may be. The guns get bigger, the deaths more bloody, the violence more brutal and the participants more glamorous and seemingly more respectable.

It is no wonder to me that, all too often, impressionable citizens seek to emulate what they see on the screens. Sadly, that case is proven, especially among young people who tend to watch more television than any other group in the community. In 1984, 1,500 children under 14 were convicted of violent crimes, 300 were convicted of sexual offences and 30,000 were convicted of theft. Imagine the numbers who were not caught. Those of us who have been victims of petty theft will know what small chance, all too often, police have of catching those villains.

Mr. Mikardo: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, but if he is arguing that many crimes derive from what people see on television, why does the Bill exempt Scotland and Northern Ireland? Why is it all right to provoke juvenile crime in Scotland and, above all, in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Marland: That matter has already been discussed. I want to get on with my speech as that is in the interests of us all.

It was with great interest that I went to see "Jubilee" and "Sebastiane", which were made available for many of us to see last week. I have to say that I was shocked by what I saw. It far exceeded my worst imagination. The scenes can only have been performed by people who were mad or under the influence of drugs. We saw people carrying out acts of unbelievable cruelty.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend agree that the growing abuse of drugs makes the need for the Bill all the greater as, when under the influence of drugs, normal restraints are absent and young people who have watched such scenes on television are more likely to imitate vicious cruelty and other behaviour in films such as the Bill is designed to prevent from going on television?

Mr. Marland: I quite agree. We saw unbelievable acts of cruelty, mindless violence and irrational behaviour, and I am sure that they were brought on by the use of drugs. We witnessed horrific killings in colour with no detail spared. Throughout there was an underlying anti-authority and anti-law and order theme in an attempt to show the police in a very bad light. It culminated in the brutal killing of a policeman by the slitting open of his stomach and his intestines falling out. It was sick making, especially as the film tried to glorify such barbarous acts of violence and somehow make them acceptable.

I do not watch a great deal of television, but I learn that those films have been put out on Channel 4. That defies belief. They might well have been shown after 11 pm, but I do not think that that makes a great deal of difference because such filth should never have been put out in the first place.

I always try to understand the other man's point of view. That is part of our job as Members of Parliament. I am not in favour of legislation for the sake of legislation as I prefer to have confidence that people will live within the spirit of the law and obey the letter of the law. However, the makers of such films have gone too far. The controllers of Channel 4 must carry a large proportion of the blame for putting this dirt out on our television screens. It is therefore with pleasure that, although the Bill does not cover everything, I shall vote for its Second Reading with enthusiasm.

2.17 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I assure the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) that I have no intention of talking out his Bill.

It is an enormous pity that the Bill is so deeply flawed. The hon. Member for Davyhulme approached me among other Labour Members and asked whether I would be interested in supporting a Bill that would try to act against violence and violent pornography. I said that I was certainly interested in a Bill with that purpose, but when I saw the draft of the Bill I had to make it clear that I could not support it.

Many Conservative Members have spoken of the worry in the country about the level of violence on television and the attitude to sex, the attitude of men to women and about the rise in the incidence of rape. I agree, but they do not seem to understand, or even care, that the Bill will do nothing to remedy those problems.

The list of offences that will not be permitted to be shown on television or to be published in other ways if the Bill is enacted are not those things which worry people in terms of their children's daily watching of television. As my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, there is a danger that the list in clause 2 will catch all manner of legitimate activities and thus create anomalies and dangers.

There is an even greater problem. We shall suggest to the public, if we give the Bill a Second Reading, that their worries are being dealt with, but the Bill is so defective that it will not tackle those issues at all. People are worried about the so-called drip, drip violence on television—the desensitising repetitive violence, not extreme acts of vicious cruelty. I have never seen such extreme acts of vicious cruelty on television. "The A Team", "The Professionals", and "Starsky and Hutch" show sanitised killing with little blood. The character who has been killed is written from the script so that there is no distress at his death. They show punching and violence which in real life would cause enormous suffering, harm and mutilation. Such programmes are continually shown, and it is

suggested that they are acceptable. When we feed our children a diet of such programmes, it is not surprising that young children of five behave more violently than they used to do. I notice that type of behaviour among my nieces and nephews, and those programmes are responsible for it. The Bill will not help us because the extreme acts of violence that it will outlaw are not the programmes that our children watch day in, day out.

The other problem that disturbs me greatly is page 3 in *The Sun*. Page 3 in the *Daily Mirror* is slighly less bad, but I do not like it either. If one considers them objectively, one sees that page 3 models in the *Daily Mirror* are slightly more clothed. I find the pictures repulsive and deeply offensive. It is notable that *The Sun* is a Right-wing racist paper. *[Interruption.]* It is undoubtedly a racist paper. A person who worked briefly on *The Sun* wrote an interesting article recently in the *New Statesman*. He said that when a Sikh man won *The Sun* bingo, the editor said, "No, we don't want any wogs on the front page of our newspapers". The racism in *The Sun* is obviously deliberate.

The Bill has not attempted to act against that. The hon Member for Davyhulme suggests that the difficulty may be a technical one, but I do not accept that. It would have been simple to deal with. Indeed, I may bring forward a ten-minute Bill to outlaw showing pictures of partially naked or naked women in mass circulation newspapers. I wonder whether Tory Members would support me. The matter could be dealt with simply in one clause, and we could all vote on it and clean up *The Sun*. It has a circulation of about 4 million, and is read by families throughout the land. Men take it with them to work and giggle together about it. It distorts their attitude towards sexuality and sex.

We could also easily in one clause impose a duty on the IBA and BBC to reduce the quantity of regular violence on television. A two-clause Bill which dealt with those two matters would help immensely with this worrying problem, but this Bill will not touch it. We are pretending to the public that we shall remedy the problem, but we are not doing so. Therefore, regrettably, I oppose the Bill. I hope that Tory Members will consider seriously the details of the Bill, instead of merely wishing to mouth an ineffective protest.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I rise with surprise and gratitude. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and his supporters from all parts of the House on introducing this admirable Bill. It deserves widespread support, and I am sorry that some hon. Members think otherwise.

With the growth of prosperity, almost every house has a television set. In many families the sets are switched on each evening for many hours. Television is the most powerful medium of communication, but it is absolutely essential that television and broadcasting should be brought within the confines of the 1959 Act.

There is a growing swell of support for the Bill and for some control of producers who have been pushing the frontiers of decency further and further back until, in the latest examples, there are hardly any acts of obscenity and vicious cruelty that are not shown, although they are way beyond the guidelines for television and broadcasting.

A further important reason for supporting the Bill is that the crime of rape is becoming horribly frequent. I am sure that many such dastardly acts, especially those committed by young people, are the direct result of something they have seen on the box. I do not believe that acts of violence on television do not influence many people. We all know the influence that television has, otherwise why should so many millions of pounds be spent on advertising?

I mentioned the growing prosperity of the country, which we have recently seen highlighted in "Social Trends". Those who have bought colour television sets, who buy their homes, go abroad for their holidays and own a car do not want this material improvement in their lives and those of their families threatened by a complete breakdown in moral codes and behaviour. They look to Parliament to regulate these matters, as they look to the bishops and the Church.

I am delighted that obscene magazines openly on sale at newsagents are to be brought within the confines of the Bill. Children often come to these shops, mostly to buy sweets, and they should be protected. I am glad that the Government are to give the Bill a fair wind, and I hope that they will reconsider their views on television and broadcasting. There is no quicker way of bringing down a society than by a corruption of morals. I hope that this is not why some misguided Labour Members have been so strong in their opposition to the Bill.

In particular, children must be protected from the wiles of evil men. We all know that pornography, like drugs, is an increasingly profitable trade. The police will welcome the Bill as they will now know where they stand and there will not be the old difficulty of attempting to describe obscenity. The police will also be glad to know that the sale of explicit sexual magazines will no longer be allowed on the premises of newsagents.

I often complain that we pass too many Bills, but this is an exception. If the Bill is passed, as I trust that it will be, I am sure that we shall earn the gratitude not only of millions of people but of the parents of many children.

2.27 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The manner in which television and broadcasting is being misused, with sexual abuse and violence being portrayed, is at the heart of the Bill. The guidelines laid down by the broadcasting authorities, to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred, have not been properly adhered to. In a brief intervention, I mentioned one of the guidelines set out in the IBA's code, which is that

> "Dramatic truth may occasionally demand the portrayal of a sadistic character, but there can be no defence of violence shown solely for its own sake, or of the gratuitous exploitation of sadistic or other perverted practices."

This matter could be regulated by the Bill, but, regrettably, it is clear from the showing of the films "Sebastiane" and "Jubilee" recently that these guidelines are not being properly adhered to. In the circumstances, it is equally clear that some extra sanction is required.

Against the background of this, and my deep concern about child abuse, which has been generated by such films and by the failure of the broadcasting authorities to exercise the influence that they could under the guidelines, I feel that the Bill is required and must be enacted. Therefore, I strongly support its principle and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for agreeing that it should go forward. I hope that it will receive full consideration in Committee and will then be enacted. The Bill has caused a great deal of concern to many Labour Members who

[Mr. William Cash]

have criticised its contents and objectives. I hope that, by the end of the year, they will realise, when they see the evidence——

Mr. Churchill *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 161, Noes 31.

Division No. 48] **[2.30 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Marcus
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mikardo, Ian
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
White, James
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Douglas Hogg and
Mr. William Cash.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Brinton, Tim
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Buchan, Norman
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Parris, Matthew
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Wheeler, John
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Buchan.]*

The House divided: Ayes 25, Noes 125.

Division No. 49] 2.40 pm

AYES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Buchan, Norman
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dobson, Frank
Duba, Alfred
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lambie, David
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Pavitt, Laurie
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Wheeler, John
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair

Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Thomas
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cope, John
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crouch, David
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Marcus
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walters, Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
White, James
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Douglas Hogg and
Mr. William Cash.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Private Members' Bills

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): Friday 2 May.

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION (PARKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon Members: Object.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Friday 14 March.

HORTICULTURAL PRODUCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): Friday 31 January.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Friday 7 February.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the previous Session of Parliament there was a dispute, on more than one occasion, when Government Whips said that, because hon. Members did not rise from their seats to object, it was not clear who was making the objection. Can it be clearly determined so that we know who is objecting?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not laid down that hon. Members have to rise to object.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be that my hearing is defective, but I cannot recall where the objection to the Horticultural Produce Bill came from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker I distinctly heard an objection when the Horticultural Produce Bill was called for a Second Reading. There is no question about that. The occupant of the Chair heard it distinctly.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 29th January, the Motion in the name of Mr John Biffen relating to Passes for Members' Secretaries and Research Assistants may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of by that hour Mr Speaker shall put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Tin Industry (Cornwall)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

2.52 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I wish to launch into what may not be the easiest of tasks. I want to achieve an application of the collective mind of the Department of Trade and Industry to the tin crisis, which affects my county and parts of London, instead of the other difficulty that has received a considerable amount of publicity this week.

There are two collective problems, one of which caused the other. However, the solution to one of those problems does not necessarily mean that the other will be solved. The question that is constantly being raised in the House —I have raised it several times, and the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has also raised it several times — is what will the Government do? I can tell the Minister that in Cornwall there is more interest in the Government's reply to that matter than in the Westland saga.

The saga begins in London at the London metal exchange. As is well known, the international tin agreement has collapsed and the market was closed towards the end of October 1985. Various rescue bids have been launched. During Question Time yesterday the Prime Minister expressed optimism about the possible conclusion of the latest rescue attempt. I must say that the Prime Minister's optimism was greater than that expressed by the people who are involved on a day-to-day basis.

The crisis has been going on for three months, and business is already leaving London. Some people believe that the saga could lead to the end of commodity dealing in London and the reneging on international debts by major financial powers. Whatever the outcome, it is certain that the price of tin will fall, and it is at that stage that Cornwall becomes involved.

I am one of those in Cornwall who have long taken the view that hard-rock mining is on a pleasant growth pattern and is likely over the next decade, two decades or three decades to make an increasing contribution to the Cornish economy. I and others who share my view do not expect hard-rock mining to return to the levels of production of 140 or 150 years ago, but we have no doubt that hard-rock mining, given Cornwall's mineral structure, can make a major contribution to the local economy.

In the 1960s, the average production of tin was about 1,500 tonnes a year. In the 1970s the average was 3,000 tonnes. In 1984, it exceeded 5,000 tonnes for the first time this century. Tin is not the only metal that is mined. Cornwall produced 7,500 tonnes of zinc, 750 tonnes of copper and 2·5 tonnes of silver in the past mining year. At October 1985 prices, the value of this output was about £50 million to the balance of payments.

Against this background there were developments in the offing. The two mines in my constituency, Concorde and Cligga, obtained permission to begin production and they are now preparing to launch themselves into it.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I should like to substantiate the argument that is being advanced by the hon. Gentleman. There are no non-ferrous mines in my constituency, but major prospecting is taking place and boreholes are being sunk at Redmoor near Callington. The determination of the ultimate viability of the project, which it is estimated will produce 300 jobs, will be reflected by the overall price of tin on the world market. The hon. Gentleman is making an important point.

Mr. Penhaligon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that intervention, which reflects the general picture of growth. Only six months ago, reasonable men would have extrapolated growth. There are about 1,500 on the industry's payroll, in Cornwall but it is an industry that does a good deal of subcontracting and the actual number employed by the industry, directly and indirectly, is considerably greater than 1,500. The industry claims—this has not been challenged—that it contributes about £23 million a year to the economy. That contribution is made mostly in west Cornwall. It is a worthwhile figure and one that should not be cast aside lightly.

We are talking about an area that is in the midst of the country's employment blackspot. In Falmouth, 26·7 per cent. of males of working age are unemployed. The figures for Penzance, Redruth, and Helston are 28·4 per cent., 23·8 per cent. and 25·4 per cent. respectively. A quarter of the male population in the area that is most affected is already unemployed. Thankfully, Truro comes in at fifth place in the unemployment league at about 15 per cent.

The industry has been aware for some time that the cartel price at which tin was being traded could not be sustained ad infinitum. It was well aware that if the industry was to continue to prosper and grow, it would have to succeed in competing in a free market. It was under no illusions and it recognised that the price of tin in a free market would be less than that at which the commodity had recently been traded on the London market.

The industry had been making vigorous preparations for the commencement of a free market. Even the most realistic among the mining personnel thought that the day was at least two years further on from today, but preparations were clearly being made made, and most obviously at the three really important mines, the Wheal Jane complex, South Crofty and the mine in Penzance which is called Geevor. Geevor is a good illustration of the effort that is being made to enable the mines to modernise themselves and to compete in a free market. Money has already been invested in a new mill at Geevor, which will double its capacity to treat available ore. Half of the ore comes from the old Geevor mine. It is good quality ore, and well worth treating. The other half comes from the old rubbish dumps of years ago. The mine is investing an enormous amount so that it can run into the old Botallack and Lezant mines for further sources of good quality ore to allow the mill to work at full capacity with good material. If the improvement is completed, the mine will be able to compete in the free market.

We have to deal with the present crisis and the mines are in the worst of all positions. They have lost the higher price that they were enjoying, but have enormous financial commitments. Large sums have already been spent on improving the mines. Unfortunately, although the money has been half spent, the efficiency gain has not been half felt. Indeed, no efficiency gains have been felt so far. If improvement work were terminated today, no improvements in efficiency would have been made.

The simple question for the Minister is, "Will the Government help?" Will they help towards meeting development costs to improve the efficiency of mines so

that they can compete in a free market? If the will exists, there are half a dozen ways in which financial asistance could be given. The county, the miners and their families want to know whether the Government will help. Does the will exist? Will the Government help Cornwall at this tragic time?

I am not pleading for a lame duck industry. The dominant employer in my constituency is English China Clays, which this year declared a profit of £74 million. I do not know what the Treasury takes from that profit, but I have a feeling that it is considerably more than zero.

We are merely asking the Government to realise that mining is a high-risk industry and to act as an honest broker in the middle, sometimes assisting mines when they get into difficulties that are not necessarily long-term or terminal.

On Wednesday next week, about 500 tin miners from my county will be lobbying Parliament. The Cornish anthem, "Shall Trelawny die?" includes the line

"Here's twenty thousand Cornish men will know the reason why!"

There are not 20,000 Cornishmen coming to London on Wednesday, but a lot more than 20,000 in Cornwall want to know whether the Government will assist the Cornish tin industry and, if so, to what extent.

If no assistance is forthcoming, at least some of the mines will undoubtedly close for all time. A couple may be held on standby for half a decade or so in the expectation that the tin price will rise again. If the Government refuse to assist at this crucial time, the growth that has taken place over the past couple of decades will stop and the production of Britian's only significant mineral resource will cease. I cannot believe that that would be a logical or rational outcome. I look to the Government for an assurance that they are willing to assist the Cornish tin industry through the tragedy confronting it.

3.3 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I am glad that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) has had the opportunity to raise an incredibly important matter for Cornwall.

I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's detailed and well-informed account of the tin industry in Cornwall. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) may be aware that I have been down two tin mines in Cornwall and I have visited Cornwall perhaps more times than any other part of the country since I became a Minister about five years ago.

I am aware that unemployment in Cornwall is extremely high—about 19·5 per cent. I am aware also that Cornwall's distance from market places could be described as an inhibiting factor. I believe that people in Cornwall feel that way. I think that it is fair to say—I do not say this in a patronising way—that the rest of the country misunderstands Cornwall's position. To a certain extent, it is assumed that problems do not exist in Cornwall. When we go as tourists and holiday makers to the area, we are greeted with enormous hospitality and great generosity. The countryside is beautiful and the seaside is perhaps everyone's dream. We do not see the true position.

Most people would not expect unemployment in Cornwall to be 19·5 per cent., yet, in the big cities, the unemployment levels are as follows: Manchester, a little less than 14·5 per cent.; Newcastle, 18·4 per cent.; Glasgow, 17·5 per cent.; and Bristol, 11·3 per cent. Even Ebbw Vale, where one would expect a much higher level of unemployment, has precisely the same unemployment level as Cornwall. I do not underestimate Cornwall's problems. The problems are not sufficiently understood, and some people underestimate them.

Of course I understand the position of those who work in Cornwall, especially at Geevor, South Crofty and Wheal Jane, and at the other small producers in the constituency of the hon. Member for Truro. The hon. Gentleman said that about 1,500 people work in the tin mines. About 4,500 people, including dependants, are directly affected. Many other people are indirectly employed and, not surprisingly, are worried about what is happening. They will read what has been said in the debate and dissect it carefully.

It is still too early to judge the impact of recent developments on the commercial prospects for tin mining in Cornwall. The most important factor will be the price at which tin settles when the market reopens. Some fall in price is probable, indeed almost certain. The extent of that fall in the short term will depend on the outcome of the Government's efforts to secure an acceptable settlement of the International Tin Council's debts and a return to orderly trading. As it is unlikely that the International Tin Council will agree to resume buffer stock buying, it seems inevitable that in the longer term supply and demand will have to balance—I was interested in what the hon. Member for Truro said about the tin mines of Cornwall in the market place in the longer term—and some of the world's more expensive producers are likely to have to close as a result. It is against that background that prospects for Cornwall tin will have to be assessed.

We have already said that we shall consider applications for grants for tin mining companies to help them reduce production costs. Since 1979, we have given grants of £3·5 million to continue projects, including exploration. Decisions on grants cannot be taken until we can be satisfied that any project receiving assistance from the taxpayer has reasonable prospects for a sound commercial future. I hope that the hon. Member for Truro and his constituents will understand that.

The period of uncertainty has been lengthy, and that is bound to cause problems for some companies. That is one of the reasons why our priority is to restore orderly trading as soon as possible. That will be in the interests of everyone. That is taking longer than we had hoped, but, when 22 countries are involved, there are bound to be difficulties.

The United Kingdom has made quite clear its readiness to meet its share of any commitments of the International Tin Council member countries and has called upon others to do likewise. Proposals aimed at finding an acceptable solution to the International Tin Council's problems have been put forward, and we have made great efforts to resolve the crisis through diplomatic channels and will continue to do so. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that an inordinate amount of time has been spent in my Department dealing with this matter. The people involved are working nights and weekends.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I helped to save Wheal Jane in the late 1970s, and I have a keen interest in this issue. There is an inconsistency in what the Minister

[Mr. Alan Williams]

says. The tin industry is beset by the chaos that followed the collapse of the ITC, and it needs help during the period of the chaos. The Minister says he cannot judge whether the industry qualifies for help until the chaos is over and the Government can make an assessment of whether it will be viable post-chaos. Is it right that the governor of the Bank of England came to the hon. Gentleman's Department yesterday to seek assistance? Can he tell us what he told the governor?

Mr. Morrison: What I am saying is no different from what the right hon. Gentleman was saying and doing, no doubt well, when he was involved with Wheal Jane during his period of office. When one is dealing with a moving target—because, as I explained, the complication is that it is not just ourselves, and the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that — it is not sensible to come to firm conclusions if only because one would be taking the wrong decisions because one would not know precisely on what grounds the decisions were to be based.

As I said to the hon. Gentleman who instigated the debate, no set of people could be doing more to bring this difficult problem to a conclusion. I can assure him that that is the case and will continue to be the case. The tin industry in Cornwall is important, but unemployment affects more than the tin industry.

Mr. Penhaligon: We can debate unemployment in the county at another time. I have done it before. The Minister has paid a great deal of attention to the pleadings of the county over the years. The tin mines have sold their tin up front, as they call it. People are committed to taking the production of tin from the Cornish tin mines for about the next six months starting last October. The agreed price was of the order of £8,000 a tonne. We are now a quarter of the way through a year, and there must be 1,200 tonnes of tin kicking around Cornwall for which nobody has paid a bean.

If the international tin agreement finally collapses, the brokers who have committed themselves to paying £8,000 a tonne are nowhere near being in a position to fulfil their contracts. They will hit the wall. At that moment, if not before, the whole thing will collapse like a pack of cards both in London and in my region. The only slight hope is that at least two of the mines are owned by Rio Tinto-Zinc and, although nobody would accuse that company of being a public charity, one does suspect that it does not suffer from the immediate cash flow problems of Little Geevor, which is an independent mining company. There must already be some doubts about whether the company is trading legally, given the circumstances that exist. Some assistance is required in the near future.

Mr. Morrison: I understand precisely what the hon. Gentleman is saying—

Mr. Alan Williams: But the Minister will not do anything about it.

Mr. Morrison: I understand what the urgency is. We are doing everything within our power to make the situation solid as opposed to fluid, which is what it is at the moment. It is all very well for the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) to say that we shall not do anything. As a matter of fact, everything within our power is currently being done. We must look at the situation as it slowly develops. As I said, we are dealing with a moving target. We are constantly looking at it carefully. I fully understand what the hon. Member for Truro is saying, and that there are many uncertainties for those involved.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the problems in Cornwall as a whole are difficult. That is why the Penzance and St. Ives travel-to-work area can benefit from regional development grants and regional selective assistance. That is why the Redruth and Camborne travel-to-work areas can benefit from that, too. I appreciated the hon. Gentleman's point of view when he said that he was pleased that in his part of Cornwall, in Truro, unemployment was not so high, but that does not detract from the fact that unemployment in Cornwall as a whole is very high.

My Department has given selective assistance since 1979, amounting to about £3·8 million, involving 44 different projects, creating about 1,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 700. In addition, payments of RDG have totalled more than £4 million over the same period.

When I first went to Cornwall in 1981, I think I went to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I certainly went to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East. I recall the newspaper headline the day after I went there. It said, "Morrison offers no hope." When I was a Minister at the Department of Employment, the enterprise allowance scheme was developed. In Cornwall, there are now 1,254 participants. The youth training scheme was developed, and currently about 2,500 16 and 17-year-olds are benefiting from that. The community programme was developed. By May this year, we hope that there will be about 2,000 full places.

Between my first visit as a Minister to Cornwall and today, I have listened carefully to what is said and watched carefully what is happening in Cornwall. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall not forget the tin industry, and I shall continue to try to find a solution to a very difficult problem.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 27 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

NCB (Productivity)

1. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the latest productivity figures for the National Coal Board.

6. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about current levels of productivity in the pits.

15. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements in productivity are currently being achieved by the National Coal Board; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): The NCB has recently, for the first time in its history, achieved average deep-mined productivity of 3 tonnes per man shift. This major improvement since the ending of the strike is a clear demonstration of what can be achieved with determined effort by all those in the industry.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. The 30 per cent. increase in productivity is extraordinary. If my right hon. Friend had suggested that 12 months ago, he would have been accused of living in a dream world. Now that that is a reality and there is a total commitment from those in the industry, will my right hon. Friend give the Government's commitment to the industry and its secure future?

Mr. Walker: As we have maintained throughout, there is no doubt that, with the best coal reserves in western Europe, and with immense skills in mining and mining engineering equipment, the industry has a considerable future, provided that it applies the abilities and talents that are available to it. Therefore, we rejoice at the achievements that are currently taking place and look forward with confidence to the industry's future.

Mr. Hickmet: Are not those excellent figures a triumph of the Government's policy in relation to the coal industry? Will that not release more taxpayers' money for the National Health Service and for pensioners, enable NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. to be adequately financed, and provide the prospect for finally removing the burden of the coal industry from the rest of British industry?

Mr. Walker: I know that my hon. Friend has industries in his constituency which depend upon the availability of coal at competitive prices. There is no doubt that the achievements that are taking place, and the greater achievements that will be available in future, give a great prospect not only to those who make possible such achievements. My hon. Friend said that the credit for this was due to the Government's policy, but in fact the credit is due to those who work in the industry and produce those figures.

Mr. Mason: Is the Secretary of State aware that I thought that pit survival was based on profit per tonne, but now gigajoules have been introduced into that calculation? The NCB now states that individual pits have to cut their output costs to 165p per gigajoule. If the right hon. Gentleman knows anything about gigajoules, will he explain the relationship between output costs and gigajoules for the benefit of myself and my miners?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir, but I should explain that "Plan for Coal", in which the right hon. Gentleman played such a positive part, envisaged that productivity would increase by 4 per cent. per annum, but that, alas, as he knows, as a member of the Labour Government during the five years that they were in power, output declined from 2·28 tonnes per man shift to 2·24 tonnes per man shift. I am delighted that some of the ambitions of "Plan for Coal" are now being achieved by this Government.

Mr. Benn: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he has held any formal or informal discussions about the privatisation of all or some of the pits now operated by the NCB?

Mr. Walker: None, Sir. All I can say is that had I been Secretary of State during the declining production of the right hon. Gentleman's period in office, I probably would have done.

Mr. Michael Morris: Do not those figures clearly show what a change good leadership makes? However, is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a shadow on the horizon in relation to opencast coal—the rate at which planning permissions are being given? Will my right hon. Friend look at that problem?

Mr. Walker: Planning permission for opencast coal is now a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I think that he is concerned, as we all are, about delays in the granting of planning permission, which leads to delays in improved productivity and other activities.

Mr. O'Brien: In view of the Secretary of State's reply and reports that pits are breaking all output records, has he any information about NCB policies to increase the sale of coal and to improve exports so that we can ensure that no pits close because of overproduction?

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows from his great interest in this subject, the Government have extended the coal conversion scheme, and in all the energy efficiency programmes that we are pursuing throughout the country we are putting forward the advantages of that scheme. Research is being done on other uses for coal, and the present management of the NCB is more interested in marketing than was any previous management.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my right hon. Friend aware that against the background of this significant achievement, some areas, including south Wales, have suffered a disproportionate loss of jobs because of the age and

exhaustion of their pits? Will he discuss with the NCB the possibility of sympathetic consideration being given to early approval of the new pit at Margam?

Mr. Walker: I shall certainly convey my hon. Friend's views to the NCB management. The exhibition in the Palace of Westminster last week of the activities of the enterprise company showed that in that sphere, too, much activity is taking place in the interests of the mining communities.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Secretary of State accept that this significant advance has been achieved at high cost, especially to the coalfield communities? Does not the logic of the situation suggest to him that there should be further NCB and Government endeavour to enhance the sales of British coal in the industrial market?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also take care to ensure that future achievements are not imperilled by high accident rates, and will he look at the situation in certain coalfields, notably Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Walker: I agree that the maximum safety standards must be retained at all times, and they are being retained. The hon. Gentleman has an immense interest in this subject, and I suggest that he must ask why, for so many years, after all that was predicted in "Plan for Coal", the improvement in productivity did not take place, despite a massive injection of investment. We are, thank heaven, at last getting a return on that massive investment, and that will be to the benefit of the whole industry.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee on Energy visited the south Wales coalfield last week and saw at first hand the increasing productivity in that area? Is he also aware that many pits in south Wales are becoming profitable for the first time since the 1950s and that that achievement is bringing about a welcome increase in morale among everyone associated with those coalfields?

Mr. Walker: It is astounding that some pits which it was argued could never make a profit under the previous criteria are now achieving production levels that make them profitable.

Mr. Eadie: We should be pleased about the increases in productivity, but does the Secretary of State not realise that we must translate that into another avenue? For example, the miners want to know what the consumption of coal will be this year. The CEGB and the NCB have been spreading doom and gloom in the past year, so what will the 1986 figures be? In addition, why are imports so disgracefully high?

Mr. Walker: Nobody has done more to bring doom and gloom to the prospects of the industry than Mr. Arthur Scargill.

Natural Gas

2. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to make an announcement of his policy on the import and export of natural gas to and from the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Portillo: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Has he had an opportunity to study the Select Committee report which recommends the liberalisation of imports and exports? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that it would be helpful to the Standing Committee on the Gas Bill if the Secretary of State's statement could be made while the Committee is still sitting?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have looked at the Select Committee report, and it is significant that the report says that a number of United Kingdom gas producers have reservations about unfettered imports and acknowledges that other interests see problems in regard to exports. Given that it is a comlex problem, about which there are conflicting views, we should give this important matter much consideration.

Mr. Wilson: In view of the question mark that hangs over the self-sufficiency of gas supplies in the 1990s, will the Minister consider taking advantage of the drop in world oil prices and the link with gas prices to renegotiate a deal with Norway to bring in imports?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: If the hon. Gentleman had followed the matter more closely, he would realise that the gap predicted for the 1990s — if there is a gap — is infinitely smaller than the total amount of gas that would have been available under the Sleipner deal. If that deal had gone ahead, it would have jeopardised the development of our own resources in the North sea. Neither I nor the Government wanted that.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a gas pipeline to Europe is well overdue and that that is probably the only way to deal with price flexibility in the long term?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes, Sir. The Government are equally responsible for ensuring that our resources in the North sea are developed properly without abuse. That weighs strongly with me.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that imports and exports of natural gas cannot be divorced from imports and exports of oil? What view does he take of our self-sufficiency, since the price of North sea crude has been almost halved in a month?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Oil and gas are different. Oil is tradeable in the world market, whereas gas is not. Although they are related, one must look at them in different lights.

Energy Efficiency

3. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the progress being made by industry and commerce to reduce their energy bills.

Mr. Peter Walker: There has been an enormous upsurge of interest, which is now leading to action. Membership of energy management groups has increased by 70 per cent. and the number of firms appointing an energy manager has more than doubled. Savings of £160 million a year have been identified in 5,000 surveys conducted under the energy efficiency survey scheme, and I expect the monitoring and targeting programme to lead to savings of £100 million a year. The energy efficiency office's demonstration scheme has also exceeded its target.

Mr. Knight: I welcome that reply. Does my right hon. Friend agree that much could and should be done? Do not

some estimates indicate that up to £7 billion could be saved by commerce and industry through increased energy efficiency? Are not the potential dividends enormous?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. There is no doubt that this is only the beginning. I can think of no other sphere in the British economy where there is more potential to improve our performance than in energy efficiency. The potential saving involved in improving energy efficiency is about £7 billion a year.

Mr. Evans: Is the Secretary of State aware that effective insulation can play a substantial part in reducing energy costs and that major producers, such as Pilkingtons in St. Helens, require a long-term, Government-backed programme if they are to achieve a proper return on their capital and provide full employment for their workers?

Mr. Walker: I agree that that is of immense importance. Firms such as Pilkingtons are delighted with our energetic campaign. I am also delighted at the considerable expansion of voluntary organisations helping to provide insulation in the homes of lower-income families.

Mr. Nell Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways for industry and commerce to reduce energy costs is to encourage more competition in coal production and to press the National Coal Board to keep its costs in line? Does he also agree that the best way to do that is to raise the limits on opencast production by licensed operators?

Mr. Walker: Opencast operators produce a substantial volume of coal. The delays which adversely affect them are caused by planning procedures rather than by anything else. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Orme: Does the Secretary of State support the view that the dramatic fall in oil prices is good for Britain, particularly the energy bills affecting British industry and commerce? Is that the message that he will convey at the meeting he is to have with Sheikh Yamani in the near future?

Mr. Walker: I have no meeting planned with Sheikh Yamani in the near future. The question of oil prices is complicated and is certainly not dealt with under this question.

Anthracite and South Wales Steam Coal

4. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the current situation regarding the availability of anthracite and south Wales steam coal.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): At my right hon. Friend's meetings with the chairman of the NCB all aspects of the coal industry are discussed, including the availability of various types of coal.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that bad planning by the NCB has meant massive stockpiling of power station coal and serious shortages of specialist coal, such as that produced in Durham and south Wales? Why was a pit in my constituency which produced dry smokeless fuel shut, yet, two months later, a plant needing dry smokeless fuel had to lay off men because it could not get that fuel?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady should check her facts. The supply of domestic smokeless fuel, including anthracite, is better than it has been for many years. That was one of the markets most affected by the tragic strike. I wish that the hon. Lady would join the fight to regain those important markets instead of cribbing in the way she does?

Mr. Rowlands: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we are still importing a large amount of anthracite? There was supposed to be an exciting new investment programme in anthracite, but we have seen nothing of it. There was supposed to be an exciting investment programme in coking coal in south Wales, but we have seen nothing of it. When will the Government and the NCB address themselves to those issues?

Mr. Hunt: Stocks of anthracite in south Wales are more than sufficient to meet expected demand in the coming months. The hon. Gentleman must realise that the tragic strike in the industry did a great deal of damage, no more so than in south Wales.

Nuclear Generation

5. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the projected figures for nuclear generated electricity for 1986 and 1996.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): No precise projection is possible. The proportions of electricity supplied by the public supply system in the United Kingdom from nuclear power stations could rise to about 25 per cent. when the nuclear stations presently under construction or commissioning are fully operational around the end of the decade. The figures for later years will depend on a number of factors, including the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that in any advanced society the need for the cheapest possible source of electric power is paramount and that, therefore, the result of the Sizewell inquiry will have a major bearing on the future of cheap electricity and of the industry on which it is based?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, Sir.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Do the Government accept the recent independent forecast on European nuclear capacity, which was published in the *Financial Times*, that only one new station would be commissioned and working by the end of the century? Is the Minister aware that 1,000 jobs in the Meirionnydd constituency depend on whether Magnox stations will be replaced?

Mr. Goodlad: I note the hon. Gentleman's comment on his constituency. I shall look at the article to which he referred.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: If we doubled the supply of electricity generated from nuclear power, how much cheaper would electricity be for industry?

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board estimates the cost of possible new stations to be as follows: Sizewell B, 2·94p per kilowatt hour; a new AGR,

3·67p per kilowatt hour; and a new coal station, 4·28p per kilowatt hour. Those figures assume a 5 per cent. discount rate and costs relating to the lifetime of the plants at March 1984 prices. On the basis of that information, my hon. Friend will be able to make the necessary calculation.

Mr. Orme: As the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry will be important to the calculations of the Under-Secretary of State, when will we receive that report?

Mr. Goodlad: The timing of the report is a matter for the inspector. He has informed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that, following a recent review of progress, he does not now expect to be able to deliver his main recommendations until the spring.

Association for the Conservation of Energy

7. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Association for the Conservation of Energy; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend regularly meets officers and members of the Association for the Conservation of Energy in his campaign for greater energy efficiency.

Mr. Bruce: In the light of the Government's rather odd decision to cut home insulation grants by more than £4·5 million a year, will the Minister consult the Department of the Environment about extending the scheme to cover other worthwhile energy saving measures, such as thermostats and wall insulation, rather than cut the scheme at the start of Energy Efficiency Year?

Mr. Hunt: The 1986-87 homes insulation grant allocation is expected fully to meet total demand. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has said that he realises the significance of Energy Efficiency Year 1986 and will bear it in mind when he considers applications from authorities for additional allocations.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will my hon. Friend continue his negotiations with the Association for the Conservation of Energy, because it is doing excellent work in an important activity, where a great deal of public money can be saved?

Mr. Hunt: I am delighted that my hon. Friend should give me the opportunity to welcome the magnificent way in which the chairmen and chief executives of the major companies involved in energy efficiency industries have come together in that association and, in particular, their initiatives in organising "Monergy" talks and promotional seminars.

Mr. Bermingham: Referring to the question asked by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), may I ask whether the Minister will support an application from the local authority in St. Helens, where, incidentally, most glazing products are made, for an increase in his £40,000 allocation for the current year, which is wholly insufficient to meet the needs of the properties in the area?

Mr. Hunt: I have already answered the hon. Gentleman's question. I made it clear that it is the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the allocations will meet total demand, but there will be an opportunity for authorities to seek additional allocations.

Mr. Speller: Does my hon. Friend accept that while energy conservation is valuable in saving energy, it is also a great creator of jobs, especially in the construction industry and in small businesses?

Mr. Hunt: Absolutely. The Association for the Conservation of Energy and my Department have a mutual interest in promoting energy efficiency measures, because an energy efficient nation means more business for those in the energy efficiency industries.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Minister aware that last year's Public Accounts Committee report showed that up to £100 million a year could be obtained by energy savings within the National Health Service—savings which are not being realised at present? Will he take the matter up with the Secretary of State for Social Services?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Only a few weeks ago my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) and I wrote a joint letter to all regional chairmen. That is now being followed up with individual health authorities.

Mr. Rost: Does my hon. Friend support the argument adduced by the Association for the Conservation of Energy and the Select Committee on Energy that the rate of return on new energy investment within the public sector should be compared directly with the return on energy investment conservation, or the Government cannot assess their priorities and decide which produces a better rate of return?

Mr. Hunt: Those of us in the public sector are determined to do just as well as, if not better than, those in the private sector in promoting energy efficiency.

Mr. Rowlands: I refer to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). Is it not the case that massive savings in the National Health Service were identified a considerable time ago and that no action was taken or follow up made? Why should we believe that there will be any more effective action or follow up now?

Mr. Hunt: Because I shall make available to the hon. Gentleman an energy efficiency publication known as ENCODE which is now going out to all operatives in the National Health Service and which demonstrates not just the need for but the ways in which greater energy efficiency can be achieved.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that there would be far more energy savings if the iniquitous 15 per cent. VAT on double glazing imposed by his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer were removed?

Mr. Hunt: It is not just on financial grounds that we urge people to install double glazing, but on a number of other grounds, including comfort and energy efficiency.

Polkemmet Bing

8. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further action he is taking in relation to the fire in the Polkemmet bing.

Mr. David Hunt: I am in regular contact with the National Coal Board in Scotland and am continuing to take a close interest in the matter.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the time scale?

Mr. Hunt: I readily understand the wish of local residents and the hon. Gentleman to know the time scale involved. I am satisfied that the Coal Board is doing everything that it can to minimise the nuisance. Work is progressing as quickly as possible to clear the bing as effectively as possible. I am aware that it is important to keep residents informed, and therefore I was pleased to hear from the area director this morning that he is making arrangements for a public meeting to be held as soon as possible, when experts will be in attendance to answer detailed questions.

Employment (Scotland)

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of employment in the coal industry in Scotland.

Mr. David Hunt: At the end of December the Scottish area of the NCB had approximately 8,500 men on colliery books.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister accept that that figure would be enhanced by at least 160 if the Coal Board would accept the decisions of industrial tribunals that have gone against it? Will he acknowledge that I have written to the Leader of the House and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State giving him detailed evidence of a meeting at Comrie colliery, which was taped? When my constituent, Mr. Robert Young, went before an industrial tribunal the National Coal Board endeavoured to fabricate evidence that would defame that man for life. Will the hon. Gentleman use his good office to conduct an inquiry into the methods and approach of the Coal Board in Scotland in dealing with dismissed miners, with a view to getting them back to work and getting decisions of the industrial tribunal agreed to by the board?

Mr. Hunt: No, and I reject much of the intemperate language used by the hon. Gentleman. He must realise that the dismissal and re-employment of employees must be a matter for the management of the Scottish area of the National Coal Board. I know that the area director has carefully considered each case, and I am sure that all the available evidence will have been scrutinised before any decision was made.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the level of employment in the Scottish coalfields depends vitally on productivity from that coalfield, and that one sure way to make certain that there will be employment in the future is to continue with the progress that has been made recently?

Mr. Hunt: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has given me this opportunity to pay tribute to men and management in Scotland, where productivity has now increased by 40 per cent. since the end of the strike. That is a marvellous recovery by men and management.

Mr. Eadie: Surely the Minister is not trying to defend the decision of the National Coal Board in relation to dismissed miners who went before a tribunal and were found to have been unfairly dismissed. The tribunal recommended that the coal board give them back their jobs. The hon. Gentleman knows that the song that he and his hon. Friends sang to the House was that the way out for dismissed miners was that they had to go before an industrial tribunal. Is the hon. Gentleman defending the attitude of the National Coal Board, which at present is indefensible?

Mr. Hunt: The careful consideration that each case has received is emphasised by the fact that out of 206 men dismissed for strike-related offences in Scotland, 75 have been reinstated. I have said that there was a revolution in the Scottish coalfields. It is not the sort of revolution that the hon. Gentleman's friend, Mr. Scargill, wanted. It is a quiet revolution in productivity, and it is about time Opposition Members recognised and paid tribute to that fact. [HON. MEMBERS: "Cheat."]

Mr. Donald Stewart: Will the Minister accept the view expressed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stewart: Will the Minister accept that the view of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is widely supported in Scotland, not least by many people who did not support the coal strike? They see the action of the coal board as simply spiteful discrimination against the miners who have been cleared by industrial tribunals. Will he bear in mind Churchill's dictum of magnanimity once the battle is over and restore the men to their jobs?

Mr. Robert Atkins: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I distinctly heard Opposition Members describe someone as a "cheat". Is that a parliamentary expression?

Mr. Speaker: Order. There was a great deal of noise, and I did not hear anybody using an unparliamentary expression, but if it was used, I ask the hon. Member concerned to withdraw the word.

Mr. Ashton: I was one of the hon. Members who said, "cheat". Is it not a fact that the National Coal Board—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the use of intemperate language here, particularly unparliamentary language, is not a part of our conventions. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that word, although I had not called him to speak.

Mr. Eadie: I was one of the hon. Members who used the word "cheat". I was provoked by the Minister who was answering the question. I withdraw that word, on your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ashton: If you insist, Mr. Speaker, I shall withdraw that word too.

Mr. Hunt: All that I shall say in answer to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) is that appeals are now being considered, and it would not be appropriate to comment further on specific cases.

NCB (Membership)

10. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he now proposes to make any changes in the membership of the board of the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: I intend to make a number of full-time appointments to the board in the next few months. Sir Robert Haslam will take up his appointment as chairman on 1 September.

Mr. Pike: While the Secretary of State is making changes to the NCB membership, will he recognise that

most people are appalled at the industrial relations record of members of the NCB, typified by the way in which they have dealt with the reinstatement of miners? Will he therefore appoint people to the NCB who will have a better industrial relations record than the present members?

Mr. Walker: I hope that the National Union of Mineworkers will appoint people to the presidency who have a better industrial relations record than the present president.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State comment on the interview that Mr. MacGregor gave yesterday in the *Sunday Express*, when he talked about leaving his job early? Will he retire before 1 September?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. I am delighted to say that, as far as I know, Mr. MacGregor will continue until 1 September, when Sir Robert Haslam will take over.

Coal Industry (Employment)

11. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss employment issues in the industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Strang: Following the disgraceful answers by his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, will the Secretary of State face the fact that there were 206 victimised miners in Scotland, that 76 have been reinstated, but that there are 11 men who have gone before industrial tribunals which have recommended reinstatement yet the NCB has refused point blank to reinstate them? Is the Secretary of State defending that?

Mr. Walker: I only wish that the hon. Gentleman had taken more interest in those who suffered from the violence during the dispute, and in the miners who were unreasonably treated because they went to work. All that I can say is that that is a matter for the management. The hon. Gentleman referred to some specific cases, and appeals will be taking place.

Mr. Butler: At his next meeting with the chairman, will my right hon. Friend congratulate him on the extraordinary success of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in creating jobs in mining areas? Is he aware that that success will encourage many further applicants to come forward? Will he confirm that the Government will make available to the company all the money that it can usefully use?

Mr. Walker: I can confirm that with present progress, because NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. is attracting about £6 for every £1 that it is investing, it looks as if, even under the present allocation, about £120 million of investment will go into new enterprises in coal mining areas where closures have had to take place. That is a stark contrast to the record of Governments in the past, when massive closure took place and there was no such thing as an enterprise company.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Secretary of State agree that, despite the very good record of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., many miners who have been made redundant are still not finding new employment? Will he speak to the chairman and make it clear that if NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. requires more resources it will receive them?

Mr. Walker: There is no need to speak to the chairman, because I have already made that clear in the House of Commons. The chairman agrees with that policy, and the coal board is very eager for it to succeed. Hon. Members who saw the exhibition upstairs last week will know how enthusiastic it is.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman, will he ask whether the board can confirm that it will be able to fulfil its targets for financial break-even?

Mr. Walker: Clearly a number of factors are involved, but present progress is exceedingly good.

Coal Liquefaction

12. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the liquefaction of coal.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that work is proceeding on the Point of Ayr project in accordance with the plans of the National Coal Board and the pilot plant is expected to be completed in 1987.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that the delay in establishing the plant at Point of Ayr is a disgrace and shows the Government's lack of interest in this important project? As commercial exploitation is due to start in the 1990s, which is not so far away, is not the £35 million being invested far too little? Will he confirm that future development will not be held up because of lack of private capital? Does he agree that this is essentially a matter for public capital and public investment?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the project is not being constrained by lack of direct Government financial support, but process problems have led to the plans being reconsidered. The present 2·5 tonnes per day unit has a much greater flexibility of operation and will enable a better process to be developed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Tier

33. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has received about the setting up of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): A number of right hon. and hon. Members have made their views known to me as to the best way forward in this matter. Consideration of the issue is continuing.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Leader of the House agree that the recent by-elections in Northern Ireland, especially the victory of Mr. Seamus Mallon, who will be introduced to the House shortly, have shown public support for the Anglo-Irish agreement? Does he agree that it is now time for him to make it possible for us to move towards the other aspect of the agreement—the setting up of the parliamentary tier?

Mr. Biffen: I certainly agree that the by-elections have been a very important development on this scene. Now that they are over, it is the more important to consider setting up the parliamentary aspect.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Unionist anti-treaty vote has increased?

Quite apart from that, is he aware that many of us who are against the Hillsborough agreement as an unequal treaty would nevertheless support the setting up of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier provided that it was between the two sovereign Parliaments?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will understand that I do not feel under a requirement to engage in any psephological analysis of what happened in the by-elections, but I am certain that he is right in believing that now that they have been concluded there is a possibility of giving renewed consideration to the idea of a parliamentary tier.

Mr. Shore: The Leader of the House has had a number of representations, and he has time to think about them. Does he favour the proposal in the early-day motion to set up a Select Committee?

Mr. Biffen: That is one of several proposals to which I have given consideration. My mind is thoroughly open on the matter.

Mr. Stanbrook: Would it not be better, before pursuing the objective of a joint committee or meetings of any kind, for a Select Committee of this House, including Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies, to go into the whole question of relations with other countries?

Mr. Biffen: Of course, at the end of the day it will be a matter for this House to authorise. I am certainly prepared to consider my hon. Friend's proposal, along with those of many others.

Mr. Beith: The right hon. Gentleman will note that there is support within the alliance and in other parts of the House for progress with the parliamentary tier, but is not total abstention from the activities of this House as proposed by some Unionists the total negation of what unionism is supposed to be about?

Mr. Biffen: That is quite a separate consideration from the parliamentary tier, but doubtless if the parliamentary tier were established it would be beneficial if it were the subject of as much widespread commitment as possible. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important questions.

Palace of Westminster (Register of Interests)

34. **Mr. Adley** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the implementation of the resolution of the House of 17 December 1985, in so far as it relates to his responsibility, concerning the establishment of new registers of interest by people working at the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: The main responsibility for the implementation of the resolutions passed on 17 December rests with the Select Committee on Members' Interests, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend, the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). I understand that that Committee is already considering the necessary administrative arrangements for the operation of the new registers and its proposals will be made known to the House as soon as possible.

Mr. Adley: As a member of that Select Committee, may I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply? Is he aware that there appear to be an increasing number of secretaries and research assistants of right hon. and hon. Members who to have been engaged in the services of outside so-called parliamentary consultants? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the arrangements between secretaries and other hon. Members' secretaries are not always known? Will he please give an assurance on behalf of the Government that, when the Select Committee reports, its reports will be acted upon by the House at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly try to arrange that the House has an early opportunity to confirm the Select Committee's proposals, if that is required before they can be implemented.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Has the Leader of the House yet had representations from representatives of secretaries and research assistants who feel genuinely offended that they are to be asked to sign a declaration that goes into more detail than that which hon. Members are asked to sign?

Mr. Biffen: If that feeling is widespread, it must be communicated to the Select Committee concerned, as it is the relevant body to receive such views.

Palace of Westminster (Souvenir Kiosk)

35. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal what were the takings at the souvenir kiosk in *(a)* the final four weeks to Christmas 1985 and *(b)* the latest 12 months period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The takings of the Refreshment Department's souvenir kiosk in the four-week period and the 12-month period to 20 December 1985 were £148,482 and £446,340 respectively. These figures include value added tax of 15 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend give some rough idea of the profit in those figures? If profits are regular, will there be price reductions in the next few months? Will he assure the House that there are no plans to expand the activities of the kiosk by building a bigger office elsewhere in the Palace, and that there is no plan to move on to gondola-type trips up the Thames from Mr. Speaker's Steps?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has other things to consider this afternoon besides the possibility of gondola journeys from Mr. Speaker's premises. The gross profit for the financial year 1984-85 was £113,000. It will be best if I refer my hon. Friend's other questions to the Services Committee, which is responsible for the kiosk.

Mr. Dormand: Does the Leader of the House agree that the price of some articles is exorbitant? As he is a believer in market forces, does he agree that, if some prices were reduced, sales might be even greater?

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer that point to the Services Committee.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Does my right hon. Friend realise that the kiosk is more profitable than Westland? Can we consider a takeover bid?

Mr. Biffen: One little difficulty at a time.

Mr. Haynes: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the price increases of goods at the kiosk are way above

anything else in the land? Is he further aware that Members of Parliament and our constituents are taken for a ride when they go to that shop?

Mr. Biffen: I am so glad that we have found a real issue. As I have already said, I shall refer the points that have been raised about prices to the relevant Committee.

Palace of Westminster (Divisions)

36. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he is satisfied with the current access arrangements throughout the Palace of Westminster for Divisions of the House.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the GLC, as a last spiteful act before abolition, has introduced bus lanes between Lambeth bridge and Parliament square, which, when operating between 7am and 7pm cause hon. Members difficulty getting into the House for Divisions? Is that not disgraceful? Do not hon. Members have enough trouble crossing the road between Divisions as it is? As he well knows, I was knocked down on 16 May.

Mr. Biffen: The Patronage Secretary expects every man to do his duty this afternoon and not to be an erstwhile jay-walker. I shall look into the wider difficulty that my hon. Friend has mentioned and will be in touch with him.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power

13. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report progress on the city combined heat and power district heating schemes which his Department is supporting.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): The work programmes of the Belfast, Edinburgh and Leicester consortia began in April 1985. The Leicester consortium expects to complete its work programme by this middle of the year; Belfast and Edinburgh consortia early next year.

Mr. Rost: Is my hon. Friend aware that prospective combined heat and power city consortia are threatened with rates assessments that are several times out of line with the rates that the public sector electricity boards have to pay for their power station utilities? Is that not an unfair practice against the private sector competing against the nationalised industries, and will he do something about it?

Mr. Hunt: At present there are no uniformly applied bases for rating systems, and propositions appear to be very high. However, one of the objectives of the study is to identify this sort of problem—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a further 10 minutes of questions before we reach this afternoon's main debate.

CIVIL SERVICE

Soil Research (Redundancies)

37. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has had in relation to redundancy for civil servants working in soil research.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): None, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: What scientific or financial sense does it make to close the MacAulay Institute for Soil Research at Aberdeen against the public wishes of the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), a former Agriculture Minister and a local Member of Parliament who knows something about this matter?

Mr. Luce: I must point out that these are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Moreover, the people employed at the two institutions are not strictly civil servants.

Mr. Malone: In that case, will my right hon. Friend convey to the Secretary of State for Scotland the deep feeling that exists in Aberdeen against this move, simply because it is not based on any logic at all?

Mr. Luce: I shall certainly do just that.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that he and the Secretary of State for Scotland discuss this whole question with the research bodies connected with soil research?

Mr. Luce: I must again point out that the whole question of soil research is a matter either for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland or my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Pollock: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is deep disquiet throughout north-east Scotland about the possible removal of this institute with its consequential loss of expertise and personnel? Will he give an assurance that no final decision will be taken until there has been the fullest possible consultation with all those likely to be affected?

Mr. Luce: I must again stress that this is not my responsibility. It is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Bruce: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that if this closure goes ahead he will receive representations from many people involved in soil science? Does he also recognise that the feasability study that has been set up is biased in favour of removal, in spite of the fact that all the evidence and all the representations are against the undermining of this excellent institute by its removal from Aberdeen?

Mr. Luce: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has noted what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Dr. McDonald: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 27 civil servants have been axed from the Soil Survey of England and Wales? Will he discuss this issue with his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ensure that Government resources are put into this important area of research, particularly at the present time?

Mr. Luce: Although that is mainly a question for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and although, strictly speaking, soil researchers are not civil servants, I assure the hon. Lady that all the staff involved in soil work at the laboratories to be closed are being offered transfers to other locations.

ENERGY

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

14. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on his visit to Leicester on Wednesday 15 January, when he met senior officials of the Leicester combined heat and power consortium.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I visited Leicester on 15 January at the invitation of the Leicester combined heat and power consortium. I was most impressed with progress to date and the enthusiasm of the consortium. I was pleased to hear that the consortium is hoping to complete its work programme by the middle of this year.

Mr. Bruinvels: I agree with my hon. Friend. Does he agree that the way in which the consortium has been put together is an excellent example of both long and lasting co-operation between the public and private sectors, bringing about genuine savings in energy, which are of great benefit to the citizens of Leicestershire?

Mr. Hunt: In paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) for their support of the consortium, I agree that the consortium indeed demonstrates the public-private sector collaboration, that is needed if the consortia are to be successful.

Energy Efficiency Year

16. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what part he intends the coal industry to play in his plans to promote Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. David Hunt: The NCB already promotes new energy-efficient technology and will continue to do so and to participate in relevant initiatives during Energy Efficiency Year. In common with the other major fuel industries, the NCB has agreed to make widespread use of the "Monergy" logo in its advertising, and is already doing so.

Mr. Davies: What is the Minister's response to the European Community's plans to increase dependency on coal imported from outside the Community? Does he not recognise that an increasing dependency on high-cost, low-quality coal will inevitably mean a lower level of efficiency than would be achieved by using higher quality home-produced coal?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman forgets that under this Government we have moved from being a net importer of coal to a net exporter. Sadly, much time and effort was lost by the tragic strike that occurred in the industry. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman remembered that.

Mr. Jessel: If we want to save energy in Energy Efficiency Year, is it not time that we all stopped wasting energy with endless arguments about who knew what and when?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, Sir.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

17. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to increase the cash available to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The £20 million already allocated to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. remains sufficient for the company's needs, but I am pleased to say that on present calculations it will attract £120 million of investment. To the end of December 1985 the company had committed £5·5 million to assist projects, creating some 3,700 new jobs.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Secretary of State aware that a vital meeting took place in Durham on Friday between representatives of Sunderland borough council, Easington district council and Durham county council to consider a series of projects for the regeneration of the area following many pit closures? Outside the meeting, when I suggested that £20 million was a pittance an official of NCB (Enterprise) said that any sum could be made available if a case could be made out with relevant projects. As the programme of projects will cost £60 million, will the Secretary of State consider it sympathetically, particularly in view of the high level of unemployment in my area?

Mr. Walker: The company is considering all sensible proposals being made to it. Under the present proposals about £120 million is likely to be invested in the coming period. We welcome any sensible suggestions made to that company.

Nuclear Power Stations

18. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest performance against planned output of nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the chairman of the CEGB that the board's fully commissioned nuclear stations are performing as planned and making a major contribution to the country's electricity supply. The AGRs at Dungeness B, Hartlepool and Heysham I have all provided valuable commercial output, but there are still problems to overcome before they are fully commissioned. Power stations in Scotland are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that as the nation has reached the point of buying cheap nuclear-generated electricity from France it is time that our nuclear industry made progress and went faster?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right. Nuclear power has the potential to produce electricity more cheaply than other types of fuel, provided that our nuclear power stations can be built to time and cost. The Government continue to attach great importance to the safe and economic development of nuclear power.

Mr. Evans: Does the Minister expect the PWR at Sizewell to be on stream by 1996? Is he aware of the widespread opposition of the staff and work force of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to the PWR programme? Why does he not stick to AGR?

Mr. Goodlad: That matter is the subject of the inspector's report on the Sizewell inquiry, which we are still awaiting. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on it.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member made the Affirmation required by law:

Seamus Mallon, Esq., for Newry and Armagh.

Teachers (Dispute)

3.32 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire North-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the latest developments in the teachers' dispute."

The matter is urgent because the Secretary of State's weekend statement about not being able to find the money to pay for the ACAS-inspired agreement will cause further disruption and irrevocable damage to the education of children. It is specific because those seeking agreement have gone a long way down a flexible negotiating path, while the Secretary of State has remained obdurate. He has compounded his obduracy by undermining the ACAS deal before it has been ratified. The position has developed since Thursday's debate.

The matter is important because local authorities and parents now feel abandoned and deceived by the Government. A short period of calm after the 1985 settlement was needed, so that all could work towards a lasting solution. That is now threatened. Unlike Secretaries of State, who come and go, children are children and we are failing them.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the latest developments in the teachers' dispute."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said. He knows that my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the criteria laid down in the Standing Order; I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Westland plc

3.35 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I beg to move, That this House do now Adjourn.

Leave having been given on Thursday 23 January under Standing Order No. 10 to discuss:

The circumstances surrounding the publication of classified information relating to the future of Westland plc.

Mr. Kinnock: For all of the people in the Westland company, the affairs of that company are obviously vital. For most of us outside the company, the affairs of the company have become increasingly important in recent months. But no one inside or outside the Westland company would have considered four weeks ago that this matter could become one of such current critical significance.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, it was a comparatively small thing. Now it is palpably a very big thing. It has grown in size because of the actions and the attitudes of the right hon. Lady and Members of her Administration. Of course, the Prime Minister says that it would never have assumed this proportion but for the fact that one member of the team was not playing like a member of the team. It is plainly true that we and the country would not have known what we know now but for the fact that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) kicked over the bucket of worms by resigning earlier this month. All the dishonesty, duplicity, conniving and manoeuvring would still have been taking place. We would not have known about it quite so quickly and quite so clearly.

Evasions, manoeuvrings and deceits nurtured this comparatively small thing until it became a very big thing. It was turned from an issue into a crisis by the dishonesty of people in this Administration. That dishonesty infected the Government's whole approach to the affairs of Westland plc. There was a basic duplicity of their public dispassion about the affairs of that company and their private partisanship in the bids that were being made for Heseltine—*[Laughter.]*—for Westland. I think that may be the last occasion on which Conservative Members of Parliament have cause to be amused in this debate. Clearly, they hold a cavalier attitude towards dishonesty, which may explain the attitude of many of them——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Leader of the Opposition to accuse hon. Members of this House of dishonesty?

Mr. Speaker: I think the Leader of the Opposition would wish to withdraw any allegation of dishonesty against Members of this House.

Mr. Kinnock: I only withdraw allegations if the cap does not fit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a debate in which the House is taking a great interest. I ask the House to keep it on a level which is in keeping with our conventions. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition, at the beginning of his speech, would wish to get us off to a good start.

Mr. Kinnock: You have that guarantee, Mr. Speaker, and it will continue like that——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw any allegations of dishonesty.

Mr. Kinnock: I said that hon. Members opposite have a cavalier attitude towards dishonesty. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the basis of the view that you take of affairs, I will certainly withdraw what I said earlier. I said that the Government's attitude was one of public dispassion and private partisanship. There are also the standing charges that still exist about moved meetings and minutes that were incomplete, and now we have the differing versions still existing of the meeting between Sir Raymond Lygo and the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We know enough of the truth about the connivings of 6 January to understand that the dishonesty has run right through this whole episode. *[Interruption.]*

All dishonesty has to stop. We have had two dress rehearsals from the Prime Minister full of half-truths and concealments. Today the Prime Minister must come clean. That is not only my view; it is the view expressed throughout the country and expressed by the Home Secretary in the course of his interview yesterday. Today, the Prime Minister must answer the questions that she signally and significantly failed to answer six times last Thursday.

First, when did the Prime Minister find out about the decision to leak, how it was to be done and who was to do it? Secondly, how can the Prime Minister explain her claim that she did not know what action was being taken? Thirdly, did the Prime Minister establish an inquiry in response to the justifiable outrage of two Law Officers who felt that their integrity was being abused and compromised——

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose——*

Mr. Kinnock: —or was there an additional reason for that? After seven days delay, did the Prime Minister establish an inquiry whose conclusions would not in the normal course of events be published, simply because she knew that demands for such an investigation would most certainly be made? Was that inquiry established for detection or was it established for deception? Was it set up to obscure the issues and to provide an excuse for silence? Was it set up by a Prime Minister who knew very well who had leaked, why they had leaked, when they leaked and what they did it for?

The Prime Minister must give clear and truthful answers to all of these questions. She must make no mistake. Today the Prime Minister is on trial. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] The main testimony against the Prime Minister is provided by herself. It is provided by her own words to this House last Thursday, and testimony is further provided by the whole nature of her style of governing. How could it be that a Prime Minister who prides herself so earnestly on her involvement in detail; who prides herself so much on her knowledge of the minutiae of her Government; who has such a deep engagement historically in the Westland affair did not know of a supremely important decision, taken by those so very close to her, to manipulate events on 6 January? How can it be——

Mr. Churchill: I am much obliged to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, but before he accuses others of deceit, will he explain whether it was deceit that led him to falsify his age when he first put himself forward for political candidature or did he just forget how old he was?

Hon. Members: Oh, no.

Mr. Kinnock: I think that that may be the best that Conservative Members will be able to do in the course of this afternoon. That was certainly the last time that I inadvertently added a year to my age.

On the testimony against the Prime Minister, provided by herself, we have to ask how it could be that seven days could pass before she recognised that the issue of the leak was so important that it warranted an inquiry. Who would expect us or the country to believe that 16 days could pass between the corrupt practice of that leak and the Prime Minister's discovery of the details when the plotters were her closest confidants—her most frequent companions?

Who would expect the House or the country to accept that in all that time the Prime Minister never asked her associates to venture even a guess about the identity of those involved in the leak? Who can expect us to believe that in all those endless hours of contact, through all those days of discussion and debate and questions and statements in the House and in the even closer quarters of No. 10 Downing street, the Prime Minister was really blundering around in blissful ignorance of the actions of 2 January? Who would expect us to believe any of that?

Well, obviously the Prime Minister expects us to believe that. It is clear that the Prime Minister expects the House, her party and her fellow citizens to suspend all normal standards of belief and to accept that it is strange but true. "Truth," she said on television yesterday, "is often stranger than fiction." When we heard that, as when we heard her last Thursday, many of us wondered whether the Prime Minister had lost the ability to tell the difference between truth and fiction.

We want to know truthfully now exactly when the Prime Minister first knew of the decision to send the Solicitor-General's letter. We want to know truthfully now exactly when she first knew of the decision to leak the Solicitor-General's letter. We want to know now exactly when she first knew of the involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and her office in the conspiracy. When did she first know that he had given his authority, as she put it, and when they had given their cover, as she put it, to act in good faith—act in good faith by making a furtive phone call to the Press Association for the specific and carefully contrived purpose of discrediting another member of her Cabinet?

We know that the right hon. Lady has not answered those questions. She has admitted that herself. Any statement, she said yesterday, is almost always a basis for further questions. That may be the understatement of the Prime Minister's lifetime. *[Interruption.]* But all we have had so far are excuses for the omissions and evasions of last week—no apologies for not answering questions with meticulous accuracy; just attempted excuses. All we have had is the propaganda about "toughing it out"—a phrase, Mr. Speaker, which you will recall first entered the British vocabulary when it came out of Richard Nixon's office.

We are told that last Thursday the Prime Minister was sheltering the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Home Secretary told Mr. Brian Walden yesterday —*[Interruption.]* They are going to hear it all, Mr.

[Mr. Kinnock]

Speaker—that he could feel the courage going through the Prime Minister when she made her statement, as the Home Secretary put it, "protecting Mr. Leon Brittan". That excuse has palpably gone because the late Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has gone, although, interestingly, he went not without resistance. Even when the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) wanted to do the right honourable thing and resign, the Prime Minister tried to talk him out of it and even invited him to apply for the next vacancy for "high office", as she put it.

But what of the Prime Minister's excuses for the omissions from last Thursday's statement and questions? *[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister said that the majority of the inquiry report — *[Interruption.]* Even the deliberate efforts, that will be heard by the nation, by Conservative Members to interrupt the House and to prevent someone from getting a fair hearing, will not stop the truth being heard. *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister said that the majority of the inquiry report was new to her. She said that, until the report was available, she did not have the full facts—what she called an "enormous number" of facts. As I listened to her then and to the Home Secretary yesterday, saying how much they wanted to be able to give the full facts, I began to think that it was the Government, not the Opposition, who had got the emergency debate today. *[Interruption.]*

The protest that there were just too many facts to be absorbed does not carry any weight at all. Of course, it is handy to have the full details for the historians—the dates, the times, the places, the footnotes. But only one fact was absolutely essential for the Prime Minister; one fact really mattered, and that was the fact that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and her office had conceived, organised and executed the leak. That was the fact which mattered and it was the fact which the right hon. Lady was forced to admit last Thursday. It was also the fact—the single salient fact—that the right hon. Lady was denied for over a fortnight.

Who were these people who decided to keep the right hon. Lady in the dark? Who were these merciless people who made the Prime Minister, in her innocent ignorance, go through the charade of the inquiry into the leak? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Do something about the giggling schoolgirls opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not see anything going on.

Mr. Kinnock: Whatever anyone sees, the whole country will be able to hear what has been going on. Once again, Conservative Back Benchers have decided that, because they cannot take the truth, they will try to bury it. *[Interruption.]*

We want to know who were the people who prevented the Prime Minister from being able to gain access to the single fact about the involvement of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and her office in the decision to leak. Who were the cynics who let the Prime Minister be in the dark for 16 days? Who let her come here to tell truths so partial, so incomplete, that they began to look like untruths and who let her come to make a whole speech in this House on 15 January without telling her that they knew who had leaked, how they had leaked and why they had leaked? Who were these callous people who caused the Prime Minister so many problems over the weeks?

Why, they were the Prime Minister's own Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and, strangest of all, her own office — the Prime Minister's very own office, her closest, most senior staff; her office which, in her own words, did not seek her agreement; her office, which, in her words,

"considered—and they were right—that I should agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry". —[*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 450.]

That begs the question. If her office did not tell the Prime Minister, why did her office not tell the Prime Minister? There can be only two reasons. It was either because they did not want to tell the Prime Minister or because they did not think that there was a need to tell the Prime Minister. If they did not want her to be involved, that could be for only one reason—the simple, straightforward reason that they were doing wrong, that they knew that they were doing wrong and that they did not want the Prime Minister to be contaminated by the guilt.

Of course, it may be that they thought that the Prime Minister did not need to know about what was going on. They might have said to themselves, "There is no need to tell the Prime Minister. We know what her attitude is to Westland. We know her attitude to the turbulent Secretary of State for Defence. We know what her attitude is to his campaign and we know what her attitude would be to us using dirty tricks to defame and undermine the Secretary of State for Defence."

Were the people in the Prime Minister's office actually right about that? Do they really know the Prime Minister? Either they do know the Prime Minister and they think of her as a woman who would stoop to conquer, no matter how low, or they are totally mistaken and she is not the woman that they think.

From the Prime Minister's statement last Thursday it appears that they do not know the Prime Minister. We have the Prime Minister's own word for it. She told us that her office did know her well enough to guess accurately that she would agree to the attitude taken by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and that she did not and would not have consented, if she had been consulted, because she felt that there was a different way, a better way, to make the relevant details known.

Despite their years of close proximity and despite the deep mutual trust that has to exist between the Prime Minister and her office, it appears that they did not know the Prime Minister at all. There they were taking important decisions in her name—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the House that backchat does no credit to the House.

Hon. Members: It is deliberate.

Mr. Kinnock: Either they knew the Prime Minister or they did not know the Prime Minister. She says that they knew her well enough to understand that she agreed with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but that, had she been consulted, she would have told them that there was a different way and a better way that must be found to make the relevant facts known.

That is all despite those years of close proximity and all that close contact. Despite all of that, there they were, taking important decisions for the Prime Minister as she busied herself yards away in Downing street.

They did not tell the Prime Minister, so we are told. All the time, they were outrageously miscalculating the Prime Minister's attitude towards the correct method of putting matters into the public domain. Having made that miscalculation, they then apparently compounded the fault by allowing her to set up an inquiry into a leak which they themselves had perpetrated.

They must have been wrong—practically wrong and terribly wrong; too wrong to enable them to endure in their present positions. At least that is what we would think. How can they continue to carry out the immense responsibilities and be the object of the Prime Minister's trust when they could be so terribly wrong, so we are told, about her attitude towards the way in which that information should be released.

If they are so wrong, why have they not gone? They have not gone, and they are not going. They are not going because the Prime Minister says that she has complete confidence in them. Why has she that confidence in them? Is it because the Prime Minister, who has the reputation for being ruthless with those who fail her, has suddenly gone soft? It cannot be that. It must not be because of charity. Can it be because of complicity by the Prime Minister? Can it possibly be that the Prime Minister is not innocent but that she is implicated and involved?

For the moment, we withhold our judgment while we wait for the Prime Minister to give her account. Last Thursday, in reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), the Prime Minister said that she hoped that we would have the decency to accept her version of events. We have the decency; what we lack is the gullibility to accept the Prime Minister's version of events.

We want the facts. We want them now. We want only the one version that will be believed—the truth, the whole truth and absolutely nothing but the truth. If the Prime Minister cannot tell that truth, she cannot stay. If she will not tell that truth, she must go.

4 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): Before I come to the wider aspects of this debate, let us recall one thing clearly: the background is the future of Westland and its work force. We have to remember that that future still hangs in the balance. The Government's position throughout has been that it is for the company itself to take decisions about the course to follow in the interests of the shareholders and the employees, but the Government are a major customer of the company and the Government's policies and intentions in that capacity are very relevant to the decisions that the company has to take.

It is therefore of the first importance that any pronouncements by the Government that might affect the company's decisions are accurate, consistent and in no way misleading. It is largely because one member of the Cabinet could not accept arrangements designed to secure the accuracy and consistency of Government statements that we are debating the whole matter today.

I propose to deal at once with some questions that have arisen since my statement of 23 January. I shall do so under three headings: first, the circumstances leading up to the letter of 6 January by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General; secondly, the reasons for having an inquiry; and, thirdly, the outcome of the inquiry.

First, I shall deal with the circumstances leading up to the Solicitor-General's letter. The House will recall that I had cleared my own letter of Wednesday 1 January to Sir John Cuckney with the Departments concerned and with my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, for the reasons I have already given.

On Friday 3 January, there was an exchange of letters between Mr. Horne of Lloyds merchant bank, representing the European consortium, and my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence. In his letter, Mr. Horne asked for amplification of a statement in my letter to Sir John Cuckney. As the House knows, my right hon. Friend went into considerable detail in his reply. His letter had not been discussed with my office before it was sent, even though it dealt with points arisng from my letter to Sir John Cuckney.

On the following day, Saturday 4 January, I saw copies of the exchange of letters. In view of the very careful steps that I had taken to clear my letter to Sir John Cuckney with the Departments concerned and with the Solicitor-General, I made inquiries to find out whether the Defence Secretary's letter had been cleared in the same way with the Department of Trade and Industry and with the Law Officers. It had not. In view of the continuing need for accuracy and consistency in Government statements on this subject, I asked that a message be sent to my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, as the sponsoring Minister for Westland, to suggest that he should ask the Solicitor-General to consider—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —the Defence Secretary's letter and give his opinion on whether it was accurate, and consistent with my own letter to Sir John Cuckney.

The Solicitor-General, on the basis of the evidence available to him, formed the provisional opinion that the Defence Secretary's letter contained material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected. This view was reported to me. The matter clearly could not be left there. I therefore, through my office, asked him to consider writing to the Defence Secretary to draw that opinion to his attention. I learned subsequently from the Solicitor-General that he spoke to the then Defence Secretary on the telephone that same evening and told him his provisional opinion about the letter and warned him that he would probably write to him on Monday 6 January, when he had checked the documents, and advise him to correct the inaccuracy.

The Solicitor-General further considered the documents on the morning of Monday 6 January. They confirmed him in his opinion. He therefore wrote to the Defence Secretary, advising him to write again to Mr. Horne correcting the inaccuracies. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has asked for the further exchanges between himself and the Law Officers to be published. I have arranged for copies of the correspondence to be placed in the Library of the House.

It has been said that the letter to Mr. Horne has not been corrected. So far as the Government are concerned, we made it clear to the company—in the letter to Sir John Cuckney of 13 January from the permanent secretary to the

[The Prime Minister]

Ministry of Defence, a copy of which has also been placed in the Library of the House—that there was nothing to add to my letter to the company of 1 January.

Perhaps more to the point, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement made it clear, in his answer to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 13 January, that the order for six additional Sea Kings would be placed if the plans for the five-nation battlefield helicopter project were approved, whichever reconstruction proposal Westland shareholders approved, and not — as my right hon. Friend had said — only if the European consortium proposals were accepted.

I explained to the House on 23 January how extracts from the Solicitor-General's letter were disclosed to the media on 6 January. I repeat that I deeply regret that this was done without reference to the Solicitor-General. Indeed, with hindsight, it is clear that this was one, and doubtless there were others, of a number of matters that could have been handled better, and that, too, I regret.

As I said to the House in 23 January, the company was informed also. There have been reports in the newspapers to the effect that that statement was wrong, and the company had not been informed. I understand that Sir John Cuckney's office has now confirmed that he did receive a call from the Department of Trade and Industry in the early part of that afternoon. The official in the Department of Trade and Industry concerned has again clearly confirmed that he made such a call, as he told the head of the Civil Service in his evidence to the inquiry.

As the full details of the disclosure only became known as a result of the inquiry which was subsequently instituted, I propose to deal next with the question why it was decided to hold such an inquiry.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I shall deal with these matters under the three headings I have given. On Tuesday 7 January——

Mr. Skinner: Will the Prime Minister give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is not giving way.

The Prime Minister: On Tuesday 7 January, the day after the Solicitor-General's letter was disclosed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General sought the view of the head of the Civil Service as to whether it would be appropriate for the Law Officers to seek a formal inquiry.

After discussions between the Attorney-General and the head of the Civil Service, my right hon. and learned Friend made clear his view that there should be an inquiry. The head of the Civil Service minuted me formally on Friday 10 January seeking my authority for the institution of such an inquiry. I readily gave him that authority. In fairness to everyone, it was essential to have a full and objective report on what had happened, and it was clearly desirable that all the officials concerned should be able to give their own full accounts of their part in what had occurred.

My authority was conveyed to the head of the Civil Service on Monday 13 January. The following day, I informed the House that an inquiry had been instituted. I had been asked by the Law Officers to institute such an inquiry. I was formally advised by the head of the Civil Service to do so. I had no doubt that it was right to set up the inquiry.

Indeed, on 7 January the hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) an Opposition Front Bench spokesman——

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central) *rose*——

The Prime Minister —wrote to me to ask that an inquiry should be set up so that—I quote:
"the full facts can be established".
Even so, some hon. Members opposite have subsequently criticised the decision to hold an inquiry.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Prime Minister said that she received a letter from me the day following the leak. Why on earth has she not told the House whether she knew the facts of the leak at the time that she received my letter?

The Prime Minister: I am dealing with the setting up of the inquiry—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]—and I shall deal then with the outcome of the inquiry and what I did know and what I did not. I have in fact done it in what I believe is the best order.

If I had rejected the advice that I had received, if I had refused to hold a formal inquiry, the parties opposite would have had just cause to criticise me. I have no doubt that they would have done so. To be criticised when I agreed to an Opposition request to hold an inquiry is, to say the least, an unusual experience. The inquiry reported to me on 22 January.

In my statement to the House the following day, I set out the steps by which the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January was made public, as this emerged both from the accounts of officials as reported by the inquiry and also from my subsequent discussions with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whom I should like in this House to thank for his years of devoted service.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I am not giving way. I am going on because I have a long speech to make, and I must get through it.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: It was the common purpose of all concerned that, at a time when difficult commercial judgments and decisions had to be made by the company, it was important that all pronouncements by the Government should be accurate, in no way misleading, and consistent with each other. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: It followed from that that, if a statement was made which appeared to be inaccurate or misleading or inconsistent with other Government statements, then it was the duty of the Government to make sure that the record was corrected as soon as possible.

When the Solicitor-General's letter was brought to his attention, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry took very much that view of the matter. He was clear that it was desirable to bring into the public domain as soon as possible the fact that the Solicitor-General had written to the then Defence Secretary, and the opinion he had expressed. The Secretary of State made it clear to his

officials that, subject to the agreement of my office, he was giving authority for the disclosure to be made by his Department, if it was not made, as he said he would prefer, from 10 Downing street. That I indicated in my statement last week.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: This is a very tightly drafted argument and I should prefer to go on. I will give way later. Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Prime Minister said that she would give way later.

The Prime Minister: Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later. I wish to continue this section.

Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry approached officials in my office, who made it clear that it was not intended to disclose the Solicitor-General's letter from 10 Downing street; but, being told that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had authorised the disclosure, they accepted that the Department of Trade and Industry should make it and they accepted the means by which it was proposed that the disclosure should be made.

My officials made it clear to the inquiry that they did not seek my agreement. They told the inquiry that they did not believe that they were being asked to give my authority, and they did not do so.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Who?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If they had believed——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If they had believed my authority was being sought, they would certainly have consulted me.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister: No, not at the moment. This is very important. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Officials of the Department of Trade and Industry told the inquiry that they regarded the purpose of their approach to my officials as being to seek agreement to the disclosure as well as to the method. They believed that they had the agreement of my office, and acted in good faith, in the knowledge that they had authority from their Secretary of State and cover from my office.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister allow me?

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

The Prime Minister: No, I must go on at this moment. This is vitally important.

Although, clearly, neither side realised it at the time, there was a genuine difference in understanding between officials as to exactly what was being sought and what was being given. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I have given the House the view of what officials on each side told the inquiry. That is one reason why it was vital to set up the inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister: As I indicated, officials too had the right to put their view of their part of what had occurred. I deeply resent any attacks upon them.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Member knows that the Prime Minister said that she would give way later. He must not keep on rising.

The Prime Minister: But it is common ground, as I told the House on 23 January—it was accepted—that the Department of Trade and Industry should disclose the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected, and that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made in the way that it was. I have given the House this account——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

The Prime Minister —of the accounts which were given to the inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I give way to the hon. Gentleman who has been rising, and to whom I promised to give way.

Mr. Dalyell: What are we to derive from the right hon. Lady's answer to the friendly intervention of her hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), the chairman of the 1922 Committee, in relation to putting it in the public domain, when she said:

"I gave my consent." — [*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 455.]

What interpretation is to be put on that?

The Prime Minister: I gave my consent to an inquiry, I co-operated with it and I set out the facts as fully as possible, in that statement. I noticed that I had said that, at that particular time. I did not give my consent to the disclosure. It was not sought and I have indicated that I deeply regret the manner in which it was made.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Prime Minister. Will she tell us what conceivable misunderstanding between the Department of Trade and Industry and her office could permit them to breach the Official Secrets Act and, in the words of the Solicitor-General, "immediately and flagrantly" to violate an important rule without any form of consultation with her as head of the Government. Will she now tell us when she knew?

The Prime Minister: I have just set out—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I have just in fact set out what my officials believed and what the Department of Trade and industry's officials believed. The right hon. Gentleman

[The Prime Minister]

will not accept that there was a genuine difference of understanding, which is something that happens almost every day in normal life, and he tries to deny it. Officials, too, have the right to be heard and not automatically be castigated by the other side. In answer to the question which I think hon. Members will be asking, I did not myself know about the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter until some hours after it had occurred. *[Interruption.]* Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have been asking for the facts, and I am giving them. I have taken immense trouble to have them checked. I discussed the matter with my office the following day, when I also learned of the Law Officers' concern. I was told that the Solicitor-General's advice had not been disclosed by my office.

Mr. Skinner: Why have an inquiry then?

The Prime Minister: I was also told, in general terms, that there had been contacts between my office and the Department of Trade and Industry. I did not know about the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's own role in the matter of the disclosure until the inquiry had reported. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Hon. Gentlemen have asked me for the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is not giving way.

The Prime Minister: Let me finish this section and then I will give way.

The difference of understanding between officials in my office and those in the Department of Trade and Industry only emerged after the inquiry had started.

Mr. Foot: Is the Prime Minister telling us that, from the day after the leak, on 6 or 7 January, right up until after the inquiry had reported, her right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry did not make any effort whatsoever to tell her how he had authorised the inquiry—[HON. MEMBERS: "Leak."]—authorised the leak? If so, does she think that such a Member is fit to be in any Cabinet, let alone hers?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated what the facts are and I have indicated the high regard in which I hold my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I have given the answers after strenuous efforts to check them with the officials concerned and with the Departments concerned.

The Government's policy throughout has been to help Westland to seek the solution which would enable the company to continue in business as a private sector concern. It is this Government who fought to help it get the Indian order; it is this Government who undertook to write off nearly £40 million of launch aid if the W30 project was terminated; it is this Government who ensured that the board of Westland had a choice of options; and it is this Government who have pledged themselves to resist discrimination against Westland in Europe, whichever option for its future it chooses. This was, and is, the right policy.

But from the Opposition we have heard nothing constructive. Oh yes, in the debate on 15 January, they offered the company their own two options. But what were they—nationalisation, or receivership.

The fact is that the Opposition parties, with the exceptions of the hon. Members for Yeovil and for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) are exploiting Westland and its employees, exploiting them for nothing more than their own narrow political advantage. It was the right hon. Gentleman the leader of the Labour party who told his party conference, and I quote:

"you cannot play politics with people's jobs . . . they have no time for such posturing".

[Interruption.] Yet that is precisely what he has been doing and has done again today.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

The Prime Minister: Let me tell hon. Members the real reason for this debate. It is not because of the Opposition's concern for Westland and its employees; until today they have said precious little about them. It is not because of their passionate belief in the defence of the realm; their policies would leave us defenceless.

Mr. Kinnock: Let me remind the right hon. Lady of the "real reason" as she put it, for the debate. It is to find out the truth. The House is not satisfied, and the country will not be satisfied, that she has given us the full details. I ask the right hon. Lady again—when, truly, did she know? Can she expect us to believe that her office did not tell her when it knew? Can she expect us to believe that she was neither told by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry nor did she ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry exactly what was going on?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman cannot stand is that I have given him the facts and he does not like them.

Hon. Members: No.

Hon. Members: Yes.

The Prime Minister: The Opposition have deliberately blown up this issue out of all proportion. This debate is part of a massive diversionary tactic by the Opposition. They would like first to divert public attention from the growing extremism of their own party—as we have all seen so unmistakably in Liverpool, Lambeth and Tottenham—and secondly, to divert us from vigorously pursuing our policies and plans for our country's future.

We are not going to be diverted from the tasks we were elected to carry out. We shall gather with renewed strength —*[Interruption.]*—to extend freedom and ownership, to give power back to the people and to keep our country strong and secure.

4.28 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I believe that the Prime Minister, in retrospect, will wish that she had not made the latter part of her speech, because, whatever the House wants to hear today, it does not want a party political — *[Interruption.]* What the House

wanted from the Prime Minister—and, wherever the jeers come from, what both sides of the House wanted — was the truth from the Prime Minister.

Some new facts have been disclosed, which are of considerable importance. The Prime Minister told the House that she drew the attention of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the letter that had been written by the then Secretary of State for Defence and suggested that he should ask the Solicitor-General to see whether there were any inaccuracies. She told us that she did that on 4 January. She has further told us that she knew on 4 January, before the Solicitor-General rang up the then Secretary of State for Defence, that there were, on a provisional look at the documents, material inaccuracies, but that the hon. and learned Gentleman would write to the then Secretary of State for Defence on 6 January. So the Prime Minister, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday before 1.30, when the letter from the Solicitor-General arrived at her office, knew that it was highly probable that there would be material inaccuracies, in the view of the Solicitor-General, in the letter of the then Secretary of State for Defence.

The question that the Prime Minister has not answered is what conversations took place with her private office between her and Mr. Ingham and her principal private secretary, Mr. Powell, about what should be done if those material inaccuracies, provisionally thought by the Solicitor-General to have occurred, were confirmed in the letter that she was warned would be distributed on the Monday. I must say to the Prime Minister that it is not unreasonable to believe that she would have discussed that with those two individuals or at least one individual. It is a reasonable assumption that it was in the knowledge of how she reacted to the whole series of events that they felt confident to give the cover that she herself claimed in her statement—*[Interruption.]* I do not know. I am merely pointing out a major gap in the Prime Minister's account.

I ask the Prime Minister now to clear that up and to tell the House. Did the right hon. Lady discuss the issue with Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell on the Saturday evening, the Sunday or the Monday morning? Did you, Prime Minister? [HON. MEMBERS: "Order."] That is the question that we are entitled to ask. I do not believe that it will be understandable to those who have worked in the Government machine that those two senior officials could have given the cover when asked by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The decision to leak a document written by a Law Officer is a very serious decision. There is a strict understanding within the Government that the advice of the Law Officers is never referred to. It is only ever disclosed in very exceptional circumstances by the Law Officers themselves. The last occasion was when the Attorney-General released his opinion in 1982 on the Greater London council. A further issue arose when Attorney-General and Solicitors-General in successive Governments issued their views on the Simonstown agreement. It is a strict convention, which would have been known by Mr. Powell, and ought to have been known by Mr. Ingham, that under no circumstances did anyone, certainly not those senior officials, reveal the Law Officers' advice. This is not some minor leak. This is not a question of inter-party strife. It is not an argument between the Prime Minister and her then Secretary of State for Defence. It goes to the core of the Government and their integrity in relation to the position of the Law Officers.

I must say to the Prime Minister that I find it very hard to believe that Mr. Powell, who was a diplomat and who is now on secondment to No. 10 Downing street, a person of outstanding integrity, would have agreed to the Department of Trade and Industry disclosing that information unless he had a pretty clear view of how the Prime Minister wanted the matter to be dealt with. The Prime Minister owes it to the country to say what discussions she had with Mr. Ingham and/or Mr. Powell.

I gather from the Prime Minister's silence that she will not tell us. If she winds up the debate, as I hope she will, I hope that she will answer that question. If she does not do so, the question will remain. If she does not do so, if she allows it to be assumed that those officials made that decision on 6 January without reference to her, there is no question what has to happen now. It is not just that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) resigned because he obviously felt that he had lost the confidence of his colleagues. As a lawyer, he must have understood the significance of the decision that he took to authorise his Department to allow the Solicitor-General's letter to be partially leaked.

But it must be the case that both Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell will certainly be now subjected to the normal disciplinary procedures that cover civil servants and members of the diplomatic service. It is inconceivable that they can continue to advise the Prime Minister. That demand must be made. Mr. Ingham is paid as a civil servant. Mr. Powell is a diplomat. They are governed by rules and regulations that cover all officials of all Governments. At the core of this issue is an issue that has been causing concern for some time—the integrity of the Civil Service. There is one person who is responsible for that now. That person is the Cabinet Secretary.

I refer to the Solicitor-General's letter. The Prime Minister said that it was essential that the full facts were given. The Solicitor-General's letter, written on 7 January and now in the Library, reveals that the letter of the Secretary of State for Defence did not contain the material inaccuracies that he had originally thought. He says:

"The additional evidential material on which you rely, and in particular the conversations with your European colleagues to which you have referred, is identified to me in your letter in terms too general for me to be able personally to assess whether the accuracy test is fulfilled. I quite understand why this may be unavoidable, particularly in the case of the conversations with your European colleagues, but it means that the judgment as to whether that test is satisfied must remain your own responsibility."

Therefore, at the end of the day, the Solicitor-General's interference has not made any material difference to the Defence Secretary's case.

However, I should like to quote the most damning part of the Solicitor-General's letter:

"I want to express my dismay that a letter containing confidential legal advice from a Law Officer to one of his colleagues should have been leaked, and apparently leaked moreover in a highly selective way. Quite apart from the breach of confidentiality that is involved, the rule is very clearly established that even the fact that the Law Officers have tendered advice in a particular case may not be disclosed without their consent, let alone the content of such advice. It is plain that in this instance this important rule was immediately and flagrantly violated."

What does that say for the competence of the Prime Minister, and the competence of the Government?

[Dr. David Owen]

The fact of the matter is that the issue now rests on the Prime Minister's competence and the competence of her private office, and the degree of trust and honour in her private office. It is not often realised that the Prime Minister's principal private secretary has his desk as close to the Prime Minister sitting in No. 10 in the Cabinet Room as you are to me, Mr. Speaker. It is extraordinary that throughout this period, from the moment when the Prime Minister admits that she talked to her officials on 7 January, she did not ask them point blank what the view of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks was. The Prime Minister tells us that she did not know about the view taken by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks over this disclosure until she read the Cabinet Secretary's report.

That says a lot for the Prime Minister's diligence and attention to detail. It is inconceivable that the Prime Minister did not ask what the right hon. and learned Gentleman's attitude was. It is almost as inconceivable that he did not tell her what his attitude was.

It is extraordinary that we are asked to believe that there was a difference of opinion between the Department of Trade and Industry officials and Mr. Bernard Ingham as to whether or not this should be considered to be an authorisation from No. 10. Mr. Bernard Ingham has ruled the Government's press information with a rod of iron for nearly seven years. His role is more dominant in the Government's information service than that of any Prime Minister's press secretary this century. It is extraordinary that the lady concerned in the Department of Trade and Industry, when going to Mr. Ingham, should now be told that he was not giving her No. 10's authority. Frankly, no one who has seen the way that Mr. Ingham has operated or the way the lobby system has been manipulated and twisted over the past few years can possibly believe that this mild, insignificant, modest, quiet and unassuming Yorkshireman did not give his authority to that lady in the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister has achieved what I think in retrospect she may most regret. She does not regret the passing of the Secretary of State for Defence, although I believe that she genuinely regrets the passing of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. By not admitting that she, by her general demeanour and general standing, gave a steer and guidance to Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell, she has left those two men with no alternative other than to resign. It is a sad commentary upon the Prime Minister's integrity that the only way that the integrity of the Civil Service can be maintained is for those men to take the honourable course and resign.

The Prime Minister must have hoped that this debate would end this whole affair. I fear, Mr. Speaker, that it will not. The Prime Minister has revealed both today and in former days that she is not worthy to hold the high office that she does.

4.42 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): I had not originally intended to take part in this further debate, and I shall not keep the House for more than a few moments. There are only one or two aspects on which perhaps I may be allowed to comment.

I should like to place it on record that I believe that from start to finish in this entire matter the behaviour of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General was exemplary.

I listened with great care, as did all my right hon. and hon. Friends, to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had to say. The House will realise that for me, as well as for many right hon. and hon. Members, my right hon. Friend's speech filled in a great deal of the background that we could not have known about before. I heard the Prime Minister clearly say that she deeply regretted the fact that the letter from my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General had been leaked. She went on to say that a number of other matters could have been better handled, and she regretted that, too. I think that that is a difficult and a very brave thing for a Prime Minister to say in such circumstances. I could not have asked for words other than those that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister used.

For my part, I would say that in the circumstances, where colleagues in a Government feel strongly, as undoubtedly my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Britan) did—I know that they will respect my position and feelings just as strongly, though perhaps from a different point of view—it is understandable that sometimes the atmosphere and decisions are not always all as we would wish them to be. I have no doubt that things that I did are open to criticism, and I accept a responsibility for that.

There are two issues on the substance of the Westland affair. The first concerns the future of the company and its effective control. As the House knows, I hold very strong views about our strategic defence interests, and I argue that Westland should remain part of the British and European Community industrial base. I shall seek to do everything that I personally can do to ensure that that is maintained.

The other issue concerns the politics of the matter. I believe that what the Prime Minister has said today brings the politics of this matter to an end and that any further questions that are to be asked will properly be asked by the all-party Select Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Who is after votes now?

Mr. Heseltine: I can answer that question, characteristically delivered from a sedentary position. The reason why the Tory party is after votes is because we have heard the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. If there are men born for whom the highest attainment is to remain Leader of her Majesty's Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition is such a man. I do not believe that the House has listened in a decade to a worse parliamentary performance than the one we heard today. Of course it is the constitutional duty of the Opposition to exploit a Government's difficulties, but they cannot even make a decent job of that.

In what has been a difficult and stressful experience for the Conservative party, let us understand clearly where we stand tonight. We shall be in the Lobby together with one purpose—to maintain a Tory party in power in this country and to keep the Labour party out.

4.48 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Ebbw Vale): After the intervention of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr.

Heseltine) I had a momentary twinge of sympathy for the Cabinet and what they might have suffered, but the twinge passed. As the right hon. Gentleman spoke, I was reminded of a comment made by a far greater figure, as I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree—Sir Winston Churchill, who did change parties occasionally —who said, "It's all right to rat, but you can't re-rat."

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): The point about Sir Winston Churchill is that he did re-rat.

Mr. Foot: I accept the correction. I will watch the future career of the right hon. Member for Henley with that in mind. At present, however, we have far more important matters to consider than the right hon. Gentleman's future.

I listened to the Prime Minister's speech with great care, as it was an extremely important speech in the history of this Parliament and of her own life, but I must say that she did not answer many of the questions that had been put. Those questions will continue to be put until we get answers to them.

This debate and the events to which it relates turn on questions of confidentiality or, as the Prime Minister insisted in yesterday's interview—and I agree with her —collective Cabinet responsibility and its implications.

Let us go back, first, to 14 January—the Tuesday after the House came back from the recess—when the right hon. Lady referred to these matters in her replies. We were then discussing the letter from the head of British Aerospace. On that occasion, the right hon. Lady was extremely insistent on a very important matter. She said:

"As the hon. Gentleman is aware from answers that have been given many times by me, it is my practice not to publish exchanges with third parties, nor to reveal them if they are marked 'Private and strictly confidential.'"

In later emphasis on the matter, she said:

"With respect, I think that I have probably answered this question several times, but let me repeat the reply. The letter was marked 'Private and strictly confidential.' It is my invariable practice not to reveal publicly such correspondence without the permission of its author."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 920-22.]

We are therefore partly examining how that invariable practice came to be varied in this instance.

The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry also emphasised this matter in his replies the previous day. He said:

"As for saying that the letter was marked 'Strictly private and confidential', the right hon. and learned Gentleman should be well aware that in matters of this kind it is the existence of the letter as much as its contents that is strictly private and confidential and that the confidentiality is one imparted by the author of the letter and no one else."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 873.]

I agree with both those statements. Leaving aside the part of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made that statement to the House on 13 January. Yet on 6 January he had authorised the leakage of a confidential document without any reference to the author and, as has already been stressed, in circumstances of particular embarrassment and difficulty — even constitutional difficulty — because it was a letter from the Law Officers. It is barely credible that a Minister who could make that statement to the House on the afternoon of 13 January should have been guilty only a few days previously of such a departure from the "invariable practice" described by the Prime Minister. It is equally incredible that, after such conduct and after the Prime Minister had insisted on the strength of her commitment to that doctrine, the right hon. Lady should be so eager to keep in her Cabinet a Minister guilty of such behaviour, especially in the light of the few revelations that she has made today.

The Prime Minister has contributed something today, in that she has stressed how much she knew about this on the previous Friday and Saturday, which makes the admission of her finding out on the Monday or the Tuesday all the more remarkable. Even more remarkable is the failure of her own Cabinet Minister to tell her on that Monday or Tuesday.

I shall come in a moment to the confusion—if that is the correct word—in the Prime Minister's own office. What is the situation that the country is asked to believe? Is it that from the Monday or Tuesday of the leakage right up to the time when the Prime Minister received the report — a period when many Opposition Members were putting pertinent questions to the Secretary of State and others and receiving evasive answers — the Prime Minister with all her determination to settle these matters did not even inquire what had happened?

Why was the Prime Minister so reticent? She is not normally guilty of that. I am not talking about civil servants, but about relations within the Cabinet. Why did she not ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come along and tell her? He was quite an obedient member of the Cabinet and I dare say that if asked politely he would have been good enough to come along and explain. Was the Prime Minister not even curious, let alone probing? Did she not want to discover what had happened? Or was she so obsessed with all these other questions that she did not even trouble to ask what had happened?

When she eventually set up the inquiry—it was a bit late and some of us had assumed that it would be set up straight away — did the Prime Minister have no discussions with the Minister concerned? Is she really asking us to believe that she set up the inquiry without troubling to ask the Minister concerned what he thought about any part of it? She was treating the Minister as the Minister was treating the Law Officers, and we cannot have that. It is an extraordinary tale. For the Prime Minister's own peace of mind, I wish that she had been able to say a little more than that, because that gap will remain. I thought that she would try to answer it today, but she has not done so. She has merely said that she would have been in difficulties if she had not agreed to an inquiry.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Mayhew knows the truth. He was used.

Mr. Foot: If only the Prime Minister had talked to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and got the truth from him—assuming that that honourable Minister was prepared to tell her—she could have come to the House and told us. She could have said that the honourable Minister whom she always wished to keep in her Cabinet and whom she would always wish to have back in her Cabinet would never mislead her and had told her what had happened. In fact, he kept his mouth shut, or she kept her ears shut, all through that period.

That is an intolerable way for the Prime Minister to treat the House. She should have spoken to us much earlier. She should have been here on 13 January and on other occasions when the music was going against her. Had she done so, she might have avoided the terrible catastrophe that has befallen her and the Government.

[Mr. Foot]

The right hon. Member for Henley said the other day that there was a constitutional crisis—a breach in the constitution—although he seems to have got over that pretty quickly. I never thought that it was a breach of the constitution. To me, it is a matter of common decency and plain speaking. It is a matter of coming to the House of Commons and telling the House the truth. It is a matter of coming to this House of Commons and telling the truth.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mayhew knows the truth.

Mr. Foot: It is a matter of the proper and essential relationship between the Prime Minister and the House of Commons, and through this House of Commons with the country at large. The right hon. Lady has gravely injured this. The reason for this is the atmosphere that is spread throughout her Government and her Cabinet. That atmosphere helps to determine the way decisions are made. It is a strange atmosphere. It is an atmosphere where, to take a practical example, the right hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas), for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) and for Waverley (Mr. Prior) and other hon. and right hon. Gentlemen are choked and stifled.

The other day, the chairman of the Conservative Party gave his advice on this matter; he has been brought forward to purify the atmosphere. Nothing like this would have happened had he been here—he would have eaten the two ex-Cabinet Ministers for breakfast to satisfy his appetite for lowering the standard of politics.

The reason why the Prime Minister is quite prepared to apply one rule of confidentiality to one lot and another rule of confidentiality to another lot—[even though] it includes her own Law Officers—is because she works on the principle, "Is he one of us?" She operates with those who are "one *of* us" and that is the way that this Government has been run and this country has been debased.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Absolute humbug.

Mr. Foot: I heard the Prime Minister yesterday, as others did. The right hon. Lady talked of the time when she would depart. When she departs—I would prefer it, of course, if the decision was made by this House or the country, as it eventually will be made—what will be written on the right hon. Lady's heart but the shabby prevarications and the collective deceits of these past few weeks?

5.2 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I do not think that I have ever heard three more miserable speeches from the Opposition on a major occasion such as this. During the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) one could notice the dismay of his supporters at the performance that he gave.

I never thought that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) would sound like a pedantic lawyer.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said on television yesterday that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had lied, but now, having heard the full explanation, he is forced to say that she did not attend sufficiently to detail with her customary diligence. What a climb down that is. It is as though 300 people had turned up for a works outing to the circus, only to find that the circus had moved on to the next town.

The truth is that this whole affair has been an enormous fuss about very little. There should never have been the excitement that has been generated, and I hope that excitement will die down. I am sure it will.

The sad thing is that two of my right hon. Friends for whom I have a high regard are no longer in the Cabinet. I much regret that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is no longer in the Cabinet, especially after the performance that he gave today. I also especially regret that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) is no longer in the Cabinet. Although I do not know him well, I think he is one of the most brilliant members of our party; and I hope and trust that it will not be long before he is returned to high office. I do not think that he has every gift in politics. It must be said that he is somewhat deficient in the art—perhaps it should be described as the craft—of political skulduggery. Launching my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) as a missile, at one stage in this business, to appear on the Robin Day programme was not an ideal choice for that occasion.

I hope that the Opposition are not trying to pretend that leaks are solely the property of this Government. Nobody leaked as much as the previous Labour Government. On one occasion, according to Mrs. Castle, Lord Wilson—who constantly complained about the number of leaks occurring—was told by Tony Crosland:

"But I must point out that there is evidence that these leaks are coming from the most senior members of the Cabinet."

The criticism of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is especially rich, as Mrs. Castle continues:

"Harold will not have Hattersley because he is said to have made three disloyal remarks recently. Dick and I agree that this is absurd because, although we do not think that Hattersley is a particularly nice man, we know he will make disloyal remarks about anyone, including Roy Jenkins."

It is by no means unique for Cabinet Ministers to make disobliging remarks about each other. I only wish there were not so many people ready and willing to take these remarks down. This weekend I read that there were no fewer than 1,000 information officers in Whitehall. What do those ladies and gentleman do? I believe I am right that in the days when Lord Attlee was Prime Minister, he only had one information officer and he was placed in a dark room with no means of communication whatever. That is a system which appeals to me far more than the present one of countless information officers giving information to anyone who will listen. It breeds leaks, and eventually it breeds disrespect for the Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. Gentleman has tried to excuse leaks. Does he or does he not agree with his hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General that the leak of a Law Officer's private and confidential advice to the Government is in quite a different category and inexcusable?

Sir Peter Hordern: My position is that I am against all leaks, whether they come from the Solicitor-General's letter or not.

Something must be done about this system of information officers and leaks. I know that successive Governments have wished to do this for a long time. It

would be worth considering placing Mr. Ingham in a somewhat different position so that he may make attributable statements on the record. This is the system in the United States where Mr. Larry Speaks is the President's spokesman. I also believe that we should look again at section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Sir Peter Hordern: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I wish to be brief.

What was all this fuss about? It was about a small company the size of a moderate London hotel. We are asked to believe that Sikorsky, the vanguard of American technology, was about to destroy and take over all technology in western Europe. That is no new charge. It is one which Servan-Schreiber made many years ago. In White Papers it has been a constant theme that we ought to have more co-operation between our defence companies within western Europe. Yet, year after year, very little is accomplished. It is true that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley succeeded with the European fighter aircraft. However, it remains the case that there are large overlaps in guns, tanks and electronics in western Europe.

Examination of Government expenditure on research and development reveals how much goes on defence rather than on other forms of science and technology. Bearing in mind the orders that are placed, we must ask whether defence expenditure is geared too much to help defence contractors, such as Marconi and Aerospatiale, and sometimes to great waste. I need remind the House only of Nimrod in that context. It resulted in vast over-expenditure compared with the original proposals.

However, it must be the first duty of any Secretary of State for Defence to buy the best equipment for our forces. In many cases, such equipment is American. If we concentrate our purchasing power more on western European firms, we must ask whether those firms have the desired capacity. Too often the Americans have the only available technology.

Westland was in great difficulty as long ago as last July. I understand that Sir John Cuckney saw my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley last September and asked for help. I believe that my right hon. Friend said that there would be no public money, and certainly not from his Department, and that Westland would have to help itself if it could, and that it might even be preferable if it went into receivership. There was not much enthusiasm last September for the European option. My right hon. Friend might have shown his enthusiasm a little earlier. If he had, we should not have got ourselves into the present trouble.

Substantial questions about Westland remain. Of course the European option must be considered seriously, but Westland knows that two of the helicopter companies involved are loss-making. Agusta's losses are larger than its turnover, which is quite an achievement. The interests of Westland workers are extremely important. They must be allowed to express a preference for the Sikorsky deal, which would give them access to wider technology and other developments. It has looked too often recently as though the efforts of the European consortium have been designed to block the Sikorsky—Fiat rescue bid.

As for Cabinet responsibility, I suppose that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister could have sacked my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley earlier. Perhaps she did not think that the Westland affair warranted such action, but it was clear that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley thought that the Westland affair warranted action. I think that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been far too kind. Indeed, I believe that she does not get her way nearly enough. We have a broadly based Cabinet, and I do not think that she gets her way nearly as much as she would like.

It is right for the Cabinet to be broadly based and to take in representatives from each section of the party. I am sure that the same has been true of other Cabinets. They include the Right and Left of a party—although they are now called wet and dry. Half of the Cabinet are most charming and likeable people who are economically illiterate and the other half are economically literate. That structure explains the leaks and counter-leaks. It is no good blaming my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for them. The issue was not important, and it is not important now. We all have very much better things to do.

It is extraordinary for the Opposition to pretend to great moral indignation. The Labour party has developed leaks into an art form. Under Labour we had something more akin to waterfalls than leaks, of every variety. Those who enjoy the fraternal bonds of Socialism show that they like nothing more than hating each other's guts. I am reminded of Lord Wilson's kitchen cabinet. I miss those leaks. Where now the stories of lavender writing paper or glasses of wine thrown over the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)?

There were not just leaks. The Labour party went in for something much worse. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley is said to be impulsive on occasion. I remember when once he went so far as to pick up the Mace. The House might not remember what occasioned his picking up the Mace. I remember it well. It was in May 1976. The House debated the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, and the Labour Government lost the Division. The next Division was called and the Labour party either sent somebody through the Division Lobby twice or allowed somebody who had been paired to vote. [HON. MEMBERS: "They cheated."] I shall not go so far as to say that they cheated, as that is an unparliamentary expression, but I have described what happened. There was none of this trifling business about leaks and counter-leaks, for the Labour party went in for something much rougher.

In 1969, the Labour party thought that it might get another 30 seats by holding up the Boundary Commission recommendations. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) laid the orders in the House—he was then Home Secretary—and tried to get his party to vote them down.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): With respect, I did not try. I succeeded in getting them voted down.

Sir Peter Hordern: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. He laid the orders and got the vote. Mrs. Castle had something to say about that. That was the Attorney-General's advice at the time. The Home Secretary had merely to lay the orders, not to approve them. Mrs. Castle said:

"Everyone seemed to think this was a very ingenious solution though I am unhappy at the political morality of it. Not that I have any qualms at all about our holding up the redistribution."

So much for morality.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I am not sure that my hon. Friend is quite right. He said that the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) held up the recommendations. The right hon. Gentleman was selective; he did not hold them all up.

Sir Peter Hordern: I am sure that that is right.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to debate the Boundary Commission's recommendations for 1969 during a debate on Westland plc?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that this is a debate on the Adjournment. There is however a specific definite subject and I think that the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) is making a comparison.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Opposition do not have a leg to stand on. It beats me how they can have the nerve to come here and preach to us about morality. There are great issues to be dealt with. The price of oil is falling, there is strain on sterling, the level of unemployment is serious and the teachers' dispute continues. The Opposition have a heaven-sent opportunity to conceal the divisions in their ranks. I do not believe that people are such fools as to think other than that this petty, ridiculous issue has had a long enough run. It is time to get back to the serious business of running the country.

5.19 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This debate might be called, "No, Prime Minister", because it is about the relationship between those who hold high office and those who act on their behalf. On occasions, we are very amused by the scene of servants becoming the master.

I have had some previous experience of the mind of the Prime Minister, and I pray in aid two examples. The first concerns a statement made by her Government on 23 April 1982. It was for international consumption and was not given to this House or put in the Library until three weeks later. Reference is made to that in paragraph 3.28 of House of Commons paper 11/84.

The second example relates to a question that I put to the Prime Minister on 17 July 1984—column 168 of *Hansard*—about the implementation of the Education Act 1944. Subsequent correspondence is in the Library, to which hon. Members can refer.

The question today is who gave authority for the release of the selected parts of the text of this important letter. Last Thursday, the House heard with enormous surprise—perhaps oiled by previous revelations in the press—that it was the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry himself who gave that permission. He is a lawyer, as we were reminded earlier today, and he gave permission to reveal in public the confidential advice of a Law Officer of the Crown. We now want to know whether the Prime Minister absolutely, tacitly or in effect shared in that decision, and we must not forget that she is also a lawyer.

The phrase "cover from No. 10" has been used, and in last Thursday's debate I asked the right hon. Lady specifically in column 459 of *Hansard* to whom Mr. Ingham was accountable and who decided his standing orders. Instead of saying what almost everyone would have expected her to say—indeed, the nation might have expected her to say—the Prime Minister did not say, "To me." She talked about something that gave a clue to what was in her mind, which I shall not repeat now, but she did not admit that accountability.

I found that extremely strange, and perhaps this can be dealt with in the wind-up. On that very day, the Prime Minister had used the phrase "cover from No. 10". We all have people who help us—people to whom we give standing instructions, such as, "If they ring, tell them this," or, "If they ask that, refer them to me." Such instructions are very clear, but in this instance, when the Prime Minister's office was approached by the DTI, her officials were either so sure of what was in her mind that they could give clearance, or they vastly exceeded the authority that she had given them. It cannot be anything else—it must be either one or the other.

The Prime Minister has not claimed today that they exceeded their authority, but she said that they did not consult her on that day. That suggests the other possibility, that they knew what her mind was on some previous day, and the Prime Minister has also told us today that, on the Saturday, there had been a lot of discussion in No. 10 about these letters. That opens up the possibility that the officials acted on her authority, having known from a previous occasion precisely what the Prime Minister had in mind.

The Prime Minister also told us today that there had been a misunderstanding. I am confused, because last Thursday she made it absolutely clear—crystal clear, as Mr. Brian Walden might say—when she said:

> "My office were accordingly approached. They did not seek my agreement: they considered—and they were right—that I should agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected should become public knowledge". — [*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 450.]

Therefore, on Thursday, the Prime Minister told us that she would have agreed, and she concurred with the cover that was given by her office, whereas today as I understand it—it was not easy to follow—she said that there had been some misunderstanding and that cover was not given.

Sir John Page (Hull, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry, but I cannot give way.

Sir John Page: Why not?

Mr. Spearing: The answer can come from the Dispatch Box. The hon. Gentleman is not entitled to intervene.

These anomalies must be cleared up, because the authority clearly given by the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was, according to the Prime Minister on Thursday, accepted, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman lost the confidence of his colleagues as that was known to be true. The House wants to know—we have heard nothing at all to the contrary—whether the Prime Minister, by implication of her office, was also involved clearly and explicitly with that decision. In nothing she has said today has she in any way dissociated herself from it. In fact, the additional evidence relating to the implication of her office on the Saturday brings her closer to it rather than separating her from it.

When they vote tonight and think of the call for loyalty, Conservative Members should ask themselves, "Loyalty to what?" Is it loyalty to a person, to the party or to the

supremacy of Parliament? I suggest that their loyalty to the last two vastly exceeds any loyalty they have left to the former.

5.28 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): The House will know why I came to the conclusion that I should no longer remain a member of the Cabinet. I want to place on record my appreciation of what a privilege it has been to serve in the Government of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The unhappy circumstances of the last few weeks will not detract from their achievements. I shall support the Government's policies as strongly outside the Cabinet as I have within it.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set out the facts relating to what has been called the "Westland saga", and particularly the circumstances relating to the disclosure of information contained in a letter of my hon and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. She has done so in great detail. Some of the facts only she can know about whereas in other events I myself was closely involved. I can and do confirm that with regard to the facts within my knowledge, the account of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is correct.

As my right hon. Friend said in her statement to the House last Thursday, I made it clear to my officials at the Department of Trade and Industry that—subject to the agreement of No. 10—I was giving authority for the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to be made. I therefore accept full responsibility for the fact and the form of that disclosure.

The House knows of the extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented, circumstances in which we were working—the circumstances of the persistent campaigning of my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Defence and the urgency of the need to ensure that the contents of the Solicitor-General's letter should become known. But for all that, and in retrospect, I must make it clear to the House that I accept that the disclosure of that information—urgent and important as it was—should not have taken place in that way, and I profoundly regret that it happened.

I must also make it clear that at all times the Department of Trade and Industry officials acted in accordance with my wishes and instructions. What they did was with my full authority. They are not to be blamed. Indeed, they gave me good and loyal service throughout my time as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

There is one further point—and one further point only—that I would make. I remain firmly of the view that the Government's agreed policy of letting the board and shareholders of Westland make up their minds about the company's future without political pressure was and is right. Let us hope that now——

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Brittan: Let us hope that the future of the company can now be decided in that way.

5.29 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, resigned because of his responsibility for the disclosure to the Press Association of legal advice in a letter supplied by the Solicitor-General. He was right to do so. His resignation is honourable, but he should have resigned earlier. However, it was not only the Secretary of State who was involved in that disclosure, which is the major reason for the anxiety about the happenings of the past four weeks. The Prime Minister was also involved.

For four weeks we have been trying to get information from the Government in a variety of ways, including today's Standing Order No. 10 debate. We have received some information from the Government, but it has taken a long time. We have not yet got it all, and, unless we get more this evening, the matter will continue.

I wish to raise two issues. The first relates to the role of the Law Officers, and the second to the private office. I disagree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that civil servants in the private office should resign, and I shall argue that case shortly.

I first realised the peculiar nature of Law Officers during the Franks inquiry of 1972, so by the time I became a Minister I was not surprised by the way that they operated. It should not have surprised the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has one great advantage over me—he is a lawyer. Indeed, it is said, properly, that he has aspirations in the political sphere, and so he should. It is an honourable task and peculiar to this country.

The Franks report states:

"The Attorney-General administers the criminal law in the interests of the community as a whole, and he must disregard the interests of his party, and those of the Government as such."

The Solicitor-General and Attorney-General have done that consistently throughout the Westland affair. I do not seek to get at them. I am mentioning their role for other purposes.

Not only is the role of Law Officers different from other Government activities. Last week, it was drawn to my notice that if the Government were to fall next week, all the information in the documents, papers and Cabinet sub-committees would not be made available to the succeeding Government, but the Law Officers' information would. It is unto itself, and above politics. I do not understand how the Prime Minister and the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, knowing that, could use the advice given by the Solicitor-General on that Saturday and then on Monday as they did. That is one of the most important issues to emerge during the past month.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if there were material inaccuracies in correspondence, they should emerge?

Mr. Rees: Of course they should, but there should be a public statement. The inaccuracies should not have emerged in that way. That is the whole point of our argument.

I shall remind the House of what happened. The Government made a decision within one and a half hours. They moved more quickly than my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and his Cabinet did on such issues. The Government knew what to do within one and a half hours. I bet that the matter had been discussed before, and that the civil servants knew what was in the minds of their lords and masters; otherwise, they would not have acted as they did. One does not leak a little bit of a letter to an honourable member of the press. I am coming to the conclusion that the Government were

[Mr. Rees]

not interested in informing Sir John Cuckney. As far as I know, he never found out. Apparently, he said that he did not find out. I am told that he thought that it was politicians playing games.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Is not the importance of the matter the fact that in the part of the letter that was not released, but which was communicated to the then Secretary of State for Defence, our posts in Europe were reporting a different view about the future potential for Westland collaboration in European projects from that which was being purveyed by the then Secretary of State for Defence in his open communication to the chairman of Lloyds merchant bank, which was acting for the European consortium?

Mr. Rees: That may be, but the Government must deal with that through their machinery. The letter should not have been leaked in the way that it was. The way in which the letter was leaked is important. During the past month the Law Officers' method of operating has been compromised by the Government.

Mr. Wilkinson: In the extraordinary circumstances that prevailed, would it not have been appropriate to draw attention to what are normally classified messages coming from abroad? Was not the important fact that the former Secretary of State for Defence was being misleading?

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): He was not.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that was the point that had to be got across quickly?

Mr. Rees: It was up to the Government how they handled that. I am worried about the way in which the Government dealt with advice from the Law Officers. They dealt with it badly, and both the Prime Minister and the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were implicated in that.

I wonder when the Solicitor-General knew of the leak. Eventually, the Prime Minister set up a leak inquiry, which has two stages. First, the Cabinet Secretary is asked to set up a leak inquiry, which is carried out within a Department through the permanent under-secretary concerned. If the inquiry comes within the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, the matter goes to the police. This matter never went to the police. Did the Solicitor-General know, when he and the Attorney-General asked for the leak inquiry to be set up, that the others involved knew that they had authorised the leak? The Law Officers would not have asked for an inquiry if they had known who had authorised the leak.

It was a charade, brought about because of the demands in the House for an inquiry. The Prime Minister could have stopped it. She could have come to the House and said, "I have to tell the House that on Monday we made a mistake. There is no need for an inquiry. We authorised the leak." That is what worries me most about what has been happening. I have already said that the Prime Minister's office knew, if not directly, what the Prime Minister and her Ministers wanted. The Cabinet Office staff are loyal and of a high calibre. They may have been high fliers, but inexperienced in the ways of politics. In my view, this should not be a matter for disciplining those people. Whether they come from the diplomatic service, the Treasury or wherever, I believe that they acted with the connivance of the Prime Minister. It is not good enough to expect civil servants to act as fall guys. To some extent, during the past week, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has acted honourably in following that premise.

Other allegations are being made and more allegations will be made in the weeks ahead. They will not go away. It is being alleged—I mention this now so that the Leader of the House can deny it—not only that was the Solicitor-General's letter leaked, but that the Prime Minister's office subsequently, because it was told to do so, acted in a peremptory and cavalier way by contacting the Law Officers and asking them if there was a way of pushing all this under the carpet.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. He will not be surprised that I require him to do so. The allegation is not true.

Mr. Rees: I accept that immediately. It is better that I should raise the matter on the Floor of the House than that the story should fester in the papers.

The Solicitor-General is an honourable man. The only complaint of the Law Officers was the way in which the Solicitor-General's letter was dealt with. I am sure that the Solicitor-General would have corrected me if that were not the case.

Mr. Bell: The question for the Solicitor-General is not only why the inquiry was held, but why immunity from prosecution was given to a specific person before the event. Why was the Cabinet Secretary given authority to grant immunity from prosecution to those who assisted in the inquiry?

Mr. Rees: What was the point of getting at the civil servants when it had been discovered that Ministers had authorised the leak?

The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) referred to the press office. It is time that we considered the way in which the press office at No. 10 carries on. It has become more important than Prime Ministers themselves, with morning briefings and the releasing of innuendo. It is time that some other method was found, even if that involved another Minister to work with the Prime Minister and to look after the press office. That occurs in other Departments. In the Home Office, someone looks after police information and produces documents and press statements. However, I am concerned about the political side, which is mainly at No. 10.

The Westland episode has gone well beyond the problem of a small company. It is not only a matter of morality or integrity. When I read about the way in which the Cabinet had carried on, I had a good look at the Franks inquiry report on the Falklands war. The last paragraph, which I willingly signed, states that it was not the Government's fault. Paragraph 339 states:

"Against this background we have pointed out in this Chapter where different decisions might have been taken, where fuller consideration of alternative courses of action might, in our opinion, have been advantageous, and where the machinery of Government could have been better used."

I have heard this story unfold and nothing has changed. The only difference is that there will be no war to wipe out that paragraph.

Several Hon. Members rose——

Mr. Speaker: It may assist the House if I say that the Front Bench spokesmen will seek to rise at 6.5 pm. I ask for brief contributions. In fairness, I must respect the rights of Back-Bench Members as well as those of Privy Councillors.

5.45 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): With the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot), I believe that it is impossible not to feel a slight twinge of sympathy for the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon. He had to address the House without knowing the story that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would tell. He had nothing much to say, except to repeat the questions that have been asked in the Sunday newspapers, which he did. He then tried to give a lecture on responsibility, but at that moment he lost the attention of the House to the extent that you, Mr. Speaker, had to plead with us to listen. It is rather difficult for us to listen to a lecture on responsibility from someone who has never held it; and to hear from the Leader of the Opposition how the Government have failed in their responsibility when he has yet to exercise authority of any sort was more than we could take.

That task might have been difficult for the Leader of the Opposition, but the leader of the Social Democratic party was under no such disadvantage. His position requires no sympathy, because by the time he made his speech, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had answered all the questions. She told us the full, unfortunate regrettable story with an honesty and candour that all of us received with great relief and sympathy because it is not easy for the leader of a Government to have to say that some things happened that should not have done. Instead of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport, (Dr. Owen) having the decency to say, "Now that we have heard the story—although it is not a good story—we will accept it," he got on his moral high horse and lectured us about the honesty and decency of office.

I would prefer to say this to the right hon. Gentleman's face, but he is probably appearing on television at the moment. He was a member of a Government who were hardly the model of Cabinet collective responsibility. He took the decision about Chevaline. He reached high office and, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, he knows what is involved in it. He knew that that decision had been taken and that it had been kept from all but a select few. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) might have a word or two to say about that. He sat in that Cabinet for five years yet he did not know that his colleagues had taken that decision. The right hon. Member for Devonport dared to lecture us about open government and about the way in which we conduct government. We need no lessons in morality from him.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my hon. Friend aware that, on television, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) lectured us about patronage? When I asked him if he could name the relationship of the Prime Minister of the day with the man that he had appointed as ambassador to Washington, the right hon. Gentleman walked out of the studio.

Mr. Mates: My hon. Friend relates an interesting tale. We are 45 minutes away from the end of what has been a sad incident in the Government's life, but it is only an incident. What we have heard today from the Prime Minister, from my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and last, but not least, from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) has shown that at least if we made mistakes we are prepared to admit them — *[Interruption.]* I have no doubt that most Opposition Members find that funny, because a little modesty and honesty would come ill from their lips.

Things have gone wrong in this affair, and no one denies it. From the outset, because I happened to be involved in the issue, I said that this was the row that should never have happened. What has been said by the Prime Minister and by the two former Secretaries of State vindicates that statement. It is most unfortunate that it became a personal battle of wills, and we have all suffered as a result of it. But it is equally clear that, now that all of them have been as open, frank and honest as they have been today, we can put this affair behind us. It is just a minor incident when one thinks of the great matters that this Government have decided and must decide in the future.

I know that I speak for every Conservative Member when I say to the Prime Minister that, having cleared this matter, she should get on with more important issues, not least a consideration of the way in which we now discuss what happens to Westland. As she reminded us in her speech today, that has not gone away. I hope that we can define the national interest in this matter without interfering with the rights of the shareholders and the board to make up their minds at the end of the day. There is a national interest in the matter and it is for us to try to define it because, after all, that is the job of Government. I hope that the Select Committee on Defence, which is considering the matter, will take evidence from all parts of industry and politics to try to come to a united conclusion as to where that national interest lies.

It is always unfortunate when mistakes are made. It is always best to come clean about them. My right hon. Friend has done that in full measure today. The Government may have suffered because of what has happened during the past two or three weeks, but it is a temporary setback. We must pick ourselves up and dust ourselves down, because there is a job to be done. I know that we shall be united behind our Cabinet in doing that job.

5.52 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): No one will know what happened until the memoirs are written, but Bernard Ingham was my press officer for some time and I know a little bit about him. He is a very tough customer, but he would never dare to agree to betray a Cabinet Minister without the authority of the Prime Minister. I do not believe for one moment the account given by the Prime Minister that Bernard Ingham and Mr. Powell assented to the wishes of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry —*[Interruption.]* I do not believe for one moment the account that has been given. What happened was that the Prime Minister used some powerful words—"who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"—and the rest was done by the civil servants to rid her of the Secretary of State for Defence.

I have found it hard to believe the Prime Minister since my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised the Belgrano question, so today is not the first time

[Mr. Tony Benn]

that doubts about her trustworthiness have crossed my mind. But the debate will be wasted if we do not understand the lessons that may be drawn from it.

First, why did the Government lose two senior Cabinet Ministers over this matter? We are at least entitled to know that. The answer is that when Westland got into difficulty, in pursuit of their policy of non-intervention, the Government said, "We do not care what happens to Westland." They said the same about the steel, mining and manufacturing industries, so there was no surprise about it.

However—this is why the matter became a central political question—the vultures from Washington and Brussels moved in. As Minister with responsibility for aviation, I used to deal with Westland and I know of its long link with Sikorsky.

Sikorsky wanted to use Westland to expand its arms sales in Europe. The Prime Minister could not ignore that view because she was close to President Reagan and she wanted contracts for star wars. However—this is why it is a big issue, not a little issue—there is a growing feeling among western European industrialists that American domination must end. Therefore, the Prime Minister tried to withdraw from a major international industrial matter by pretending that the decision should be left to the shareholders. Of course, her idea of democracy is to hold ballots to elect trade union executives, but if employees want to ensure their future employment, they must buy their votes and become shareholders. We saw the disgusting slave market of the Albert hall, with people such as Mr. Bristow and Lord Hanson buying shares to trade the future of Westland workers. So much for the workers at Westland having any rights.

The matter became more complicated because one Minister supported the American bid and another supported the European bid. The Prime Minister deliberately used the mechanisms open only to a Prime Minister, first, to encourage legal advice and, secondly, to release that advice to destroy the Secretary of State for Defence, who left the Government. Thereafter, she had to sacrifice her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by saying that he, alone among Ministers, had authorised the leak. That is what happened. That is what people outside know to have happened. It was not simply a matter of who telephoned whom on what occasion. This was, and still is, a major industrial conflict between Europe and the United States, with Ministers taking different sides and the Prime Minister using her powers, first, to undermine one Minister and, secondly, to get another Minister—very close to her—to take the blame so that he felt he had to resign.

It was good to see those two Ministers go. The former Secretary of State for Defence led the Army against the Quakers at Molesworth, so I am pleased that he has gone. The former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, when he was responsible for the Home Department, told the police to batter the miners at Orgreave and now he has gone. The loss of those two Ministers is a plus, and it must have delighted the National Union of Mineworkers and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

However, the House must discuss other matters. The first is the Official Secrets Act. Some months ago, Sarah Tisdall, from a sense of principle, released to *The Guardian*, which did not protect her—it might be remembered that Bernard Ingham came from *The Guardian*—details of something that had happened, and she was put in prison for six months. No doubt the Prime Minister, who believes in law and order, endorsed that sentence. Clive Ponting of the Ministry of Defence was charged under the Official Secrets Act. Yet the Prime Minister retrospectively authorised—today she takes responsibility for what she pretends she did not know—a leak to undermine a colleague. There is no doubt that the purpose of the leak was to undermine the Secretary of State for Defence. That is her idea of law and order and official secrecy.

What she should have done, if the Minister had made a mistake, was to issue a public statement saying, "We have reconsidered the letter from the Secretary of State for Defence, and in some respects we believe it to be in error." She could have sent it with a motor cycle messenger to the place where the shareholders were meeting—it has been done previously—so that the shareholders would know the position. But she chose to do something different.

The incident also throws light on the lobby system and all those people sitting there in the Press Gallery—*[Interruption.]* If I am not allowed to refer to them, Mr. Speaker, that is another absurdity added to many. There are people in this Palace who go twice a day to No. 10 and get from Bernard Ingham an account of what the Prime Minister wants them to know about Government business. Then people appear on television saying, "Our political correspondent understands," but they never tell us from where the information comes. They do not understand it. That is because they got it 10 minutes before from Bernard Ingham on the instructions of the Prime Minister.

When the briefing gets a bit touchy, they appear on television or write in the papers about a grave constitutional crisis. The lobby correspondents are involved in secret arrangements with Ministers of all parties. I hope I will not be accused of being a leaker when I say publicly what has to be said. I do not leak through the Lobby. That is a vicious system, because it creates a sort of cosy conspiracy between Ministers, Shadow Ministers, civil servants and the lobby correspondents.

The third thing that the Prime Minister did was to blow up the questions of procedure that she sent to her own Ministers in 1979. I have a copy sent to me by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) in 1976. The procedure is identical from year to year. It says about consultation with the Law Officers, in paragraph 25:

> "It is essential that Law Officers should be consulted in good time before the Government are committed to critical decisions involving legal considerations. The categories of cases in which it would normally be appropriate to consult the Law Officers include the following:
>
> (1). Cases in which the legal consequences of intended action by Government might have important repercussions either in the foreign or the domestic field."

The classic case for consulting the Law Officers is contained in that paragraph.

Paragraph 23 of these instructions to Ministers reads,

> "It is important to avoid giving any indication of the manner in which the Minister has consulted his colleagues before any decision is announced."

The Prime Minister broke her own rules. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend says [illegible] are his rules, but they disappeared along with him and the Prime Minister issued

her own. As the Cabinet Secretary was my right hon. Friend's Cabinet Secretary or Lord Wilson's Cabinet Secretary, the same rules apply.

The main reason we are debating this matter is, first, because it is a major constitutional question. Because of the Official Secrets Act and the way in which the right hon. Lady treated her Cabinet but because the Government misled Parliament and the public we have had to have this debate. We are told that parliamentary democracy is what we uphold but we cannot have parliamentary democracy if Ministers do not tell the House of Commons what is happening and have to be hauled up under Standing Order No. 10.

This is an important debate. It goes well beyond whether the Prime Minister talked to Bernard Ingham, which I am sure she did. I know that other people who know Bernard Ingham will agree that he would not have so acted if he had not had the clearest instructions so to do. The debate is important because of Westland and all the other matters. The Prime Minister must be wondering why what she sees as such a small issue should have been exploded to the point where it appears to the minds of some correspondents to threaten the premiership.

The reason is that Thatcherism, which the right hon. Lady created and believes in, was a myth. People are asking whether that myth is capable of leading the Conservative party to victory at the next election. The Conservative party is looking for a new leader. Members on the Government side will go into the Lobby tonight and the resigned Secretaries of State will be rubbing shoulders with the Prime Minister. The reality of the matter is that they are looking for a new—*[Interruption.]*—leader.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Benn: If British politics moves sharply to the Right, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) would be the obvious candidate. This style of Government, the approach to industry that says it does not matter whether our helicopter company continues any more than it matters whether we have a steel industry or an engineering industry, combined with a contempt for Cabinet government, parliamentary government and truth, has brought the Prime Minister to the point where her days are numbered. If the Conservative party does not deal with the matter, the electorate will put my right hon. Friends in charge.

6.5 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): That is one of the most disgraceful speeches that I have ever heard, even from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). In addition, the right hon. Gentleman has spoken for so long, despite your injunction, Mr. Speaker, that I have had to cast aside a point a minute and shall confine myself to two aspects about which I must say a word.

This House must deplore and condemn the cowardly attempts that have been made to implicate the Solicitor-General in any—*[Interruption.]* I was glad that the right hon. Gentleman ultimately accepted the assurance given to him, and I hope that other hon. Members will do the same. The House must realise how fiercely proud of our impartiality are all of us who have held that great office, and how important that is to the life of our Parliament. There is not the least trace of impropriety or breach of those standards by the present holder of that office.

We have heard from the Leader and the deputy Leader of the Opposition a torrent of cant and hyprocisy. Only marginally less nauseating was the contribution on behalf of the alliance. But it was all counter-productive because what must now be as clear as a pikestaff is that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stands head and shoulders above all of her critics in courage, loyalty and integrity. If those critics believe that in this way they are going to drive her and us out of office, they have sadly misjudged the lady, her Back-Bench supporters and the great majority of people in the country.

Now can we not get on with the job? Speaking both for myself and for all those who would have liked to have the chance to say it in this debate, may I say to the Prime Minister, "Thank you for your courage, loyalty and integrity with which you set the lead for us all." *[Interruption.]* Of course the Opposition do not like to hear that. With that lead we can and we will beat not only the Opposition but the other, and real, problems that beset the country we love.

6.7 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): The word will be going out from those who conduct press affairs for the Government that matters have been answered and cleared up today, and that the House of Commons and the British public can put this matter safely behind them in the confident reassurance that, perhaps at long last, the Prime Minister has come clean with the House and with the public. Let us examine what the Prime Minister told us today. It was not a great deal. First of all, she told us that the first she discovered of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's behaviour in the matter was at the end of the inquiry. Secondly, she told us that some hours after the leak she was told in general terms of her office's involvement. Thirdly, she told us how the inquiry came to be instituted.

I cannot see how the addition of these small pieces of information, interesting though they are, changes the situation from last Thursday, when the Prime Minister was floundering in her inability to answer these questions. Now, suddenly, we are told that it has all been cleared up. It has not all been cleared up and the question that will be asked again and again is a very simple one. It is: before the Prime Minister decided to institute the bogus inquiry into the leak—bogus is what we now know it was—did she know about any of the involvement of her Ministers and her officials?

I have to concede that we have received a partial answer to one leg of that question, because she said that she did not know about the involvement of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That is a little curious, because he says, and the Prime Minister said when she made a statement about this matter the other day, that he telephoned her or caused his officials to communicate with No. 10 on the basis that, subject to the agreement of No. 10, certain action was to be taken. It is odd that that was there and signalled from the beginning apparently, yet the Prime Minister says that she did not know of his involvement until after this laborious inquiry had been completed.

But let that matter stand. What we do not know is whether the right hon. Lady knew from her officials of their involvement in the leak before the setting up of the inquiry. That question simply has not been answered. It will be asked, and it will be asked, and it will be asked

[Mr. John Smith]

again until it is answered. The question is not an idle one. It is not one of a small matter of the mismanagement of government; an unfortunate leak, a slip, something that arose out of an unfortunate, but genuine, misunderstanding, as we are told.

Let me remind the House what the Solicitor-General wrote to the former Secretary of State for Defence in the letter which has become available only today, having been declassified and put in the Library before the debate started. In the penultimate paragraph, the Solicitor-General, writing to the former Secretary of State for Defence the day after the leak occurred, said:

"On a different aspect of this matter. I want to express my dismay that a letter containing confidential legal advice from a Law Officer to one of his colleagues should have been leaked, and apparently leaked moreover in a highly selective way. Quite apart from the breach of confidentiality that is involved, the rule is very clearly established that even the fact that the Law Officers have tendered advice in a particular case may not be disclosed without their consent, let alone the content of such advice. It is plain that in this instance this important rule was immediately and flagrantly violated."

So let us get to the situation on 7 January, when the Solicitor-General knows that a flagrant violation has occurred. This is the time when the Prime Minister has been told in general terms of her office's involvement. She certainly must have known that there was a leak. It was on the front page of *The Times*, *The Sun*, *the Daily Mail* and I think that it got into *The London Standard* on that very day. In lurid headlines, the *Daily Mail* says:

"The great Cabinet shambles. Open war as Ministers attack Heseltine".

The Times said:

"Heseltine told by law chief: Stick to the facts".

The article goes on in that vein. *The Sun*, true to form, had a simple headline:

"You liar".

That was all happening on 7 January.

The Solicitor-General tells us that it is quite clear that a flagrant violation has occurred. I assume that the Prime Minister knew of the rule about Law Officers. But what was her reaction to that? Did she have people in and say, "A flagrant violation has occurred. I am not putting up with it in this Government which I run and I want to find out what went on."?

Nothing happened from the Prime Minister until the Attorney-General stirred himself, realising that a flagrant violation had occurred. He did not go to the Prime Minister apparently, which is very strange, but to the head of the Civil Service. Perhaps he thought that he would get a more sympathetic response there than going to the Prime Minister, and be able to get his complaint out before he received his letter of dismissal perhaps. However, he goes to the head of the Civil Service and within minutes the Prime Minister—three days later—on 10 January says, "I readily admit that I gave my authority for an inquiry to commence." The question must be: why did it take the Attorney-General and the head of the Civil Service to remind the Prime Minister of her constitutional responsibility? Why did she remain inactive? That is charge number one.

Charge number two is: is it really true that the Prime Minister knew nothing about the activities of her civil servants in No. 10? In that regard, Mr. Speaker, let me remind you of something which happened this very afternoon. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) rose in his place and put a question to the Prime Minister. He referred to a question at column 455 of *Hansard* of 23 January put by the chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Woking, (Mr. Onslow), to the Prime Minister. I hope that the House will forgive me if I quote the question and answer, because it is of profound importance.

The hon. Gentleman said:

"My right hon. Friend will be aware that many right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, like the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), are not really interested in listening to the facts of the full account given by my right hon. Friend. What view does my right hon. Friend think that the House might have taken of any Minister in any Government placed in such an invidious situation by the action of a colleague who had failed in his duty to ensure that correct information was made public as soon as possible?"

That is clearly referring to the conveying of the information suggesting that it was necessary for a Minister to make sure that that information was communicated. There can hardly be any doubt about that. Nor was there any doubt apparently in the Prime Minister's mind as to the meaning of the question, because she replied:

"Yes, Mr. Speaker, it would have been much easier, as the facts were commercially sensitive, if the relevant letters had been cleared as mine was with the Solicitor-General. It was vital to have accurate information in the public domain because we knew that judgments might be founded upon that and that the Government could be liable if wrong judgments were made as a result of misleading information. It was to get that accurate information to the public domain that I gave my consent."—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 455.]

Why did the Prime Minister tell us last Thursday that she gave her consent to the leaking of the letter into the public domain? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

The Prime Minister: I shall gladly reply to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I was quite content that I had given a whole account in the statement, cleared in every single detail, and the account in the statement was absolutely accurate.

Mr. Smith: I know that the Prime Minister's statement was gone over with a toothcomb. The one she read out here is full of all the weasel words such as "it became accepted as a matter of duty" and "cover" instead of "authority" —all those curious words that have been fashioned and honed after many hours of consultation to get them right.

The Prime Minister was OK when she was on the statement, but the question took her slightly outwith the range of the statement. The question could not have been clearer and she said, "I gave my consent." Today, when she was asked about it by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, we all heard her say: "When I said consent, I meant consent to the inquiry." I must say that I felt something had gone wrong there, and I immediately checked in *Hansard*. It is obvious for everyone to see that the Prime Minister did not mean that. So she either gave us the wrong answer then or a wrong answer today. Which one was it? On the record in *Hansard* the Prime Minister admits that she gave her consent to the leaking of the information. Until she publicly corrects that account and answers the particular allegation that I have made, the question will remain unanswered.

The Prime Minister: I did not give my consent to the leaking of the information. May I make that quite, quite clear?

Mr. Smith: If we are to accept the Prime Minister's statement that she did not give her consent, she was

remarkably foolish to say so when she answered the question to the House. It takes me back to my days in the criminal courts. When some people gave unfortunate answers when required to do so about their activities they did not always get such an understanding response. "I made a mistake," said the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister make a mistake? That is one of the unanswered questions, and there are more.

What is worrying people who care about good government in Britain is that this is typical of this Administration. I am sorry to say that there is no surprise throughout Britain at the evasions, denials and all the wrong goings-on of recent weeks and months. There is no surprise that things should happen in this way, because the standards of good government in Britain have been steadily deteriorating under the Prime Minister and her Ministers. That is why it appears to be enough to come to the House of Commons and get cheers from the ruling party for saying that matters should have been handled in a different way. Handled? Why cannot the Prime Minister say, "It was wrong. It should not have happened and I am taking steps to make sure that it does not happen again."? No, it is all a matter of handling. It is a matter of manipulation and presentation.

I hope that the time will come soon in this House of Commons when Ministers, including the Prime Minister, when asked straight questions will give honest answers; when we will have a Government in whose competence, as well as in whose integrity, we can have confidence.

The problem is this: if we accept the explanation that has been given to us, it is a sorry tale of woeful incompetence. If we cannot accept it, the whole integrity of this Administration is suspect.

This matter, I am sorry to tell the Government, simply will not go away, despite the attempts by Conservative Members, carefully planned throughout this day and carefully planned in advance, to disrupt the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. The Conservative party's tenacious defence of power is ruthless and absolute. Unfortunately for them, they have been found out and are being found out daily by the public.

6.20 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The knowledge that a debate is to arise on a motion for the Adjournment is frequently a matter for regret and some disparagement, but this afternoon has demonstrated that a debate on the motion for the Adjournment, shot through with passion and arguments of principle, can put the House in the best possible light.

I say that in respect of the whole range of speeches, including that by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). It is not difficult to flatter the right hon. and learned Gentleman; it is more difficult to flatter some of those sitting behind him.

The House has very properly considered the matter in the forum of this Chamber, but my hon. Friend the Member for Hamphsire, East (Mr. Mates) has reminded us that departmental Select Committees are also investigating the wide range of issues that have been debated and which, I have no doubt, will continue to be matters of parliamentary interest.

I want to draw the attention of my hon. Friend and of the House to three aspects of this afternoon's debate. One concerns, in a very real sense, tragedy; another is the major lesson for Parliament and for the Treasury Bench; and finally I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends to a dire political warning implicit in what is now being argued.

First, as far as the point of tragedy is concerned, the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have drawn attention to the continuing shadows over the future of Westland—a future which cannot be assisted by the current political difficulties and a future which we must all hope will shortly be resolved.

It is particularly in terms of tragedy that I and many of my colleagues feel deeply the loss of two colleagues over this issue — my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) paid a very warm tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks, which I thoroughly underline. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley has given the clearest possible indication that he returns — *[Interruption.]* — to the fray with tremendous enthusiasm. *[Interruption.]* The nervous laughter on the Opposition Benches shows how much they will be frustrated in their hope that they were to see some form of civil war within the Tory party over this matter. My right hon. Friend's speech this afternoon indicates that for the Government Benches and the Conservative party, this is no parliamentary Dunkirk, but rather a parliamentary Alamein. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Skinner: Where are the Desert Rats?

Mr. Biffen: When I look at the hamster from Bolsover —*[Interruption.]*

I turn to the most central and serious issue of this whole unhappy business — the need for effective collective responsibility. The situation outlined by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Whitelaw in another place on 23 January was an accurate and perceptive description of recent months. I would judge that it is the hallmark of good government that it should be defined and realistic in its ambition, but effective in its operation.

The doctrine of collective responsibility has been followed by successive Administrations, with the cumulative wisdoms that come over the ages and over the Parliaments, because of the necessity for strong and secure Government to operate within that discipline. Hence, despite what may be a certain amount of modish criticism —*[Interruption.]*. Oh, yes. If hon. Members wish to dispute what I am going to say, we shall be happy to have their dissent on record. For I want to assert that the operation of the 30-year rule and the operation of strict confidentiality applied to Government papers are integral to the operation of collective responsibility *[Interruption.]* So central has this been to good government that, when Governments have from time to time been obliged to digress from the doctrine of collective responsibility, it has been done on a formal basis and on terms where the breach was acknowledged to cover but a limited period.

I have particularly in mind—I say this for the benefit of the Opposition Benches below the Gangway—the Liberals who sat in the Government of 1932 and were allowed licensed dissent on the issue of free trade and, more within the recollection of the House, the European Community referendum arrangements of which the right

[Mr. Biffen]

hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) took advantage when seven Cabinet Ministers were entitled to argue their dissent within licence.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman made a special reference to reasserting the 30-year rule—after we have seen the 30-second rule applied. Is he actually laying claim to a reassertion by the Government, after what has happened, that these matters cannot be properly examined for 30 years? In particular, is he denying the right of privilege to expose them? I quoted from that procedure and laid it on the Table. It is now in the public domain, and I want that to be clear.

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman has got his publicity. I was asserting the desirability of the 30-year rule in the light of a great deal of opposition that there now is to the effectiveness of the 30-year rule. I was saying that a 30-year rule or something very much like it is important for the maintenance of the doctrine of collective responsibility.

Finally, the informal breach of collective responsibility is that which gives rise to the greatest difficulty for contemporary Governments. No one is a better demonstration of that than the right hon. Member for Chesterfield who, in the mid-1970s, pursued a highly individualistic form of existence within a Government and, in my belief, weakened that Government, subverted loyalty to his colleagues and, on the whole, was a gift to his opponents.

As politics is or should be, at least in part, about learning from experience, I say that this Treasury Bench has learnt from the bruising experiences of the past weeks. If Opposition Members were at all wise, they would also learn.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon) *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: No. I am going to proceed to the third point that I wish to make, which is a warning to my right hon. and hon. Friends about the nature of this afternoon's debate and what I believe it implies in political terms.

It has been a major political assault. It has not been an assault designed as a relentless search for truth. The disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter, which certainly is an incident which contains errors enough, has been mentioned from the Government Benches, not least by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but nonetheless it has been subject to critical comment elevated out of all proportion. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) properly assessed the situation in his intervention at Question Time on 23 January when he referred to "hypocrisy", "humbug" and "cant."

First, on the issue of the disclosure. The disclosure was undertaken in terms which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has deprecated. We all admit that we judge that matters could have gone better, but to turn this into some kind of moral crusade is simply to totally disregard what happens in the world about us.

If we want to know we need only look to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, without whose existence this speech would be the sadder, when he wrote "Arguments for Socialism," in which he set out in a fair way the operation of disclosure. He repeated some of it for us this afternoon.

Mr. John Morris: Give way.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Lord Privy Seal is not giving way.

Mr. Biffen: Both the Crossman and Castle diaries are textbooks of the practice, and that has been referred to again and again by my hon. Friends. *[Interruption.]* I can tell the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)——

Mr. John Morris: May I ask the Leader of the House two simple questions? Did the Prime Minister canvass her advisers or any Minister before she requested through her office the Solicitor-General to write his letter or to put that letter into the public domain? Secondly, when she set up the inquiry, did she know that it was an official leak? Did she know the salient facts?

Mr. Biffen: Those points have been dealt with by the Prime Minister. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The fact that they are being put again and again shows the prejudiced approach by the Opposition. It is an approach symbolised in the language of the Leader of the Opposition in his speech this afternoon, when he said that the Prime Minister was on trial. That is the language of someone whose idea of a trial in the House of Commons is the ethics of the kangaroo court.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made a reasoned exposition both in the circumstances of the Solicitor-General's letter and of the leak inquiry. It is an exposition which appeals to any fair-minded judgment in the House. We have gone through an episode implying sadness and regret. There is certainly no question whatsoever of implying any shame. The Opposition now show an opportunism possessed only by those hungry for office. Such an appetite bodes ill for the nation and I ask my hon. Friends to reject the argument and the votes of the Opposition.

Question put, That this House do now adjourn:
The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 379.

Division No. 60] **[6.34 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bruce, Malcolm
Alton, David	Buchan, Norman
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Caborn, Richard
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Ashton, Joe	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Campbell, Ian
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Canavan, Dennis
Barnett, Guy	Carlile, Alexander *(Monig'y)*
Barron, Kevin	Cartwright, John
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Bell, Stuart	Clarke, Thomas
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clay, Robert
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Cleiland, David Gordon
Bermingham, Gerald	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Blair, Anthony	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Cohen, Harry
Boyes, Roland	Coleman, Donald
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Conlan, Bernard
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*

Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds, E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*

Hawkins, Sir Paul (N'folk SW)
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heyhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holland, Sir Philip (Gedling)
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. (G'ldford)
Howell, Ralph (Norfolk N)
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger (B'ham N'field)
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth (Stam'd)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew (Berkshire)
MacKay, John (Argyll & Bute)
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. (N'bury)
McNair-Wilson, P. (New F'st)
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Mills, Iain (Meriden)
Mills, Sir Peter (West Devon)
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David (Hants NW)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. (N'hampton, S)
Morrison, Hon C. (Devizes)
Morrison, Hon P. (Chester)
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John (Harrow W)
Page, Richard (Herts SW)
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher (Bath)
Patten, J. (Oxf W & Abdgn)
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter (Dover)
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Robinson, Mark (N'port W)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shelton, William (Streatham)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim (Dorset W)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Andrew (Sherwood)
Stewart, Ian (Hert'dshire N)
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John (Solihull)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald (Calder V)
Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Thorne, Neil (Ilford S)
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (T'side N)
Walker, Rt Hon P. (W'caster)
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen (Hertford)
Wells, Sir John (Maidstone)
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Airports Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the leader of the Liberal party.

6.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill fulfils the commitment to legislate that we made in the airports policy White Paper which was published last June and which the House then welcomed. It establishes a framework for the structure, ownership, operation and regulation of the United Kingdom's airports for the rest of this century and beyond.

The structure and ownership of airports has changed and evolved as necessary to meet the demands of the civil air transport industry which, over the past 50 years, has grown rapidly and become one of the most successful and dynamic sectors of the economy. I shall not go into the history of airports; I shall start with the 1961 White Paper "Civil Aerodromes and Air Navigational Services" which proposed the decentralisation of airport ownership. The principal airports serving London and Scotland — Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Prestwick — were to be transferred to an airports authority while local ownership and control were to be further extended to a number of airports primarily serving local needs. Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen airports were later added to the four originally transferred to the British Airports Authority. Apart from this, the White Paper set the pattern of ownership that has existed to the present day.

The airports industry is now a mature and, in many cases, expanding and highly profitable sector of the economy. It is high time that we changed the regime under which it operates to liberate management from the constraints of public ownership. Our objective must be to remove the burden of political interference and state control so that airports, airlines and their customers can reap the benefits. The record of the 20 or so companies privatised since 1979 has proven the advantages of private ownership beyond doubt. We intend to add airports to that success story.

Part I of the Bill provides the powers to enable the privatisation of the British Airports Authority; it vests the industry's assets in a successor company as the first step towards privatisation. Clause 1 provides powers to require the BAA to be restructured while it is still a nationalised industry and before its assets are transferred to a successor company. The Bill does not specify how the BAA is to be restructured and offered for sale, but I want to tell the House what our intentions are in that respect.

We intend to privatise the BAA as a whole. Some of my hon. Friends think that each of the BAA's seven airports should be privatised separately. I, too, found that idea initially attractive. I believe in maximum competition. That, indeed, is one of the serious criticisms under which I labour. But I examined the structure of the airports industry in detail and I was forced to conclude that splitting up the airports would bring no real advantages since it would be impossible to see any practical way to create effective competition between the individual BAA airports in a system.

Not only would it be impossible to create competition, but there would be some important disadvantages. The Select Committee on Transport in its report on July 1984 and the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in its subsequent report on airports in January 1985, took the same view. Where we have more than one airport in a system serving one area, they cannot effectively compete on price. Airlines will always seek to maximise their revenue by concentrating services at the most favoured airport. The economic benefits to airlines of such concentration are far greater than any direct competition between airports on airport charges could hope to match. Airport charges are, on average, only 3·5 per cent. of an international scheduled airline's costs. Our international obligations prevent airlines from raising charges to a level which would reflect the true value of access to the most favoured airports and thus preclude effective price competition.

Airports within a system cannot compete effectively on the facilities they offer — particularly in the south-east, where Heathrow and Gatwick are nearing the limits of their capacity and the scope for further development is strictly limited. If the airports were privatised separately, so that the BAA could not use Stansted to take the overflow from Heathrow and Gatwick and to enable new services to develop, the consequences for airline passengers and for airline competition would be disastrous. The tendency of any airport with little scope for expansion would be to maximise the profitability of the capacity it had, by encouraging more profitable traffic in the form of larger aircraft, and squeezing out airlines using smaller aircraft — in particular, domestic ad feeder services.

To correct this, the Government would have to take a strongly interventionist role to direct traffic to which airport it could use, thus effectively holding in their hands the prospects of profitability or otherwise of each airport. That entirely frustrates the concept of equal, fair competing units. It makes the case for privatisation of the BAA as a whole. I am sure it is right to restructure the BAA into seven separate subsidiary companies under a holding company.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The other side of the argument surely is that if the airports were denationalised separately, the most successful airport would expand to its full capacity, whereas, under the present arrangements, and if the BAA is denationalised as a whole, that incentive to maximise the efficiency and productivity of one unit will be sacrificed.

Mr. Ridley: First, Heathrow and Gatwick are close to their capacity. In a few years' time, I do not believe there will be room for any more services into those airports.

Secondly, the effect of privatising Heathrow and Gatwick separately would be that the managers of the airport would seek to exclude all the less profitable traffic. We should find that domestic and feeder routes were being excluded from the airport which Londoners believe is the one nearest to them and the one to which people from other parts of the country feel that they should have access when they visit London. Those would be undesirable results.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend mentioned the expansion of Heathrow. When

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

the airport is privatised, will there be anything to prevent it from being enlarged and the number of flights increased? Will the Secretary of State have any control over the number of flights? What will happen about Perry Oaks?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not go into the subject of Perry Oaks at length. It hardly arises under the Bill. The problems of Perry Oaks and whether it can be moved are being studied by the Thames water authority and the BAA. If there is a report, it will be made available. The problems there are great.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose——*

Mr. Ridley: May I just finish my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn)?

My hon. Friend asked about powers to control flights into Heathrow. The number of flights is limited by its physical capacity. We have no intention of allowing greatly different hours during the day or night. Moreover, if in the future it is felt desirable—I am not proposing this—the Bill contains powers which would enable an air transport movement limit to be imposed on Heathrow. I repeat that I have no present plans to do that.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) raised a serious point. People in many constituencies around Heathrow are worried about the environment and protection from aircraft noise. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's policy to protect the environment remains as stated in his White Paper last June? In particular, will he confirm that the Government do not intend to do anything which will increase the number of night flights allowed?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that the section in the White Paper on the environment will applies. The points do not feature in the Bill because environmental considerations are taken care of in the Civil Aviation Act 1982. Arrangements for banning night flights are contained in that Act. The powers will remain. My hon. Friend is probably aware that a review of present night flight restrictions is taking place. When I receive the report from the consultants, it will be made public, and he may submit any views that he has on that report. That activity is taking place separately; it has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Secretary of State justifies denationalisation as a whole on the ground that it would be better and would prevent the owner of, for example, Heathrow freezing out less profitable flights. Whichever way the denationalisation is carried out, surely there is the shrine called market forces at which, I understand, the right hon. Gentleman worships. Market forces being what they are, is there not a grave danger that the present flights from Newcastle into Heathrow could be squeezed out to Stansted or Gatwick?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should listen to what I say. I said that it was important that we should not allow that to happen. That was one of the main reasons why it would not make good sense to privatise the airports separately. If the House, as I believe it does, wishes to have some control over traffic movement at the various airports. He will find that that philosophy is firmly contained in the White Paper, the Bill and what I am saying. I do not know why he thinks that I should worship at the shrine of free market forces when we are discussing which aircraft should land at which airport. A public interest is involved, which I intend to maintain.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As the Secretary of State knows, I am a great supporter of the Bill and would like to assist him if I can. Does he agree that we should get the most out of the existing system and that the national air traffic control services may well have more capacity than is presently being heard about? Is he aware that the Ministry of Defence is holding 30 per cent. of the air transport movements in and out of Gatwick and Heathrow and that that is preventing the natural expansion of more and quieter planes into Heathrow and Gatwick? The Secretary of State need not assume more centralised control of the movement of planes if he managed to have an inquiry into the operation of NATCS and how the Ministry of Defence is preventing the natural growth of Heathrow and Gatwick.

Mr. Ridley: I must leave such technical considerations to the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority because safety is involved. I am adamant that safety shall be the responsibility of the CAA and shall be paramount in the matter. I would not suggest that the House would wish to go beyond what the CAA believes to be the maximum technical number of flights landing at any airport at the present time.

I understand that the BAA may suggest an intermediate Scottish holding company to co-ordinate the management of the Scottish airports. Privatisation will open the door to a new future which will provide incentives for management in an increasingly commercial and competitive world. It will innovate, increase efficiency and provide the services that the customers want, at the right price and of the right quality. The offer of shares to employees will give them real involvement in their airport's performance and a stake in its future. I am confident that this is the way to provide better services for the airlines and for their customers. I am confident, having read the Leader of the Opposition's views on this, and despite what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) is presumably about to say, that the Opposition really agree and that this will not be a matter to which they will wish to return if ever they had the opportunity to do so.

I recognise that the BAA will continue to have a near-monopoly position in the private sector. But customer preference is such that, even if the airports were privatised separately, Heathrow would enjoy a near-monopoly position. Accordingly, the Bill provides for a tough regulatory system that will protect airlines and their passengers and airport competitors from abuses of any airport's monopoly position. I shall come to that later.

These thoughts apply equally to the major local authority airports. Over the past few years, traffic at regional airports has grown at similar rates, and at some airports at higher rates than the BAA's airports. The main regional airports are substantial businesses and they, too, should operate in a proper commercial environment. Part II of the Bill provides for the major local authority airports to be released into the commercial world in which they belong.

The Bill will enable me to require major local authority airports—those with a turnover of over £1 million—to

be reconstituted as public limited companies. They will continue to be wholly owned by the relevant local authorities. Clauses 12, 13 and 14 of the Bill provide the necessary powers. I would like to see local authorities introduce private capital into their airport companies, but I do not intend to oblige them to do so. I know that that disappoints some of my hon. Friends, particularly those from the north-west; but I ask them whether it would be right to compel local authorities to privatise. I hesitate to suggest support from the Labour party on this. It would create a dangerous precedent.

I hope instead that local authorities will come to see the advantages of privatisation. The Bill makes that possible, and clause 24 will prevent local authorities from placing restrictions on the disposal of shares.

The Bill also ensures that there is a proper arms length relationship between the new airport companies and their parent authorities so that airport companies will have proper commercial freedom. It provides for the boards of the airport companies to include full-time airport executives, and not simply to consist of local councillors. It limits the services that local authorities can provide to airport companies, and such services as may be provided will have to be at commercial rates. The Government believe that airport companies should be free to buy in services by competition in the best interests of the company. The directors of the airport company will have a duty under the Companies Acts to act in the best interests of the company, which may not necessarily coincide with the interests of their own local authority. I think that that is an important change which will lead to greater efficiency.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does my right hon. Friend consider that a municipal airport controlled by a local authority and subject to political control will be able to operate and compete fairly with the privatised airports of the south-east?

Mr. Ridley: I think that is doubtful. I agree with my hon. Friend, but it seems that that extremely pertinent and thrusting question should be addressed to local authorities rather than to me. I was in Luton today and made the same suggestion to the council there. I am sure that it is right to convince them of that rather than to use powers to force them.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): We were pleased to see the Secretary of State in Luton today. Will he confirm that any councillors who might be elected to any privatised board will still be able to carry out their full council duties and be able to report on their activities to the council?

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I am not an expert on local authority rules, but I am sure that a councillor can be a director of an airport company. It might be, if there were some planning application from the airport, that the councillor would not be able to vote or be present on a matter where there is an inter-reaction between the two. However, in principle my hon. Friend is right.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend consider that, since the ownership of the company is with the shareholders, the substitution of the local authority as shareholders for the present public ownership is no privatisation at all? It will give little satisfaction to people such as those in my area in the east midlands, who would like to see their airport privatised.

Mr. Ridley: I absolutely agree. I made it clear that we are not privatising local authority airports. We are making it easy for them to privatise if they see the advantages —as my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) and I clearly do.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): In answer to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), is it not the case that the Bill makes it clear that no paid director or any employee of the plc can be a member of or elected to the local authority? Does it also not make it clear that an unpaid director may be a member of the local authority but may not speak or vote in any of the proceedings relating to the airport, except by committing a criminal offence?

Mr. Ridley: That is right. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North asked whether a councillor could be a director of a privatised airport. That would be totally different.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The Secretary of State says he is not privatising.

Mr. Ridley: We are not privatising. The hon. Gentleman is thicker than usual tonight. Let me explain it for the benefit of the extremely thick hon. Gentleman.

The Bill allows for airports to be made into plcs. If they remain in the public sector, owned by the local authority, what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said applies. If a local authority sells its shares, the airport becomes privately owned. Even the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) must understand that. In that case, when the airport is privatised, my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North applies.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Over 51 per cent.

Mr. Ridley: Over 51 per cent.

As companies, major local authority airports will be required to produce and publish Companies Act accounts —a discipline which in itself will foster a more commercial and businesslike approach. The Bill also extends that businesslike approach to investment. Investments financed from an airport's undistributed surplus will no longer come within the capital control system and will no longer need Government approval. Investment financed from external sources will, of course, remain subject to the Government's capital expenditure controls whilst the company remains within the public sector. If, however, the local authority concerned chooses to privatise an airport, the investment will be free of those controls.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Following his extraordinary reply to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) about airports under local authority control, may I ask whether the Secretary of State is aware that Manchester international airport has always been under local authority control? Is he further aware that it has competed with great success against other airports, not least subsidised Stansted?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman must also consider whether the airport might have done better if it had been under private enterprise management. Those airport companies are now major concerns and the interests of the companies must take precedence over the interests of the council. That is a matter to be determined

[Mr. Ridley]

locally, in each case, but the advantages of going into the private sector are clear. The disadvantages are beginning to come out from what I have been saying, including the point about capital control, which the right hon. Gentleman may have noticed.

The major airports, as near-monopolies, will be regulated in the future. Part IV of the Bill gives the Civil Aviation Authority powers to regulate airport charges and trading practices.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Before my right hon. Friend flouts on to part IV, may I ask whether he has anything to say about part III? Many promises have been given about the consultation with airlines and airport authorities that my right hon. Friend envisages. Is there any possibility of the creation of a more formal consultation procedure? Many people are worried that, with all the offers of informal consultation, there seems to be no end point. Will my right hon. Friend take that matter on board? Can we reconsider the matter in Committee and create a more formal consultation procedure under part III?

Mr. Ridley: I have to disappoint my hon. Friend. I shall come to part III at the end of my speech. I do not believe that the difference between formal and informal consultations is as important as the consultations themselves. However, if my hon. Friend has a problem with that, I shall be only too happy to see whether we can meet him in Committee or in any other manner.

Part IV of the Bill gives the CAA powers to regulate airport charges and trading practices. That is a natural extension of its existing role as regulator of civil air transport and airports for safety purposes. All airport activities will be subject to normal competition law. The CAA will exercise more specific regulatory functions over airport charges and core airport activities that are essential for the use of an airport for air transport, such as operating runways, aircraft servicing facilities and passenger and baggage handling facilities. Clauses 34 and 35 require operators of airports to obtain and retain the CAA's permission to levy airport charges, and the CAA will be able to attach conditions to any permission.

There will be two tiers of regulation. Airports with a turnover of over £1 million will automatically be subject to the first tier. The second tier will apply to the largest airports that enjoy a substantial amount of national or local monopoly. Those second-tier airports will be designated by order. At all airports, the CAA will have the power to impose the conditions described in clause 38—to require proper and separate accounts, to prevent or remedy any discriminatory charges or trading practices or abuse of a monopoly position, and to prevent predatory pricing. Clause 37 makes special additional provision for designated second-tier airports.

Mr. Favell: On this very important point, will my right hon. Friend state whether Stansted comes under the first or second tier? If my right hon. Friend remembers the debate on Stansted, he will realise that it is immensely important for regional airports to know whether Stansted will be subject to maximum supervision. Will he give an assurance tonight that Stansted will be subject to the maximum supervision?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, indeed. Stansted will be in the second tier and will be subject to further measures that I shall come to later.

No firm decisions have yet been taken, but it is my intention to designate at least the BAA's south-east airports, which include Stansted, and Manchester. At those airports, the CAA will have a duty to regulate airport charges through a price formula and to require transparency of accounts. Every five years, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will carry out an investigation of a designated airport's business. It will make recommendations on any practices found to be against the public interest and also recommend what limit should apply to airport charges over the following five years.

We are the first country to privatise airports and therefore the first to set up a regulatory regime. I believe that it strikes the right balance between the need to ensure that airport companies can flourish within the private sector and the need for a fair deal for the customer. The CAA's new duties in clause 36 reflect that balance.

The Bill makes provision in part III for the regulation of airport use. We have to accept that airlines and airports do not operate in an entirely free market. International services are governed by international agreements between Governments within the framework of international conventions. The powers of direction in clause 27 are needed primarily to ensure that airports comply with the United Kingdom's international obligations — for example, in respect of landing charges. The other three provisions of part III deal respectively with traffic distribution rules, limits on air transport movements and slot allocation schemes. They recognise the limitations on airport capacity and merely acknowledge the Government's responsibility to ensure that powers exist for using that limited capacity in the most effective way.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): My right hon. Friend said that the reason why he could not privatise the BAA as separate airports was to safeguard access from regional airports. Why can he not impose the necessary regulation under the powers that he is now describing, to protect regional airports, while privatising the BAA as separate airports?

Mr. Ridley: The traffic distribution powers, to which I shall refer, would not enable a positive policy to be applied, which I believe to be important in relation to domestic flights. We would be able to suggest a negative policy for containing excess demand. That is the point of all three measures. When Heathrow and Gatwick reach capacity, something must be done about that. One cannot just have more aircraft—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is the market."] If the market is allowed to do that, the domestic flights will have to go elsewhere.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): The logic of my right hon. Friend's argument is clear. In those circumstances, the market will dictate what happens. If airlines find that they cannot get the slot or the access to Heathrow, of their own volition they will move to Gatwick or Stansted. The Government are imposing something that takes the market away from its natural method.

Mr. Ridley: It is not a natural market, because Heathrow is the most attractive and is close to London, Gatwick is next and Stansted is third. The attraction of

Heathrow is so enormous that the pressures to get into it have always been the dominant factor. We have to take powers to ensure that there is public control over that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Like my right hon. Friend, I am a friend of the market. On what basis have the Government formed the view that a privately controlled Heathrow would seek to keep out the feeder services? They must realise that it is, in part, the feeder services that provide the strength of the interlining operations.

Mr. Ridley: Not only a privatised but a publicly owned Heathrow had those itchings in the past, and it has been necessary to frustrate them. That bears out what I said.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend referred to the free market. How free a market does he intend to permit in airport services? How heavy a hand is the Monopolies and Mergers Commission likely to apply to the relationship between the development of those services and what appears to be the hidden subsidy of landing fees?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will know that that is a complex matter and that there are international agreements about precisely what revenue from non-aviation enterprises may be devoted to the reduction of airport charges. Those are constrained by international obligation.

Within the aviation services, the runway, the baggage handling and the various services mentioned by my hon. Friend, the CAA will have the role of ensuring that the services are not used discriminatingly against the interests of any particular airline by charging twice as much for baggage handling for airline A as it charges for airline B. That is a necessary protection and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission can ensure that such services are provided efficiently. It would obviously be desirable for a privatised airport company to contract out such services in order to gain the maximum efficiency in performance.

First, clause 28 allows the Government to make traffic distribution rules that will set the strategic aims for the operations of airport systems within which those airports may develop. Rules may be made only after I have consulted and received advice from the CAA, which will be required to consult airport and airline operators that have an interest. I have already asked the CAA to review and advise on the current rules for traffic distribution in the London system. The CAA has undertaken a wide consultation exercise, involving airports, airlines and a range of other bodies. I expect to receive its final advice in the spring.

Secondly, clause 29 empowers me to set limits on air transport movements at airports, after consultation with the CAA, the airport operator and the airlines affected. This is not a power that can or should be used lightly, as we discovered last year. It is a tool intended to ensure that the development of our airports strikes the right balance between traffic growth and its effects on the surrounding area. I undertook last summer that in approving the development of Stansted to an eventual capacity of 15 million passengers per annum, I would seek the approval of the House to set an ATM limit which will enable the first phase of development to be limited to 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. Thereafter, increases in the ATM limit and, therefore, decisions on the appropriate rate of traffic growth at Stansted will be for Parliament to determine. I have no present intention to set ATM limits at any other airports.

Thirdly, clause 30 allows me to require the CAA to prepare schemes for allocating slots at individual airports again, in consultation with relevant airport and airline interests. I envisage no immediate need for this power to be used. The scheduling committee system is working well, but is undoubtedly coming under pressure. As airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick reach their full capacity, with demand still rising, the pressure upon slots continues to grow. There may well come a time when voluntary agreements among airlines cannot cope or begin to work in a way which is contrary to the national interest. I want this power to be in place to insure against that eventuality, but it is very much a reserve power.

The White Paper set out clearly our policy objectives for the future for the aviation industry as a whole and for airports in particular. This Bill provides for the implementation of that policy. It takes a radical step forward—one which other airports around the world are watching keenly. The Bill propels the ownership and structure of airports into a commercial and entrepreneurial future, while still providing the right degree of protection for airlines and passengers. It will bring profound and lasting benefits to airports, their customers and to the economy as a whole, thus ensuring that the United Kingdom remains a world leader in aviation. I commend it to the House.

7.26 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I begin by paying a tribute to all those involved in the British Airports Authority, management and employees alike. It was distinctly uncivil of the Secretary of State to leave that out of his speech. A fulsome tribute ought to be paid to those people who have made a contribution to providing an efficient service catering for the transport needs of the airlines and the millions of customers who pass through the airports during the year.

Not for the first time, the Secretary of State for Transport is presenting to the House a Bill that is totally irrelevant to his departmental responsibilities. The Bill cannot be justified by any transport criteria, and indeed none has been advanced today. No criticism has been made of the British Airports Authority on the grounds of efficiency, however narrowly defined, because we all know that the BAA has been consistently profitable for a number of years. The BAA has not been criticised for its failure to meet its responsibilities to the airlines or to the travelling public. The only criticism that has been made of the BAA, not today but a couple of years ago, concerned the steep increase in landing charges that took place in 1979-80. That took place purely, simply and directly as a result of the Government setting very stiff financial controls.

No international experience is being prayed in aid; in fact, the Secretary of State made a virtue of the fact that no other country in the world has proceeded along the lines he is following in relation to privatising an airport system. No other country with a comparable number of airports of such strategic importance is proceeding in the way suggested by the Secretary of State.

Although it may be a contradiction in terms, the Secretary of State is driven both by sheer naked dogma and by expediency. The dogma is that private enterprise must

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

be given the chance to get its hands on the profits at the expense of the nation. I was surprised that the Secretary of State did not mention in his speech that he is writing off about £43 million of capital debt before the company is sold. That is a nice tidy sum and a nice tidy sweetener to the prospective new owners simply to write off £43 million.

That is, of course, in keeping with the character of the Government. Almost every privatisation project has allowed for massive sums of money to be written off. That is profligacy with the public purse, as it is the taxpayer's money that is being misused. The Secretary of State should be thoroughly ashamed of himself. Of course we know that he is not. He is the archetypal example of his master's voice. The Prime Minister tells him what to do and he does it. The Prime Minister has told him that it is expedient to raise as much cash as possible for the Treasury, to build up a kitty that can be used to give tax cuts to the Prime Minister's friends. Even if the Prime Minister were to succeed in doing that — and Treasury Ministers are busily back-pedalling as fast as they can about the promised tax cuts — she will not save the Government from defeat at the next election.

The Secretary of State said a lot in his speech but on the other hand he also left a great deal out. He did not say anything about how much money he expects to realise from the sale. That is a significant omission. We know that the fixed assets have been valued precisely at £1,179·2 million and that does not translate exactly into what might be raised from the sale. How much is the Secretary of State expecting to raise — £500 million or £700 million or some other figure? We have a right to know.

We also have a right to know how much the Secretary of State's agents will get from the sale. If there are any sure winners in the privatisation process, it is the agents who handle the sale.

There are many questions that still require an answer from the Secretary of State. He sought to give some answers but none of these were very satisfactory. He has the power under clause 1 to direct the British Airports Authority to submit proposals for the organisation of the new company. He has the power to agree these with or without modification. If he wishes to modify them he can secure modifications, in the words of the Bill, as "he thinks fit".

The Secretary of State has told us that he wishes to keep the British Airports Authority together. He said that there was some proposition that the Scottish airports would be under a separate holding company. It looks as though there will be a holding company for the British airports, a subsidiary holding company for Scottish airports and seven airports all as separate subsidiaries. That raises many questions. For example, how will the Secretary of State maintain the integrity of the whole system after privatisation?

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Why should the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Aberdeen pay ticket prices based on landing charges at Prestwick, thus subsidising an enormous loss-maker? Is it not time to change the organisation of the Scottish airports so that the future viability of Prestwick and whether it should be kept as an airport can be assessed?

Mr. Hughes: No doubt the hon. Gentleman's information is reliable and put forward in good faith, but I am advised that Prestwick is not a monumental loss-maker and that its problems are not a severe drain on BAA funds. I believe that the problems of Prestwick have been grossly exaggerated. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) will wish to go into that in greater detail.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does my hon. Friend agree that for many years Prestwick subsidised the other Scottish airports until they were built up and able to make a profit?

Mr. Hughes: I accept that. We shall have to look very closely in Committee at the process of cross-subsidisation, and questions such as who is to pay for the development of Stansted will have to be asked.

Two matters relating to the conditions of sale are not mentioned at all in the Bill. First, as the Bill is drafted there is nothing to prevent shares being purchased by foreign interests which might seek to influence air traffic policy. I hope that no one will take this example as gospel, but the French have problems with Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports and might wish to take a substantial stake in the new British Airports Authority to exercise an influence and affect traffic movements. The Secretary of State will doubtless argue that under clause 27 he has powers of direction in the interests of national security and the discharging of international obligations, but I believe that it would be far better to write these matters into the Bill so that we know where we stand.

Secondly, nothing in the Bill inhibits airlines from buying a controlling share in the BAA and exercising an influence to protect their operations to the detriment of their competitors. The Secretary of State, who is taking remarkably little interest in what is going on, may be relying on references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but anyone who has had dealings with that machinery knows that it is extremely cumbersome and slow to react. Again, I believe that it would be much better to write this into the Bill, although I appreciate that there may be difficulties in defining an airport owner, as there may be all kinds of subsidiaries. Nevertheless, we must get this right and it should be done in the Bill.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): What kind of limitation on shareholding does the hon. Gentleman propose? Would it be by numbers of shares or by reference to the identity of the shareholder, or would it be some other form of control?

Mr. Hughes: I much prefer to have no foreign ownership at all and no airline shareholdings in the BAA. The latter point could be solved by limiting the proportion of shares held by airlines to below that number that would allow them to nominate a director. I give notice that we shall wish to pursue those questions in detail in Committee.

Questions of accounting will also have to be probed in detail, especially the way in which the Government intend the transparency of accounting by subsidiaries to operate. If the Secretary of State is worried about cross-subsidisation, we need a much clearer idea both from him and in the Bill as to how the accounting procedures will operate.

A year ago the Secretary of State tried to introduce a Bill giving him powers over aircraft traffic movements.

without explaining his general policy. That Bill received a Second Reading and went into a Standing Committee which, in effect, threw it out. He has now come back with another Bill which, in essence, amounts to the same thing. We have been told no more and no less than we were told 12 months ago. The Secretary of State should write his policy clearly into the Bill and tell us exactly how much parliamentary scrutiny there will be.

Since I first read the Bill I have been asking why we need it at all. Sheer dogma has been the only believable explanation so far. The Secretary of State and others who wish to pursue privatisation say that it will achieve two things. First, it will remove the financial constraints exercised through the external financing limit. Secondly, it will allow the BAA to expand its business horizons. For example, the BAA could go in for hotel and recreational developments. It is not long since the Secretary of State's predecessor compelled British Rail to sell its hotels because they were not central to its operations, so there is inconsistency and hypocrisy, if nothing else, in the present proposal.

The objectives of access to external finance and wider business horizons could both have been achieved within the public sector. I have long believed that public industry has been unnecessarily constrained and restricted in its opportunities to compete with private enterprise. The solution proposed by the Secretary of State has nothing to do with the health and competitiveness of the industry and everything to do with dogma.

The same applies to the local authority airports. For 40 years the local authorities have shown dedication and far-sightedness in developing their airports policy. They have taken wise investment decisions and the benefits to our airports system should be welcomed. Now that they are beginning to see the fruits of their endeavours they find that the millions of pounds of investment are being set up for private companies to reap the profit. The Secretary of State can be motivated only by the Government's paranoid dislike for local democracy because the private companies that the Secetary of State seeks to establish for the local authority aiports will not be treated on all fours with the BAA. If the Secretary of State wishes the local airport authorities to become private limited companies, why has he so strongly and constantly resisted the proposals of Manchester council to do just that?

The plcs set up for the local authority airports will not receive equal treatment with the BAA. Their debts will not be written off before they go into the private sector and they will not be free to operate in the same way as the BAA in relation to finance. The Secretary of State has stated that so long as majority control in terms of share ownership is with the local authority the company and the local authority will be subject to tight financial constraints and will need the Secretary of State's permission for capital spending. All this is designed to compel them to privatise their shares. The Secretary of State says that his friends will be disappointed that the authorities are not being compelled to sell their shares, but he is trying to achieve that result by subterfuge because he and his colleagues in the Government will so operate the financial aspects as to stop or stultify developements so that authorities are compelled to sell their shares.

Why has the Secretary of State chosen £1 million as the threshold for bringing airports into economic regulation and forcing the formation of plcs by local authorities? What is magic about that figure? The Secretary of State is taking powers in the Bill to revalue that figure as time goes by. Leaving aside the cost of inflation, the £1 million can change in relative importance simply by the passage of time, and even if the airports do not develop. It would have been more sensible to choose a figure based on the number of passengers using the airports. If that had been done it would have been a clear measure of how the airports were developing and whether it was necessary to bring them within the controls of the Bill. I have the impression that the Secretary of State has simply decided which authorities he wishes to deal with and has picked a number out of thin air to justify it. It is all arbitrary and we need an explanation.

The Secretary of State is not allowing the new plcs to expand their business horizons in the same way as the new British Airports Authority. What local authorities are not allowed to do now the plcs will not be able to do either. If it is good enough for private enterprise to expand into non-essential airport activities such as hotels, why is it not good enough for the plcs, with a local authority base? The Secretary of State has presented himself in the guise of a swashbuckling knight of free enterprise who will liberate public industry from the chains of state bureaucracy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] But as is so often the case — the hon. Members who make baying noises will realise this if they read the Bill—the reality is nothing like the fictional account.

In parts III and IV of the Bill the Secretary of State, clearly and without equivocation, has said that private industry cannot be trusted to run an enterprise which is vital for the transport needs of the nation. I wholly agree with him on this. In clauses 26 to 48 the Secretary of State has resurrected and imposed a labyrinthine system of controls—controls on the total volume of traffic, the type of traffic, the distribution of traffic between airports, the power effectively to control landing charges and the power, which he has retained, to control investment policy through planning procedures. There is not much room for competition and free enterprise.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. McCrindle *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way. If a Labour Government had produced legislation with such detailed control of private enterprise we would be attacked on the grounds of the tentacles of state bureaucracy reaching into every nook and cranny of the industry. Clause 58 would be cited in evidence.

Mr. McCrindle: Does it not occur to the hon. Gentleman that one of the reasons for requiring the continuation of the regulations which he effectively derides is that we are committed by international obligations to require them?

Mr. Hughes: Well, if that is the case why has the Secretary of State come before the House and pretended that he is freeing the industry from state bureaucracy? The Secretary of State has said that the Bill will liberate the British Airports Authority from the constraint of a public industry and let it loose in the private sector.

Clause 58 is an example of the control, and for greater clarity I will read it in full. Clause 58 states:

" .—(1) The Secretary of State may, in the case of any airport—

(a) give the airport operator a direction requiring him to make available for the exclusive use of designated

[Mr. Hughes]

persons using the airport such special accommodation and any associated facilities as may be specified in the direction;

(b) where it appears to the Secretary of State that the airport lacks special accommodation and associated facilities suitable for being made so available, give the airport operator a direction requiring him to take such steps as may be specified in the direction for the purpose of, or in connection with, securing the provision at the airport of such accommodation and facilities.

(2) In subsection (1) 'designated persons', in relation to an airport, means such persons, or classes of persons, as may from time to time be notified to the airport operator by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section."

I shall not read any further because I can see the embarrassment of the Government. What conclusions can we draw from this? I am tempted, having read clause 58, to reach the conclusion that the Government have surreptitiously privatised the parliamentary draftsman's department and contracted Frank Muir and Dennis Norden to write the script.

We all know what lies behind clause 58. It is a quarrel between the BAA and the Foreign Office about the cost of VIP facilities. To deal with such a situation in legislation with a catch-all clause is the height of absurdity and the Secretary of State knows this.

With regard to accountability, we can see all the details of the powers exercised directly by the Secretary of State, indirectly by the Secretary of State through the CAA and also through the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I am not satisfied with the amount of parliamentary control and accountability which is in the Bill. It is especially inappropriate since the Secretary of State has not spelled out in detail his policy that we should not have detailed parliamentary control. We know that this Government hold Parliament in contempt. Our earlier debate confirms that. The whole of the Westland saga reinforces the need for parliamentary accountability and I give notice that we shall press hard for this in Committee.

Will this policy be a success? I am not sure that the Secretary of State will succeed in his aim of privatising British airports or, in the long term, privatising local authority airports. The tightness of the controls of the BAA does not make it an attractive proposition for investors. I do not think that there are big killings to be made in this area. There is no will within the local authorities to sell majority shareholdings of the local authority airports in the new plcs. Minority shareholdings will not be attractive because of the public expenditure constraints on capital development. In the case of British airports there is an external complication of which the Secretary of State has made no mention in his plans for privatisation. I call it the "Laker factor".

The privatisation of British airports has to be viewed in the context of other Government privatisation schemes —it cannot be viewed in isolation. The Government are intent on privatising the gas industry and proceeding with the flotation of British Airways. British Airways has been up and down the country, not of course selling shares— it is not empowered to do this — but making presentations in all sorts of places on British Airways. British Airways is preparing the climate for selling shares and there is nothing improper in that.

The Government hope that shares in British Airways will be floated in June or July this year. That is the date that would-be investors should bear in mind. Frankly I cannot see that being achieved. Lawsuits are currently in progress in the United States on behalf of former Laker employees. It is hoped that these may be disposed of in the courts in March of this year. Beyond this there is a further threat of litigation by the travel agents and tour operators in the United States. As long as there is a threat of further litigation—even where cases have not yet been launched — British Airways' shares cannot be attractive to investors because no one will wish to buy shares in a company when potentially large damages have to be paid. This will push the programme back.

We have the prospect of the flotation of British Airways, British Gas and British airports at a time when the availability of finance is at a premium. If they all occur at about the same time it will cause a problem with the money that is available in the market. We also know— the Government cannot avoid this in their considerations —that when British Telecom shares were sold there was a severe drain on the resources of building societies. All these things will have to be taken into account when the Government decide on the flotation process.

It is quite possible that there will be only a partial flotation of those three companies. As shadow spokesman, I am interested only in British Airways and British airports. If I am right—only time will tell—the Labour Government, when it is returned to power, will still own a substantial proportion of those companies. That will give us greater freedom to achieve our overall objectives in transport policy. We shall ensure that British airports are publicly accountable and that they meet the needs of the economy, consumers and the workings of the industry. That will be achieved in a way consistent with our economic and democratic aims and priorities.

British airports are the subject of the Government's eighth privatisation measure. Some privatisation measures have been completed and some are only partially completed. We shall have to determine our priorities on terms of public acquisition, on terms of compensation and the rate of public ownership once the picture is clear when we are in Government. Above all else, we are determined that public assets transferred to the private sector on a beneficial prospectus should not be ruthlessly exploited by financiers and against the interests of the nation. In any case, we will not allow the privatisation of British airports to stand in the way of our civil aviation policy.

Mr. Ridley: I can only interpret what the hon. Gentleman is saying as meaning that he will not renationalise the airports. Shall I go and see the shadow Patronage Secretary and stand down the Whip for tonight, as it appears that the hon. Gentleman is not opposing the Bill?

Mr. Hughes: Having failed to listen to the debate, the Secretary of State has failed to listen to what I have said. I made it clear that our acquisition policy will be determined by what we find when we are returned to office. I do not believe that we need bother, as the airports will still be in public ownership then. I have made our pledge quite clear and we intend to keep it.

We oppose the Bill root and branch because it does nothing for the industry. It is pure dogma. I am not like those in the Liberal party or the Social Democratic party who have tabled an amendment. I know where I stand. I

oppose the Bill. They do not and are using weasel words to cover the fact. I shall not support their amendment and I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the Bill.

7.52 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) seems confident that we shall have a Labour Government. I do not share his confidence. Indeed, it is likely that most of us will be dead before another Labour Government is elected. To judge by the performances of Opposition Members today, they do not deserve to form a Government.

I shall try to be brief, as I realise that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak and there is nothing more frustrating than sitting in the Chamber all day without getting a chance to speak. I support the Bill in principle, because it follows the June 1985 White Paper. When we debated the White Paper, I paid tribute to the help that the Government have given regional airports, especially Manchester international airport. They have done a great deal to help us. One of their main objectives in airports policy has been

"to encourage the use and development of the regional airports so that they can meet the maximum demand they can attract".

What worries me most is the development of Manchester's role as the United Kingdom's second hub. Air service licensing policy is a vital ingredient. I am pleased with the progress so far, especially with the recent granting of an operating permit to American Airlines for its Chicago-to-Manchester service. I am aware that there were great difficulties. Some Jeremiahs in the Manchester area said that it would never go through. I am delighted that the difficulties were overcome and that the route will soon come into operation as it will be a boost to the north of England.

All we are asking for in the north is that any legislation sets a framework of fair competition between our regional airports, including the Manchester gateway, and those in the south. One of the things that has worried us in Manchester is the fact that the British Airports Authority has been able to subsidise landing rights at Stansted from profits at Heathrow. That was undoubtedly to the disadvantage of Manchester international airport.

Paragraph 9.8 of the White Paper says that BAA airports would be structured as a holding company with seven individual airport companies, each producing separate accounts. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can explain why that seems to have been omitted from the Bill. I cannot understand that it should be left to the BAA, albeit with the Secretary of State's veto, to put forward its own scheme for organisational structure. The BAA has never made any secret of its philosophy that the London airports should operate as a system. I cannot accept that that is in the national interest.

By offering inducements to airports to operate services, initially from Gatwick and now from Stansted, the BAA has artificially deterred airlines from offering services from regional points to meet the true demand. The use of profits from Heathrow to that end has inhibited the development of a balanced national network of airports and air services.

I accepted limited development at Stansted on the basis that those discriminatory activities would stop and that, as a result, Stansted's charges would have to rise to commercial levels. Instead, there seems to be a view that decisions are being taken prematurely about the development of Stansted and even about its rail connection. Any commitment to expenditure on Stansted's development would pre-empt the judgment of the successor company's board. There have even been rumours, which I hope will be denied, that there will be capacity for 15 million passengers a year at Stansted rather than the 8 million promised at the time. These issues must be debated publicly before any decisions are made and while the BAA remains in public ownership.

I am also worried about part IV, which empowers the CAA to regulate airport charges. There appear to be no safeguards to prevent cross-subsidies. Airport operators will be required to disclose subsidies to the CAA in the process of regulation of charges, but nothing in the procedures here outlined renders such subsidies illegal. The Bill merely provides for the CAA to set an upper limit on charges, taking subsidy into account. I am sorry to labour my argument about cross-subsidisation but it is vital to the future of Manchester international airport. The problems must be tackled.

I have already said that I am unhappy about how the Bill will deal with the control of the BAA's charging activities. I am also unhappy that the regulations are to be applied to local authority airports, as there is no evidence that local authority airports have acted outside the public interest, so safeguards involving maximum charging levels will be unnecessary.

I am also unhappy about part III, which allows the Secretary of State to control types of traffic using any airport. Such provisions could be used forcibly to transfer traffic to Stansted rather than to allow airlines freedom of choice between all United Kingdom airports.

As the White Paper made clear, there must be maximum reliance on market forces. That would lead to an increase in services from Manchester and other regional airports if they are allowed to operate unhindered by licensing restrictions. By further encouraging the development of direct regional services, a significant proportion of London's capacity problems could be solved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has apparently asked the CAA to advise him on the mechanics of traffic allocation to be adopted between airports.

The Bill says that we should consider the roles of two or more airports serving the same area in the United Kingdom. I draw attention to the fact that there is a substantial overlap of catchment areas between the London and Manchester hubs. At present a considerable number of northern passengers are, through lack of services at Manchester, forced to use London for scheduled international services. Any decisions relating to the London area will have substantial implications for the Manchester hub.

It is essential that traffic distribution policy should take on a national dimension. In particular, a policy that arbitrarily transfers traffic between airports regardless of the needs of the market must be rejected. I make no secret of the fact that my main concern is for Manchester international airport. It is the largest employer in my constituency, and the more prosperous that airport becomes, the better it will be for the north of England.

For the last few years it has been run perfectly amicably on a 50:50 basis between Manchester city and Greater Manchester. With the demise of the Greater Manchester council, a new formula will have to be devised. Again I

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

make no secret of the fact that I would favour a plc comprising Manchester city, the nine district councils comprising the rest of Greater Manchester and private capital, all three having a 33·3 per cent. stake. I am not in favour of Manchester city controlling the airport, and I therefore welcome clause 14 which empowers the Secretary of State to reject any scheme.

Manchester international airport is the largest asset in the north-west of England and it would be an act of unforgiveable folly to put it in the hands of the people who at present control Manchester city council.

I also welcome clause 19, which provides for setting up an employees' share scheme. That would give those who work at the airport a chance to share in the profits of the airport, and that would be an incentive.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Does the hon. Gentleman also welcome and support clause 20, which will truncate the development of Manchester, as the ability to raise capital and finance will be subject to the strictures of local government financing? Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has said some unkind things about the Government's views on local government spending. Can we expect that on this issue he will at least join the Opposition to ensure that that does not prevent the further development of Manchester airport?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The situation remains as it is now. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would interrupt me because of what I said about Manchester city council. He feels that the ratepayers of Trafford will not get a fair deal. I am also a Trafford ratepayer, and it is because I want to ensure that Trafford gets a fair deal that I want — *[Interruption.]* If only the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) would shut up for a moment, I shall come on to the point that his hon. Friend made. I am surprised that not one Labour Member from the Manchester area has challenged me on that point. The hon. Member for Manchester, Central was a member of Manchester city council. Would he like to see the lion's share of this airport handed over to the people who are at present controlling the city council?

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The hon. Gentleman did not even answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). As a member of Manchester city council, I took a great pride in the airport. If the hon. Gentleman read the history of Manchester he would discover that when Alderman Tommy Regan cut the first sod he needed police protection because the Conservatives did not want the airport. There was a tremendous fight for the airport against the likes of the Tory party, but now that it is a success, the Conservatives again want to get their sticky fingers in the till. The argument about present control of the city council is merely an excuse. The Labour party will not always be in control, and the Conservatives or even the Liberals may take over. The hon. Gentleman's argument is nonsense. He is merely appeasing his conscience because he wants privatisation.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I make no bones about the fact that I would like privatisation, but the hon. Gentleman's defence of those people now in control of the city council was not very convincing. Of course I hope that they do not remain in control for much longer. I hope that they will be swept out in May, if not by the Conservatives and the Liberals, at least by the moderates in the Labour party for whom I have respect.

As to clause 20, there has always been control over local authorities by this Government and previous Governments. I therefore do not see the relevance of the point made by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

Mr. Litherland: The hon. Gentleman did not understand it.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If that is so, there is no doubt about what the hon. Gentleman thought, because he seems to understand nothing at all. He gave a very unprepossessing defence of the people whom he is supposed to support.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Perhaps I can assist. The argument is that, if the private sector companies have freer access to the market for capital, that will be unfair competition for those companies that are still in the hands of local government via shareholding in successor corporations, especially if they are still limited by the provisions of clause 20. The argument was that they would have a different basis for obtaining capital in the future.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: That is the point. Local government expenditure has always been controlled by this and previous Governments. If private capital is introduced, the situation will alter.

Perhaps I can finish—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is much happier with his new sparring partner——

Mr. Snape: I need no encouragement from the hon. Gentleman about my relationship with my sparring partners. Will he address himself to the point put to him by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd)? Why discriminate against a public limited company created under the Bill in the way that clause 20 obviously does? Did not Trafford council originally second the proposal that the future of Manchester airport should lie in the direction that the Opposition have recommended? For what reason did Trafford council change its mind? Was it nobbled by the Secretary of State, who has not even bothered to listen to the hon. Gentleman's contribution?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I come back to my point that local authority expenditure has always been controlled, and it always will be controlled. The leader of Trafford council is entitled to his opinion. I disagreed with him on this issue, as have many other people, because under the proposals Manchester city council would have 55 per cent. of the shareholding.

Mr. Favell: There is, of course, an argument between Manchester city council and the other councils that form part of Greater Manchester. Manchester city council behaves as if the only people who contribute towards the airport as those who come from Manchester city. This is a regional asset. It does not belong purely to Manchester city. Therefore, should not it be regarded as a regional asset and privatised if possible?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I agree with my hon. Friend.

The Bill is good in parts, but there are other parts of it about which I have doubts. As it stands, it lacks the clarity

of purpose needed to implement the policies enshrined in the White Paper. By the time the Bill comes out of Committee, I hope that the principles embodied in the White Paper will have been enacted in the total national interest.

8.8 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, by requiring the profitable British Airports Authority to be sold outright, fails to appreciate the virtues of partnership between the public and private sectors, including the introduction of private capital into publicly owned companies, and which seeks to stifle municipal enterprise, which was responsible for the successful development of regional airports such as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford, Newcastle and Luton."

I first apologise for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). He would normally be speaking on this subject and has a greater experience of it than I have, but because of the re-arranged time for the debate, my hon. Friend is unable to be present as he is attending the Council of Europe on parliamentary business.

We have tabled this reasoned amendment because in our view it sums up the three key reasons why the Bill as it stands is unsupportable. The amendment first refers to the ridiculous aim of trying to privatise the BAA, which at present is a highly profitable body. That is to be sold outright, yet it is a virtual monopoly. In our opinion, if it is to be a monopoly, it should be in the public sector rather than the private sector.

Indeed, paragraph 30 of the Select Committee report stated:

"We have noted that the Secretary of State has 'virtually' decided that, in the event of privatisation, the BAA's three South East airports will not be put under separate ownership but we are not convinced that privatising a monopoly, irrespective of safeguards, is in the best interests of the user."

That Select Committee has an in-built Conservative majority, and it is interesting that it put the emphasis on those sentences at the end of the paragraph.

Secondly, the partnership between the public and private sectors, which could be enhanced by changes in the structure and management of airports, will be obviated by the Bill. There is no reason why there should not be public corporations with private finance, or why publicly owned bodies should not attract private capital. That is done elsewhere and in other spheres, and there is no reason why it should not be done in the United Kingdom. Yet the Government have turned their face against that for the airports.

Thirdly, the reasoned amendment refers to the strange desire to stifle municipal enterprise. I am always puzzled that Conservative Members believe that civic pride and municipal enterprise are bad. Our tremendous achievements throughout the centuries have not all been accomplished by national Government and private enterprise. Everywhere in our great cities one sees the results of municipal enterprise and civic pride, and rightly so. Indeed, we are arguing for spending public resources on infrastructure. The public sphere is belatedly trying to continue the work carried out with immense foresight 100 or more years ago. It is ridiculous to suggest that municipal enterprise in relation to the airports should be done away with.

As the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, the limit of £1 million turnover, which decides whether an airport should be taken into the restrictions of the Bill, could easily be lifted. There is a power to do so by order, no doubt intended simply to keep pace with inflation. If the sum were raised to £5 million many of the smaller civic airports would be excluded. That would be a small token act.

The Government's attitude to the management of airports shows yet again the triumph of ideology over reason. It is misguided and cynical to force the takeover of all but a handful of our smallest airports, whether or not they have genuine local accountability, and have been effectively developed and managed. The Leeds-Bradford airport is situated where it is because, at the beginning of the 1930s, Bradford city council made a strong plea that the airport should be put between the two cities, although the site was not the best available. The experts advised a site to the east of Leeds. Nevertheless, Bradford city council insisted that if the airport was to serve its city, it should be placed between the two cities. The council wanted to have some share, commitment and understanding of the problems that would arise.

It is important to recognise that what has happened in Leeds and Bradford is typical of other areas. Although in the past I have criticised the membership of the Leeds-Bradford airport committee and its lack of political balance—I shall continue to voice those criticisms—that is a local question and must be dealt with locally. If the airport is taken out of the hands of local government, it will certainly not help to bring wider local accountability.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman says about the location of Yeadon airport. Will he confirm that it was put there by the Royal Air Force?

Mr. Meadowcroft: Yeadon airport existed as a private aerodrome long before it was opened as a public airport. The adviser recommended a site at Whinmoor, which would have been more suitable, especially in terms of altitude, but the airport was placed where it was because two cities were involved.

For many years, despite the efforts of the local authorities, Leeds-Bradford airport lost money, and those losses were met by local ratepayers. Recently, more than £20 million has been expended on extending the runway, and again local ratepayers bear the revenue implications. During the past few years the airport has been making a profit. Is it not right that that profit should be returned to the ratepayers? Why privatise the airport now, when it is making money? In any case no one knows how long that will continue. The extended runway is predicated on a high forecast of passengers coming through on package tours. It seems monstrous that the losses of the past should not be compensated by present, and possibly future, profits.

As municipal airports with a turnover of more than £1 million a year will be forced to become public limited companies, they may decide to take up all the shares. The provisions of clauses 20 and 59 show that consent for loan sanction and even for expenditure could be withheld by the Secretary of State. I agree with the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) that there have been capital controls in the past, but then the airports were endeavouring to compete on the same basis. They had the

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

same restrictions because they were in the public sector. When they become plcs they will be able to look to the market to raise funds. However, airports whose shares are held by local authorities will not enjoy the same freedom, but will be constrained by the Secretary of State as if they were local authorities. They will have the worst of all worlds. Not only will they not be in the public sector, but they will not have the supposed benefit of freedom of access to the market by being in the private sector.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Can the hon. Gentleman cite any aspect of local authority expenditure that is free from control? One facet of local authority expenditure cannot have complete freedom while all the others are controlled.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Gentleman still misunderstands the point. Under the Bill the airports will cease to be local authority airports. They will be plcs. As plcs why should they not, like other plcs, have access to capital funding? They will not be able to compete on equal terms.

Mr. Parris: The answer is that if Derbyshire county council decides to set up a social services department of the county council as Derbyshire social services plc, which is paid for entirely by a subvention from Derbyshire county council, it could not, by so doing, free its social services department from local authority control.

Mr. Meadowcroft: We now have an even more powerful argument against the Bill. It is now being suggested that if airports were allowed freedom by turning themselves into plcs, Derbyshire social services might do the same. That is nonsense. Local authorities do not want the Bill, or their municipal airports turned into plcs. They want to retain accountability and the present membership. They do not want the restrictions contained in the Bill. I hope that hon. Members will accept that the pride that has gone into the formation and development of the airports should be allowed to continue in future.

In reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) the Secretary of State suggested that the same possibilities of reporting back would exist as hitherto, but clause 62 suggests that that is not the case. It contains severe restrictions about the disclosure of information. Where the matter has arisen previously, for example over the new passenger transport authorities, a specific disclaimer has been inserted to avoid preventing local authority members from being permitted to report back to the constituent authorities. Clause 62 will prevent local authority councillors from reporting back to the bodies that put them in a position of authority. It is bad enough having delegated powers and indirect elections to the bodies, but then to say that the members should be prevented from reporting back to their constituent local authorities is ridiculous.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if he checked on the matter as I have done, and found that the consultative committees that existed prior to the Bill could continue under the Bill, he would be satisfied that the Bill will not create the problems that he suggests and could be good from that point of view?

Mr. Meadowcroft: My experience of consultative committees is hardly as encouraging as the hon. Gentleman suggests. I am not arguing for them, but for local councils to be able to have a report from the members that they put on the board of the new public limited companies. I am not arguing for a local consultative committee. Although that is a good thing, it does not have the teeth, the power and the forum of debate of the local authority. That is like saying that one supports the community health councils. They are of benefit, but they are no substitute for the proper accountability of the Health Service to locally elected members. They can snap at the heels of the authority like other consultative committees can, but they cannot bite. That is the difference. There must be accountability or the matter becomes staid and introverted. That is another difficulty in the Bill.

Other strange things suggest that the Bill does not deserve support. Clause 58 mentions the exclusive use of accommodation. Does that mean VIP accommodation or security accommodation or what? It is strange to include the power to direct an operator to provide the exclusive use of accommodation. Under clause 27 the Secretary of State is given the power to direct security. There is no suggestion in the Bill that there will be any public contribution towards the cost of any security. It is unfair that an airport could be told to provide X number of police with machine guns, but the state would be under no obligation to pay for them.

Regarding the writing-off of debts, there is different treatment of bodies under the Bill from that in other legislation. When the PTAs were set up, the accumulated losses of the bus authorities that were being taken into the PTAs were not written off. The ratepayers and bus passengers had to pay for them. It is unfair that, because ideology rules, losses and accumulated debts will be written off.

Employee share ownership was mentioned earlier. That applies to only part of the Bill. There is no suggestion that employee share ownership will apply to the body that will become the BAA plc, despite the fact that airlines will be able to participate. It will be a strange position when the airlines will be able to participate in the BAA plc, but not its own employees.

Not only do we have the triumph of ideology over reason, but reason is so curtailed as to be almost ridiculous. The Bill purports to place those bodies in the private sector and it suddenly allows them freedom—a freedom that does not occur anywhere else in the world. The United States of America is the land of the free, to which we are told to look for enterprise, job creation and buoyancy in the economy. From the Select Committee report, we see that there is no privately owned airport in the United States. That does not stop private funding coming in, but the corporations are publicly owned and able to raise bonds in the market.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the United States. While I follow his argument, may I ask whether he would agree that in the United States the terminals, hangars and most of the facilities are funded and operated by private concerns?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support. That is exactly my point. Why cannot a public body contract out if it wishes? I believe that that would be of benefit. Anyone who has compared terminal 3 at Heathrow with American airports will see the benefit of that.

However, the Bill is in place of a public body being able to contract out and bring capital in. To do so, the body must be private. The Bill gives a long list of restrictions and immense controls over personnel, security, capital and revenue. In the end, the Bill hedges the proposed companies about with so many controls that the bodies might as well be nationalised. I do not believe that the Bill deserves support.

8.24 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): In view of the tremendous interest and the numbers who wish to speak in the debate, I shall be brief.

The House will not be surprised that I enthusiastically support the Bill. I wish that it had been introduced earlier. I believe that it will be of more general benefit to the country the quicker it comes into operation.

The Bill covers several airports, but it deals mainly with how the British Airports Authority will be brought into the market. An interesting facet of the Government's privatisation programme is the ingenuity with which they produce some form of regulation on monopoly powers and introduce some form of competition into the market place. Inevitably, we make comparisons with British Telecom, which was the first to go down the privatisation chute. I do not dismiss the effectiveness or the splendid work of Mercury, but it takes only 2 per cent. of the market while British Telecom takes 98 per cent. Those who served on the Committee will remember that there was a great deal of discussion about the setting up of the regulatory body to ensure that Oftel would be independent, would have enough expertise and finance and would not be subject to agency capture. To date, that has not happened. In the case of the privatisation of the British Airports Authority, we are fortunate to have the CAA already in existence. It has a splendid independence and a well-known and proven record on matters such as safety control.

However, why is it necessary for the CAA to refer everything to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission every five years? That does not happen in other privately owned operations, so why should it happen in this case? I realise that this matter can be explored in Committee, but, on the face of it, the impression is left that the CAA will not have sufficient powers. That implies that it will not be able to do the job properly. Referring matters every five years will produce the tendency to say, "Look, there is a problem. We should hang on and wait for the commission to deal with it." A problem that could be tackled much sooner may be shoved into the background.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) made some valid points about the ability to deal with cross-subsidisation of charges. It is important that we do not differentiate between charters and scheduled airlines. The Bill must be seen to cover all the airports. It cannot be hybrid. The House knows what happens when we run into the problems of a hybrid Bill.

Mr. Bright: My hon. Friend has mentioned cross-subsidisation in relation to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). Does he agree that it is more important that the question of cross-subsidisation should be completely nullified and that we should have clear and transparent accounts, especially in an airport such as Luton? Luton will be the only independent airport in the London region. The rest are owned by BAA. If we are to have competition, it is important that Luton is free to have genuine competition, unlike the position at the moment with the effects of cross-subsidisation and the effect that Stansted has had on Luton's traffic.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend makes the case for Luton very powerfully and he has made the position quite clear. Any rules of support finance must be clear, understood and above board. I do not believe that we can countenance any covert, under-the-counter, operations.

It is important that a balance should be struck between presenting the British Airports Authority to the market as attractively as possible in commercial terms and ensuring that there is fair play and no discrimination against smaller operators. That is why I support the proposal to make the BAA the holding company and to make each airport underneath it a separate subsidiary company. To quote the jargon of the day, it will provide financial transparency and show that fair play exists.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned fair play in reply to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). That definition will be expanded and debated in Committee.

The balance to which I referred earlier must be maintained, because the British Airports Authority must remain the world's most successful international airports system.

Mr. Dicks: Why must we leave it to the BAA to maintain and keep the British airports system in the lead? Could not independent companies — Heathrow Ltd., Gatwick Ltd., and, God forbid, Stansted Ltd.—do this equally well?

Mr. Page: I have no doubt that those fortunate enough to serve on the Committee will argue that point as they debate the Bill's 72 clauses and five schedules. I believe that the central expertise of BAA would benefit each operating company. Some services could be provided from the centre while each airport gets on with operating as a separate company. There should be no duplication of central costs.

An important factor in the success of an airport is why an airline and its customers choose to go there. There are many reasons, but the cost of landing fees is a major factor. Some might say that it creates the natural, but short-sighted, temptation to use the exceedingly strong market position of the monopoly, especially in the south, to advantage. I know that the BAA and its directors are far too careful to fall into that temptation. However, some regulation is necessary. When the formula of control is produced, I hope that it will be similar to the British Telecom formula. In the end, it might be an exotic formula, but essentially it should be the RPI minus *x* as the control, not a cost-plus exercise. The former would give benefits to customers, shareholders and employees, whereas the second would produce an atmosphere of complacency and no advantage to anyone.

We have all read the figures of passengers going through British airports—2 million in 1950, 67 million in 1984 and the various figures that are extrapolated into the 1990s. Whichever figure one takes, there will be a huge growth in the market and a tremendous opportunity. If we are to continue that growth, we must have the powerful stimulus of privatisation. It will bring efficiency and responsibility to customers' views, and management, especially in the British Airports Authority, will be

[Mr. Page]

motivated. I hope that we shall create the opportunity for employees to have shareholdings, as we did with British Telecom, the National Freight Corporation and Jaguar. I welcome the Bill and wish it a speedy passage through the House.

8.33 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): As the House knows, I have two interests to declare in the debate. The first is that Manchester international airport, which is in my constituency, is much the biggest employer there. It employs more than 6,000 people and more than 20,000 others owe their livelihoods, wholly or in part, to the airport's existence. My second interest is that I have worked, in an honorary capacity since its inception, in close liaison with the North of England Regional Consortium, which speaks for local authorities all over the north on some of the most important issues to which the Bill is addressed.

When the House debated the airports White Paper in July last year, I warned that the Government's bold promises to support the regional airports sounded fine, but that there would be an early test of their sincerity. That warning is now fully vindicated. Since our debate last July, we have had the Civil Aviation Authority's consultation document on traffic distribution which, in the view of the North of England Regional Consortium, is primarily geared to forcing traffic to use the subsidised Stansted airport.

On 9 January, County Councillor John Gunnell of West Yorkshire, who is well regarded by hon. Members on both sides of the House, spoke for the consortium about the CAA's consultation document. He said:

"The Government in its White Paper . . . finally acknowledged that regional airports should be encouraged to realise their full potential . . . At the first test, the conspiracy of the London-based establishment has sought to ignore the major principles behind the White Paper, as though they did not exist. Every effort must be made to encourage the CAA to think again."

Before the debate ends, I hope to hear how the Minister responds to that statement.

Since the publication of the White Paper, we have also had the Secretary of State's disputed decision not to publish the financing proposals put to him by the British Airports Authority and British Rail for Stansted's expension and the provision of a rail link to that airport. Even more seriously, we now have this Bill, of which the Joint Airports Commitee of Local Authorities says:

"As drafted, the Airports Bill will do little to assist and, indeed, is likely to hinder the development of Regional Airports."

The Secretary of State's press statement on the day when the Bill was published said that it represented a new and enterprising deal for the airports industry. How can that possibly be said of a Bill that seeks to arm the Government with powers forcibly to distribute traffic and to regulate the pricing of airport services; that selectively denies the regional airports access to the open market; that provides for the effective "nationalisation" of the regional airports and for continuing and detailed central Government control over their funding; that proposes to write off the BAA's capital debts and therefore, effectively, provide a state subsidy for a capital programme which includes the expension of Stansted; and that fails to give details of the proposals for restructuring the London airports, thus adding to our concern that Stansted will, in practice, continue to be heavily subsidised?

Far from being an enterprising new deal for the airports industry, this Bill is an attempt to force most airports into a financial straitjacket. The Bill is basically about manipulation. It vividly demonstrates the Government's prejudices and their overt influence on the development of air transport policy. Yet even in the Government's own terms the Bill is a shambles. If parts I, II and III are allowed to stand in their present form, the dominance of the London airports will become absolute. Unfair competition between Stansted and other airports will continue.

The Secretary of State must be made to understand that making a subsidy transparent is not the same as securing its elimination. Equally, he must be made to understand that providing the CAA with powers forcibly to distribute traffic within the London airports system does nothing to encourage the meeting of demand for air travel in the region of its origin. That is the only effective way to ease congestion in London. The north's case against the south-east's dominance is strongly endorsed by the recent report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. Referring to the scope for a dispersal of tourist traffic, which now almost exclusively uses the London airports, the report states:

"We are concerned that it is too easily taken for granted that demand in the South East cannot be transferred elsewhere."

The Select Committee report also says:

"The growth of Manchester Airport in particular provides perhaps the major way in which the tourist industry in the North of England will be stimulated."

Right hon. and hon. Members from all parts of the House worked long and hard, entirely without party animus, to establish the case of our regional airports. We worked in close co-operation also to ensure that the subsidising of Stansted would cease. If that objective is now to be achieved, and the interests of the regional airports are to be adequately protected, substantial changes will have to be made to the Bill. For that to happen, all supporters of the regional airports must continue to work together.

I turn now, in particular, to part II of the Bill, which relates solely to the regional airports. Its proposals do not provide for companies of the kind indicated in the White Paper. They impose on the regional airports the Minister's own wholly political perception of a company. If the Minister is anxious to see airport companies at arm's length from their local authority owners, he would allow them to operate in the open market irrespective of who owns a majority shareholding in the company.

The fact that open market facilities are to be denied to companies if they are controlled by local authorities amply demonstrates the Government's total distaste for our democratically accountable system of local government in this country. What other interpretation can there be of the Government's approach? Part I of the Bill specifically allows the successor company to BAA, which initially at least will be wholly owned by the Government, to operate in the open market, and clause 34(4)(a) in part IV specifically excludes such a company from the economic regulation controls to be imposed on other airports.

Notwithstanding what the right hon. Gentleman said in opening the debate, many people will believe that the practical effect of the Bill will be to impose a privatised

framework on airports such as Manchester at the earliest opportunity. More than one way of achieving this is provided for in the Bill. The extensive powers that the Secretary of State will have to control the level of external and internal resources required for their development will give him more than ample scope to starve the regional airports of the resources they need if they resist private sector equity. It may be said that such action would be unreasonable, but I remind the House that it would be no worse than the Government's action in pressurising a Conservative-controlled local authority in Greater Manchester to back down from the agreement it assisted in writing to secure the early restructuring of Manchester international airport.

The Secretary of State must recognise that the people of Manchester will not simply lie down and allow their most valuable public asset to be handed over to asset strippers and profiteers. Manchester international airport enjoys its present status because of the commitment of the people of Manchester first to develop the airport and then to support its growth over a period spanning more than 50 years. After Heathrow, our airport is easily the most profitable in Britain. With over 6 million passengers last year, it is by a considerable margin Britain's third airport. In terms of quality of service, it is Britain's best.

There were many years when our airport did not make a profit. Only in recent years have the city and county taken a return on their ratepayers' investment. Moreover, all the return has been ploughed back into the regional economy. If by the enactment of the Bill the Government's wishes are met, there can be no guarantee whatever that the airport's profits will stay in the north-west. Nor is it likely that the airport will develop at a pace consistent with the needs of the region.

Now that the major risks have been taken by Manchester's ratepayers and an increasingly successful future for the airport beckons, the Government want to poach the north-west's premier public asset for private profit. That is why there is so much resentment in Manchester about the Government's approach and why there is such strong determination to keep the snouts of private speculators out of the trough.

Manchester international airport is the only growth point in a region devastated by unemployment and by both economic and social decline. It is by any standards already highly efficient. If anyone doubts that, let him name the private companies in the north-west that will show a profit of £16 million this year. It is one of the few institutions that gives us any cause for optimism for the future and is as important to the north-west today as the Manchester ship canal itself was earlier this century.

No other airport is promoted more vigorously than Manchester, and no organisation is more committed to its future success than Manchester city council. I know of no major issue affecting the airport which has created any conflict along party lines within Manchester town hall since I first had the privilege of representing my constituency 21 years ago. That is the definitive answer to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery).

What Manchester international airport needs now is positive support from the Government. We seek support not in terms of handouts, but in the way airports policy is shaped and pursued. What we do not want is absolute authority for the Government to control the airport's activities. We not only question the Government's motives, but are far from certain that they even understand the needs of the airport and the role it plays in the regional economy.

At the Stansted public inquiry, the Civil Service was totally dismissive of Manchester's case and that of the regional airports. Acting together on both sides of the House, it took us four years to persuade the Government publicly to acknowledge their role in the national airports system. Part II of the Bill is, at best, totally irrelevant to Manchester international airport's needs and the aspirations of both its work force and the people of the north-west region. At worst it could be positively damaging, and I urge the House to show its understanding of our grave anxieties about the Bill by rejecting it in the Lobby tonight.

8.49 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I support the Bill enthusiastically. Birmingham international airport, one of our most important regional airports, is in my constituency.

I should first like to talk about the part of the Bill that deals with the British Airports Authority. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider in his reply and in discussions with those of us who are fortunate enough to be chosen to serve on the Standing Committee, the continuing possible unfairness created by the cross-subsidy for Stansted airport. That worry has been voiced by a number of my hon. Friends and I do not intend to go into it in more detail.

Speaking on behalf of one of the municipal airports, I have to say that the cross-subsidy for Stansted and the write-off of the BAA debts must give rise to some anxiety among those who are also worried about regional airports. Is this fair to municipal airports?

I am puzzled about the need to provide for certain facilities at airports through legislation. I have talked to the British Airports Authority about this. I am surprised to find that in the Bill, and perhaps the Minister could outline why it was important to include it. If there is a good reason, as suggested by hon. Members, I should be interested to hear it, because it seems a slightly unusual precedent.

I shall also be grateful if my hon. Friend will comment on the need for protection against foreign ownership on privatisation of BAA in the way that has been proposed, which I fully support, and perhaps discuss whether the golden share solution would be one way in which that could be done. That was certainly the answer for Jaguar, which is also an important local employer of my constituents and a most successful company privatised by the Government in exactly the same way as the airports will be privatised by the Government with yet more benefits being offered. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will have a full opportunity to make his views known in a way in which only he can.

I also urge my hon. Friend to do everything possible to ensure that wider share ownership, on which the Government have achieved so much, should be included for airports. I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about that. *[Laughter.]* I find it strange that Labour Members laugh when it is suggested that baggage handlers, pilots and people working in airport canteens could be offered shares in the place in which they work. It is a most important fundamental part of democracy that employees should have a share in their industry.

Mr. Snape: Labour Members invariably laugh at the suggestion that those who work in an industry should be given shares in it because, as we have seen recently in Westland—and it happens in every other company in Britain—the views of private shareholders count for naught when it comes to their future. More often than not the bulk of the shares, particularly under this Government, land up in foreign hands. That is why we laugh. It is an alternative to crying.

Mr. Mills: On a day like today, when we have heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister talk so well about her concern with that affair, it would be like taking the hon. Gentleman's helicopter up in an uncontrollable spin if I were distracted from the main point of the benefits of the privatisation of BAA. I urge the hon. Gentleman to watch his television set. He might emulate that gentleman who seems to have a most magical helicopter. It might help him and the Leader of the Opposition. They seem to need something to help them.

I do not understand the ideological reluctance of Labour Members when the privatisation of BAA is discussed. They talk of ideology as being the Government's reason for that, but the fact is that the Government have been successful in privatising so many concerns to the benefit of their employees and customers. British Telecom has been mentioned as one of the many examples. I am sure that those working in BAA will welcome the freedom and involvement that the measure will bring.

I said that I have Birmingham international airport in my constituency. That is a most important matter, but it is also a mixed blessing on which I must touch this evening. The economic activity and the jobs that it provides have to be balanced with the needs of those who live within hundreds of yards of the taxiways and landing ways with the noise and other effects of the airport. A clear role for Birmingham international airport in the region is to supply the region with what it needs—the facilities for Birmingham-based people and those who wish to come to Birmingham. The suggestion that there should be some sort of forced shift of passengers from the south-east to regional airports such as Birmingham is not music to my ears.

Birmingham has a role to play, and it is playing it. It has a new terminal. But to force people who wish to land in London or to leave from London to use the provincial airports would be singularly inappropriate for the Government. I am not sure whether Labour Members would wish to force more aeroplanes and more noise on the people of Biggin Hill, Marston Green and elsewhere. It might be interesting to ask them if we have the opportunity.

In privatising not just BAA but municipal airports, which I welcome, I hope that my hon. Friend will have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury and the Home Office to ensure that our airports have facilities which are more customer friendly. I am thinking in terms of customs and excise and immigration. That is a most important matter. It will aid those privatised airports to be yet more successful in providing the friendly facilities that will encourage our tourist trade.

My hon. Friend knows from the discussions that we have had about my concern for the future of Birmingham international airport. It is most important that municipal airports which become plcs should truly become private enterprises. I know that my right hon. Friend is concerned about the precedent. [*Interruption.*] I understand his concern about that when I see the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. He is a man of great innovatory skill and talent. To give him a precedent to use would not be wise.

However, I urge my hon. Friend to consider amendments that may be proposed in Committee to ensure that the shareholdings in municipal airports are truly available to baggage handlers, canteen workers, pilots and others in the enterprise as well as a wider base in order to encourage the maximum investment of private capital to make the airports successful.

8.55 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Like all my right hon. and hon. Friends I oppose the principles and aims of the Bill, which seeks to privatise a public asset and that is why I shall vote against it. Airports should be owned and controlled by public bodies—either in Government or local authorities.

First I want to deal with part III, which deals with the regulation and use of airports. That enables the Secretary of State to give general directions to airports in the interests of national security and international relations.

On 16 January 1985 the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, of which I am Chairman, carried out an inquiry into the impact of airport privatisation on the Scottish lowlands airports policy. At the end of that inquiry we produced a very nearly unanimous report which made a series of recommendations, two of which I want to deal with tonight.

The Select Committee said:

"We therefore conclude that no change should be made to the existing policy in advance of privatisation, should privatisation eventually take place".

The existing policy that we were talking about was the Scottish lowlands airports policy. We said that the BAA Scottish airports should be retained and privatised, if that were the Government's policy, as a single group. That was why I was glad to hear tonight the Secretary of State say that BAA plc would have a Scottish holding company dealing with the four Scottish airports. The Scottish lowlands airports policy regards Prestwick as an international gateway for north Atlantic traffic and long-haul services and considers that Glasgow and Edinburgh should cater for domestic and short-haul European services.

If we were starting afresh on a green field site, no one in Scotland would build three airports so close together, serving the same population area. However, we have Prestwick, Glasgow and Edinburgh airports and, as most speakers have said, airports are growth points, irrespective of their size. They are centres of activity and employment.

There is a large pool of unemployed people in central Scotland; every third man in my constituency is unemployed. Therefore, we must retain the airports and try to make them profitable, so that we maintain employment prospects.

That is why I am glad that, if BAA is privatised, there will be a Scottish holding company for the three lowlands airports in Scotland, plus Aberdeen airport.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that when the Select Committee examined the lowlands airports, there was no disagreement about what the outcome of the report should be?

Mr. Lambie: I said earlier that the report was almost unanimous. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member

for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) pointed out in an intervention that the members of the Select Committee who represented all four airports were unanimous in supporting the Committee's recommendations.

Our second recommendation was:

"We agree with BAA that their London and Scottish airports should be privatised as two separate statutory undertakings wholly owned by a single holding company; this holding company would be publicly-quoted and provide the sole vehicle for private investment."

We were saying that the Scottish lowlands airports should be privatised within the BAA. We believe that our future lies in tying ourselves not to Manchester, but to the London airports. In all friendliness to my colleagues from the north-west, I say that we object to those who speak on behalf of Manchester airport saying that that is the airport for north Britain. If they claim that that is the gateway to Scotland, they are proposing that Manchester should be built up at the expense of Prestwick, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Scottish Members cannot accept that.

As a Scottish Member and a member of the Select Committee, I see the future of the Scottish airports being aligned to that of the London airports. Some say that we should stop development in London to divert traffic to regional airports. From my experience and from my talks with those on the international airports scene, I know that we would divert traffic not to regional airports but to European airports. Instead of building up the British airline industry, we would be helping to build up the European industry.

No matter how the airports in the United Kingdom are organised, the fact that half the population of Britain lives in the south-east means that that region must be the centre of activity. All that we in Scotland are asking for is a share of that prosperity and that Scottish airports should be tied in with the London airports.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: I accept that the London airports must be the feeders for the north of England and Scotland. I would not worry too much about the utterances of Manchester Members. They are talking about the possibility of a transatlantic service, but Newcastle airport has had a transatlantic airport to Canada for the past three or four years. That is a help to Scotland, because Newcastle has a big catchment area and it is handy for Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Mr. Lambie: I take that point. My hon. Friend's argument about Newcastle is the same sort of argument that I am making about the Scottish airports. My hon. Friend is interested in the future of one airport and I am interested in the future of the three lowland airports in Scotland.

Mr. Bowen Wells: When referring to London airports, does the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) include Stansted? Does he want Scottish traffic to be developed in relation to Stansted or to Heathrow and Gatwick?

Mr. Lambie: I see Scottish traffic relating only to Gatwick and Heathrow. I hope that the Scottish holding company will be able to negotiate slots at Gatwick and Heathrow. We should not consider Stansted. I am sure that that problem will be discussed in full in Committee.

I was disappointed when a Government Member said that Aberdeen airport should not be held back because of subsidies to help losses at Prestwick airport. It is bad enough that Scottish Members should criticise one another about Scottish airports but I take exception to English Members interfering in the fight. We have enough problems without the enemy increasing them. That is why I was glad when I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston say that the profits from Prestwick had been used to develop other Scottish airports.

Prestwick, unlike most other airports, is fortunate. All developments there are completed. Its terminal building will see us into the next century without further capital expenditure. The airport is ready to take international, long-haul planes without further expenditure on runways. All that we need now is one scheduled service to fly from Prestwick and the airport will make a profit. If Randall Fields is successful in its highland express venture and is permitted to fly from Prestwick to north America the airport will become profit-making.

Major airports such as Gatwick and Heathrow could experience severe financial problems if the European Commission suddenly decides to abolish duty-free facilities. I should like to see the balance sheets for Heathrow and Gatwick without the income from duty-free sales. In two or three years Heathrow and Gatwick might have to rely on the profits from Scottish airports to help them to develop their own facilities and to develop Stansted.

As a Scottish Member I travel by air most of the time and so use airports. Most Scottish Members arrive at the House wearing a bright tie because every time that they go through an airport they buy a tie. There are shirt factories and ice cream parlours. The emphasis is on capitalising and making money. The passengers who want to catch the aeroplanes and the airline companies that are paid to get passengers and luggage on the aeroplanes as quickly as possible are hemmed in by these concession facilities. Instead of airports being for the benefit of passengers and airlines, they are becoming commercial ventures to maximise profits. If the European Commission stops the sale of duty-free goods in most of the airports in south-east England, the airports will face tremendous difficulties.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that most of the so-called duty-free facilities are rip-offs?

Mr. Lambie: I do not want to go into that matter. It is another issue.

I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will reconsider their policy of privatising airports. Airports are a national asset, which should be owned by the nation.

9.10 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I approve in general terms of the Government's approach to the Bill although I share, almost completely, the doubts of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I do not believe that a London system, as outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, is needed. I am worried about Government powers to regulate and constrain airline operations. I am worried also about the lack of consultation with concessionaires at airports and the lack of protection given to them in the Bill.

I must declare an interest because my wife works for one of the concessionaires at Heathrow. Although I see none of that income, I am told that it could be suggested that I benefit financially.

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

I am, as always, angry about the retention of the BAA's monopoly powers. My views on that organisation and those who run it, as distinct from those who work for it, are on the record. I think that almost everyone who is interested in airports policy knows how I feel.

The London system can only be justified—contrary to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said—if we seek to protect Stansted. There can be no other reason for having a holding company covering Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted unless it is to protect the loss-maker of Stansted and to continue the BAA's policy of developing that airport, contrary to commercial practice and the requirements of the people in the area. Switching resources between the airports also means putting money into Stansted.

We know that the holding company can invest in any of the three airports. It has to offer a competitive interest rate when lending money. I cannot for a minute envisage money from the holding company going into Heathrow, but I can imagine the holding company taking some of the profits from Heathrow and Gatwick and ploughing it into Stansted, even though its aim should be to get a reasonable rate of return. Heathrow profits will not necessarily go back to Heathrow. Those who create the profits at Heathrow will receive no benefit.

The Secretary of State has the power to set air traffic movement limits, to allocate slots at airports and to distribute traffic between London's airports. If it is decided that enough traffic is using Heathrow, the market will not be able to dictate, as it should and would do if it were allowed to operate properly. Because of aeroplane landing arrangements between countries, British Airways is the only airline to which the Secretary of State can say, "You must use Gatwick or Stansted." That power concerns me and Britain's—say, the world's—leading airline. We must watch this aspect carefully if and when the Secretary of State uses his powers.

The Secretary of State can intervene in an airline's operations by redirecting it. He can affect the free market—that market that I thought my right hon. Friend so firmly advocated. I am worried about these powers to interfere. My right hon. Friend has said that he will use the powers if he sees a need, but I have great doubts about that. I am certain that there will come a time when either my right hon. Friend or his successor will use the powers to intervene in the market as they see fit.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Does my hon. Friend agree that the scheduling committees which have been at work at Heathrow and Gatwick for many years have done sterling work, that the airlines should be allowed to sort out the slots as they have done so successfully, and that central Government should not interfere with the process?

Mr. Dicks: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is nothing that I can add because, on this occasion, his words are mine.

The total income from concessionaires to the BAA in 1984-85 was £178 million. The net contribution was £123 million. That amounts to almost 33 per cent. of the BAA's income. The BAA had a net profit on commercial services in that year of £98 million. However, those concessionaires were not consulted about one dot or comma of what is contained in the Bill. I find it incredible that civil servants and Ministers should decide to bring the Bill before us and say, "Despite earning 33 per cent. of the BAA's profit, we felt it completely unnecessary to consult concessionaires to see what they felt about what was going on and how they felt the Bill would interfere with their operations." I find that amazing.

It has been suggested that clause 33 might have an effect on concessionaires, but when one studies it one finds that the concessionaires are excluded from the operation of that clause.

It has been claimed that clause 39(2)*(a)*(ii) gives the Civil Aviation Authority power to refer the airport operator to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission when its conduct may be against the public interest. It has been suggested that concessionaires will be covered by the clause, but the BAA is clever. It would not push concessionaires to the point where the CAA would have to interfere. The fair trading legislation would not be contravened by the BAA, because it is far too subtle.

I shall give an example of the way that the BAA behaves. Until last year, a concessionaire had a concession from which the BAA took 10 per cent. of its turnover for five years. That concession came up for renewal and the BAA told the concessionaire that if he applied again it would take 12 per cent. of the turnover and for three years only. The concessionaire, reasonably, asked why. He was told, "Mind your own business. We do not have to tell you why. We will not tell you why. If you do not like the general terms, you can push off and go somewhere else." That is the BAA's attitude. It comes from the top, from Sir Norman Payne downwards.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I am genuinely fascinated by this little exchange. The hon. Gentleman has been making what he would regard as a strong case in favour of allowing market mechanisms to operate, but when—I agree, completely ridiculously—the BAA allows that mechanism to operate, the hon. Gentleman complains bitterly about it. Which does he want? Does he want the free market mechanism or something that is rigged? He wants something that is rigged.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. In a free market, there is some protection. Fair trading is generally carefully watched by the people within the organisations involved. They know what is going on.

I wish to give a further example of what I was describing. The same company was in the process of negotiating the concession and the MMC had started to look into the BAA. The company had made a planning application. The BAA's officers said to the concessionaire, "Get that MP"—that is, me—"off our backs while the MMC is studying us and we will push on with your planning application."

Understandably, the concessionaire thought that that was reasonable. He just wanted good will, to obtain the concession fairly and to succeed with the planning application. The minute that I backed off and the MMC finished with the BAA, what happened? The planning application has been delayed and pushed back.

Clause 39(2)*(a)*(ii) does not cover such circumstances. The BAA is too subtle to break the fair trading legislation or the provisions of that clause. I want a guarantee that the word "concessionaire" will be included in the Bill and that there will be adequate powers to ensure that the bullying monopoly tactics used by the BAA cannot continue.

The terms of reference include the public interest but they should also include power to consider the private interest of individuals and companies which depend on airports for their livelihood. That is an important aspect. We hear about public interest all the time, quite rightly, but some of the activities of the concessionaires have a private interest which is different from the public interest. An example is car hire. Most of the concessionaires on the airport have a monopoly position, whether it be a tea shop or the shirt and tie shop that we have heard about. The car hire companies of an airport have to compete with each other. There is not a monopoly. The BAA deliberately fails to recognise the difference between one concessionaire and another.

We must look carefully at the monopoly power of the BAA. I appeal to the Secretary of State not to have a holding company—let there be Heathrow Ltd., Gatwick Ltd. and Stansted Ltd. We know that Heathrow will make a fortune if it is sold, Gatwick will just about break even and nobody in his right mind will want to buy Stansted at the moment.

Therefore, I agree with the general approach. I accept the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I beg the Secretary of State to ensure that he protects the concessionaires on the airport and looks carefully at the powers to regulate airline operation, because I fear that he will interfere with market forces and the way in which the airports operate.

9.21 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I will detain the House only briefly because I know that the 72 clauses and five schedules and the nuts and bolts therein will be subjected to the flogging spanner and the swenchwrench of Committee. I must declare an interest in that, as a ratepayer of Cleveland, I hold a minor involvement in the affairs of one airport—Teesside. The Cleveland county authority controls its function together with Durham county council, so the remarks which follow are essentially based on that perspective.

Bearing that in mind, I suppose I must thank the Secretary of State on Teesside's behalf for effectively removing the somewhat artifical categorisation of airports which had previously condemned Teesside — quite wrongly in my opinion—to third-rate status, denying it access to the substantial financial support on offer to other regional airports.

Teesside airport can and does justifiably lay claim to be the regional airport at the centre of the north-east of England, with all the facilities, operational resources and expertise needed for its further development in terms of industrial investment, North sea gas and oil logistics, continental communication and holiday tour operations, and, allied to all of these, the job creation which is so desperately needed in an area which can, sadly, boast the highest levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Given the new equality of status among regional airports, I ask the Minister whether he will ensure that future Teesside operations will receive the same level of financial support as has been accorded to other regional airports. Furthermore, will the Minister fully acknowledge the previous handicap experienced by Teesside and make some provision to ensure that ground lost in the past is recovered, and recovered quickly?

I have noted with interest the proposals in clause 3 to extinguish the accumulated debts of the British Airports Authority — an undisclosed sum, but one which doubtless runs into many millions of pounds. I am sure that that action will prove a great attraction to cronies of the Secretary of State—the vultures of the City—when they are finally allowed to prey upon another vibrant and vital piece of public enterprise.

A similarly juicy morsel is presently on offer, I understand, in the writing off of British Airways' financial liabilities. Is it intended to make provision for the extinguishing of all the debts of local authority airports, in similar fashion? Does the Secretary of State intend to write off the debt of Teesside airport and those moneys already committed for the next two years to provide for the latest updated radar equipment?

Furthermore, clause 13, in part II, restricts the Secretary of State's powers of compulsion on local authorities to privatise to those operating airports with an annual turnover exceeding £1 million. It empowers the Secretary of State to raise that level by order. Surely the Minister agrees that such a low figure is of such little significance as to be positively footling, and if the Bill were to be enacted, it must be re-examined.

I remind the Secretary of State that at the joint council meeting of the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities and the Airport Owners Association, held at Gatwick on 28 November, it was moved by Mr. Ian Crann of Cardiff and seconded by Mr. John Dyson, chairman of Teesside's airport committee, that that arbitrary annual turnover trigger be raised from £1 million to £10 million. That joint council represents every operational civil airport in the United Kingdom. All are represented on it and all were present. There was no dissent to the motion that I outlined. It was carried nem con. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that he should heed the formal and collective voice of that council, and as testimony to that acknowledgement, will he state his intention to amend that figure accordingly upwards to £10 million?

I note that, in part III of the Bill, clauses 28 and 29, already referred to by several right hon. and hon. Members, would empower the Secretary of State to make rules governing the distribution of air traffic among airports and to impose limits on numbers of aircraft using airports within a given period. So much for the Government's public pronouncements against state intervention and in support of freedom. As on so many issues, they say one thing and mean the opposite. They abuse the English language and defy sound logic.

Finally, I refer to the Minister's statement to the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities on 4 November, when he expressed support for the view that an airport system should be sufficiently mature to stand on its own feet and make its contribution to taxation. Is that what the Government have in mind following the enactment of the Bill, and if so, will the Minister say so tonight?

9.28 pm

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I welcome and support the Airports Bill, particularly the creation of public companies, open to external investment, to run the airports now run by local authorities.

I disagree with the Bill on one point — the privatisation of the BAA in the London region. The Secretary of State knows only too well that I should have liked those airports to be treated separately, in the interests

[Mr. Graham Bright]

of fair competition. I say that against the background of my constituency interest. The airport in my constituency will be the only independent airport in the London region.

The Bill contains essential measures for loosening the direct control of central Government and local authorities over Britain's airports. The proposals are also a vindication, in part at least, of the arguments that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) have been putting forward for the past five years. I have no doubt that they will make our airports more responsive to passengers' needs and to airlines' requirements, as well as freeing them from some of the constraints of public finance.

I am conscious that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has had to frame the Bill with a number of considerations in mind. These go well beyond the provision of extra passenger capacity in the London area, the regions and Scotland. Problems connected with the role of Heathrow as the dominant airport at the centre of a network of international airline routes, the issue of air traffic distribution, the regulation of landing charges and the daunting problems of safety and security have inevitably had to be faced. The transfer of the BAA and local authority airports from direct public control also poses complex financial questions.

The strategic decision to place our major commercial airports in private ownership is clearly right. Passenger traffic at Heathrow and the other London airports has consistently grown more rapidly than the economy since 1960. There is no doubt that this growth was by itself more than sufficient to attract the investment needed to expand those airports.

With the greatest respect to Opposition Members, the record of the BAA in generating profits and providing new facilities since 1965 is irrelevant. Given the nature of the BAA's monopoly and the strength of passenger demand, it would have been amazing if the BAA had not done as well as it has. The profits and facilities would have been forthcoming anyway. There was never any justification for state ownership, and I am delighted that the Government have recognised the force of that argument and decided to act.

Mr. Snape: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House why, in view of what he has said about the BAA's profit record since 1965, he would rather see those profits in the private sector than in the public sector?

Mr. Bright: The point is that there has been a belief that the BAA was necessary to provide these airports. I believe that with its monopoly it was the easiest thing in the world to produce the sort of growth that has taken place. If there had been private operations, there would now be a much slimmer and fitter organisation.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the principal reason for privatising airports is to provide a wider share ownership so that everybody in the community can benefit from the success of the airports?

Mr. Bright: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. I shall deal with that later in my speech.

The form that privatisation takes will be crucial. Until the BAA comes forward with its proposals to the Secretary of State, it will not be possible to judge precisely how that is likely to operate. I am sure that my hon. Friends will wish to know in detail about the relationship between the holding company that has been envisaged and its seven airport subsidiaries.

It is vital that transactions, particularly lending, between the holding company and its subsidiaries are transparent and on commercial terms. The problems that cross-subsidisation has caused to airports such as Luton, that are outside the BAA's empire, should not be allowed to recur and the damage that that has done in the past should not be under-estimated. Care must also be taken to ensure that no under-provision of capacity arises.

The Minister will be aware of these two technical points and they are capable of resolution in Committee. The sale of the BAA will provide a unique investment opportunity. There is nothing new about private investment in airport terminals and hangars or even in commercial concessions. They are common in the United States and even at some local authority airports in Britain. That is certainly the case at Luton where Monarch Airways, Britannia Airways, McAlpine and many others privide facilities at the airport. The transfer of an entire group of airports to the private sector will provide those who work at the airports and those who live near them with the opportunity to acquire shares in those airports. In my view, those people ought to be given generous preference in whatever scheme is decided upon.

There is no better barrier to the Opposition's threat of renationalisation than having public ownership by real people with a real stake in the success of these airports. There is also no better incentive to the work force than having a real stake in the airport at which they work, and that is often reflected in the service received by the public.

I appreciate that the sale will have features which make it rather different from previous disposals. It is entirely right that matters of security and safety should remain with the Secretary of State. Given the bilateral arrangements between Governments about international air routes, it is also inevitable that the licensing and control of air traffic distribution should remain with the Secretary of State. I see no realistic alternative to the regulation of charging policy and trading practices which might exploit airport users. If the CAA and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission did not exist, we should have to invent them or to devise substitutes for them.

The efforts of successive Governments to define airport policy have been complicated by the contrast between the shortage of passenger capacity in the London area and the evident surplus in the regions and in Scotland. The latter, I believe, is largely the result of over-optimistic assumptions by local authorities about traffic growth, and the consequent misinvestment has in many, although not all, cases been behind the pleas for forced redistribution of air traffic. I am glad that the Government have resisted those pressures and decided to open the way to much more commercial operation of local authority airports. The formation of public companies for municipal airports is a very welcome step forward.

I appreciate the reluctance of local authorities to give up part of their empires, especially when they have been responsible for the airports for many years, but I do not believe that the ownership and control of airports is the essential function of local government. If it were, there would be even more under-used airports. It would be especially unfortunate if attempts were made to frustrate

the purposes of the Bill in that area, and I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is taking powers to forestall such manoeuvres.

This aspect of the Bill directly affects my constituents as Luton airport is one of the town's two major employers and the only part of the London system not under the control of the BAA. We have had to compete against unfair subsidies paid to Stansted from the profits of Heathrow and Gatwick with the object of weaning away our traffic. Despite that, local airlines, with the support of the local council, have built up the passenger capacity to just under 2 million per year. We are aiming for 3·5 million as the next step, with an ultimate target of 5 million.

I know from conversations with constituents and with workers at the airport that there is a widespread desire to have the opportunity of a direct and personal stake in the airport. That is no reflection on the council, which has run the airport until now. It is a positive response to the success of the Government's privatisation programme. If the people of Luton can buy their council houses and shares in British Telecom, there is no reason why they should be denied the chance to own shares in the local airport.

Mr. Litherland: As a ratepayer to Manchester city council, I already have a share in Manchester airport. What good will issuing shares to other people do me?

Mr. Bright: In that sense, I am a shareholder in Luton airport as a ratepayer in Luton, but I know very well that if we had private capital in the airport and if I were a private shareholder there would be far more accountability. I believe that it would also be much more efficient.

Mr. Litherland: Where will the money come from?

Mr. Bright: If the local authority sells 51 per cent. of the shares in the airport, the local authority will benefit from the sale. It will have that cash to invest or spend as it wishes in the future, so no one is losing anything.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The money will go to the Treasury.

Mr. Bright: I see no reason why a scheme cannot be devised to enable a substantial proportion of the equity to pass into the hands of airport employees and local residents. It is very important to consider schemes of that kind while leaving the council with a sizeable stake. If the council retains 49 per cent., that is a sizeable stake and, to all intents and purposes, a major control in the airport. The proceeds of the sale would be available for other purposes in the town. Luton airport used to make £1 million a year, which helped to subsidise the rates. Unfortunately, at the moment the airport is not making money and it is forecasting a loss for next year.

If the council sold a 51 per cent. stake in the airport, that would probably raise enough money to make £1 million a year to subsidise the rates, yet the council would still have a 49 per cent. stake in the future profits of the airport.

For all those reasons, the Airports Bill is the most positive step forward in airport policy in the past 20 years. It removes unfair cross-subsidisation and exposes the airports to clear accounting procedures. Ownership by private investors and institutions will provide a more commercial approach to meet the requirements of the growing passenger demand. The commercial approach will also enable local authority airports, which are big business—Luton is the second largest business in my constituency—to pay management at the going rate. At the moment the airport director is limited in his earnings by what the town clerk earns. A corporation of the size of Luton airport needs the right sort of person to run it, and one must go out to the market to find the right person and pay the right sum. This opportunity to acquire commercial management experienced in aviation will help to make local authority airports much more competitive than in the past. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking this step, and I look forward to the progressive evolution of airport policy once the Bill has passed into law.

9.41 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It seems to me that we have had this Second Reading before. We have a number of major public assets, in the main making money for the taxpayer and ratepayer after huge investments of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money over a period of time. Why is this?

Tory doctrine holds that any publicly owned body which makes a profit is an evil concept and should not be allowed to continue other than in the private sector. That is the purpose of the Bill. I have never heard it suggested that all our loss-making pits should be sold to private enterprise or that rail services that lose money heavily but which are kept going because of social necessity, should be taken over by private entrepreneurs.

Clause 2 provides a lot of gravy for the private purchaser of BAA. From the appointed day all properties, rights and liabilities will belong to the new company while any debts owed to the state will be written off. That is not a bad deal—all the goodies, all the gravy but none of the debts. I would not mind getting into that sort of act myself.

Mr. Steen: Buy the shares.

Mr. Brown: I have never bought a share in my life and I will not start now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) was right to refer to clauses 12 and 13 as he did. In the debate on airports policy last June I asked why the ratepayers of Northumberland, Durham, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland should be threatened with the privatisation of their airport. As ratepayers, they have poured many millions of pounds into the development of a first-class international airport at Newcastle. During the past three or four years, it has paid profits of £2 million or £3 million a year. Now we are told that it has to be privatised.

Mr. Steen: No.

Mr. Brown: It has to be made into a plc. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]. I shall not be confused as I was on 17 June, When the Under-Secretary of State said:

"I suspect that there is a little confusion in the hon. Gentleman's mind."

I must concede that there was. He continued:

"The distinction involves passing legislation to form plcs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that we would not force those plcs to be privatised."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1985; Vol. 87, c. 70.]

Everything hangs on the Secretary of State's word. With the best will in the world, I would not buy a second-hand car from the Secretary of State. We must be fair and honest. His treatment of Tyne and Wear's integrated

[Mr. Brown]

transport system does not fill me with any confidence that his word will stay good even for the lifetime of this Government.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman says that he does not trust my word about whether local authorities will be forced to sell their airports. If he examines the Bill, he will find that there are no powers there to make them sell their shares in airports.

Mr. Steen: Shame.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) says, "Shame," but the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) might at least acknowledge the truth and tell his authorities about that.

Mr. Brown: I am willing to concede the right hon. Gentleman's point, but it would not take long to introduce a simple amending Bill after this Bill has been on the statute book for 12 months or so.

I want to be as generous as possible, as I was last June. I thanked the Minister then for lifting the limitation on air transport movements at Heathrow, and I do so again today. I hope that he will give me the assurance for which I asked last June and never got—that there will be no question of aircraft movements from Newcastle to Heathrow being shunted off to Gatwick or, worse, to that other place, Stansted. I should dearly like that assurance. I back everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) said about that.

During last June's debate, I asked the Under-Secretary of State whether he would give us that right to spend our own money on further improvements at Newcastle airport. He was unable to give any such assurance, but, surprise, surprise, shortly after that debate, Newcastle airport had its 50th anniversary celebrations and the Under-Secretary of State was the guest of honour. I was pleased to see him there and had a very good lunch with him. When he gets one of these plums, he likes to be able to say something. I was more than delighted when he was able to announce that he was giving the airport committee the right to bring forward to the current financial year improvements for next year. I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman and the Minister for giving us the year-early deal.

If I were a suspicious man I would have asked, "Why have they done this? Is it to make it more attractive for private investment?" However, I do not lay that suggestion at the door of the right hon. Gentleman as I am well aware that that would be unworthy. He knows that so long as the present consortium runs that airport, there is precious little danger of private capital being involved.

An article in this week's *Airline World* stated:

"Government plans to privatise UK regional airports have met with bitter condemnation—branded as 'draconian', 'illogical', 'devious' and 'lunatic'."

I would not go that far. Nevertheless, the strongest reaction came from the North East Regional Airport Committee, whose spokesman said:

"Although the Airports Bill does not order local authorities to privatise their airports, NERAC claims the Government is 'using back door tactics' to pressurise councils into privatisation".

I am sure that none of my hon. Friends would disagree with that. The article continues:

"Department of Transport demands for two sets of accounts to be produced by April—as a prelude to the conversion of airports into public limited companies—were described as 'quite horrific'."

Whether or not it is horrific, it is a bit off that, before the Bill becomes law, the airport committee in the north-east is being dictated to by Department of Transport civil servants about how it should do its accounting.

The Association of District Councils, whose chairman is Jim Swanwick, said this week:

"Although there are aspects of national airports policy which would benefit from some of the proposals in the Bill, there is no evidence that any district council controlled airport, ranging from the smallest grass field to international centres such as Luton, has behaved in a way to inhibit competition or damage passengers' interests".

No hon. Member who is reasonable could dissent from that. Mr. Swanwick adds:

"There is no reason for them to be shackled by this Draconian legislation. Our airports have always been open to, and have welcomed, investment by the private sector."

But there has been no rush by private investors to invest in Newcastle airport. He rightly adds:

"Ministers must listen to reason on this occasion".

I have news for Mr. Swanwick—he has far more optimism than I have. I do not believe that any Ministers in this Government will listen to reason. I commend to the Secretary of State the article by Bob Papworth on page 4 of *Airline World*. I doubt whether the right hon. Gentleman will sleep so well after he has read it, but it will do him good.

9.53 pm

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would not describe himself as either a wet or timid man, but this is a remarkably cautious Bill. I imagine that the Opposition Front Bench must have tossed a coin before the debate to decide whether to castigate my right hon. Friend for his ambition or to mock him for his timidity.

Mr. Snape: There was no need. We were prepared to do both.

Mr. Parris: I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to do both. I could compliment him on his fine head of hair and sympathise with his baldness, but there would be an inconsistency in doing so.

My right hon. Friend was almost too cautious in the claims that he made for the Bill. He said quite correctly that there were severe limits to the amount of competition that one could envisage taking place between the south-eastern airports. That is true. There is a limit to the extent that airports can compete. However, I would not say that there was no scope for competition. There are three British Airports Authority airports—Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted. There is already a measure of competition between Gatwick and Heathrow. Moreover, airports compete not merely for the total number of air transport movements, but for business with passengers who are attracted by the range of facilities on offer. They can compete for particular types of business and categories of passenger. Therefore, there is scope for competition.

No one has a kind word to say for Stansted, and I can understand why. However, sooner or later Gatwick and Heathrow will reach an absolute limit of ATMs, and there will be still more people who wish to fly to and from London. They will have to go somewhere. My right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State described modest plans for the expansion of business at Stansted. They must be modest, but there must also be expansion.

It is true that in the short term there is an element of cross-subsidy. The cost of developing Stansted is met from the profits from Heathrow and Gatwick. When International Stores opened a supermarket in Ashbourne, it probably took years for it to recoup the cost. Nevertheless, it opened that store because in the long term the supermarket could make a profit. In the long term Stansted could make a modest profit and be a helpful contribution to ATMs in the south-east.

The North of England Regional Consortium seemed to dither between two inconsistent arguments. It objects to forcing passengers to move around from one south-eastern airport to another by the subsidy of the latter at the expense of the former. Whether it objects to the idea of persuading, cajoling or bribing passengers to go to the northern airports is less clear. It is not right that passengers who may not wish to go to northern airports should be obliged or bribed to do so by Government or CAA policy.

Mr. Silvester: My hon. Friend should be clear that the North of England Regional Consortium has never suggested any form of bribery or cajoling to persuade anybody to go anywhere. Its policy is to ensure that the development of Stansted is done on a commercial basis, and that it competes fairly with other airports.

Mr. Parris: That is true. The consortium has probably been careful in its statements, but many of its supporters have been less careful. If the Bill becomes law, it will make it easier and more transparent for us to see how much Stansted is being subsidised, and to say whether it can be commercially justified. It would be difficult to do that at present.

One does not necessarily criticise the management of the BAA or local authority airports when one says that they would be better run in the private sector or, in the case of local authority airports, as plcs. On the whole, the BAA does a good job. The one local authority airport that I know is the East Midlands airport, which does an extremely good job. I do not necessarily criticise the councillors, who do a splendid job, nor the airport authority which runs an efficient little airport, when I say that the airport could be run even better, if it were organised as a plc, as I hope it will be.

I hope that some points relating to the Bill will be dealt with in Committee. Clause 27 gives the Secretary of State a power to issue directions of a general character where it is

"necessary or expedient in the interests of national security or of relations with a country or territory outside the United Kingdom".

I remember from my days in the Foreign Office that foreign Governments would often bring pressure to bear on the British Government to arrange for a flight to be allowed in or a terminal to be made available. In the Foreign Office we had the convenient excuse that we did not control the British Airports Authority in that day-to-day sense. We could pass on representations. The clause will give the Government the right to make such things available, which could put the Government in a difficult position. There should be some mechanism whereby—

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the Business.*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Airports Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Mr. Parris: There should be some method whereby the British Airports Authority could be compensated when, against its will, something that would not be in its commercial interest is forced upon it by the Government.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill includes the directions to be given by the Secretary of State in relation to facilities that he believes should be made available to passengers? That could involve the British Airports Authority in extremely onerous tasks and expense, for which it would have no redress.

Mr. Parris: That is contained in clause 58. As my hon. Friend has raised the matter, there is no need for me to repeat the point. However, in clause 27*(b)* (2)*(c)* the Secretary of State can make directions when he believes it is necessary to facilitate the discharge of any international obligation. I am not sure who defines an international obligation, whether it has a strictly legal meaning or whether the Foreign Office can say what it believes the international obligation to be. I hope that that point will be teased out further in Committee.

Clause 39 is also worrying. It provides for the regular review every five years by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of surprisingly detailed aspects of management of the BAA. We are not surprised to hear that landing charges will be subject to review, but I was surprised to read in subsection 2(2)(ii) that it applies to other activities of the BAA. The revenues and costs of those activities are taken into account by the authority in fixing charges. Given that landing charges make up a part of the total revenue of the authority I would have supposed that anything that costs the authority money or brings it revenue can be said to contribute towards the fixing of landing charges. The clause gives the Monopolies and Mergers Commission considerable powers to monitor and oversee the authority, which is inconsistent with the need to allow the BAA to manage.

I have no doubt that the Treasury will complain that that practice will reduce the asking price that the Government can quote for the authority, because it implies strict control of profits. However, I do not complain about that, because that is not the purpose of selling the British Airports Authority. The clause interferes with the freedom of the management to manage. The Office of Fair Trading, which can consider such matters, would have been sufficient to do the job.

There has been much discussion about whether local authorities should be forced to "company-ise" their airports. Will the Minister consider the case where a local authority is prepared to franchise the management of its airport and put the management out to tender so that a private company can manage the airport? In such a case there might be no need to oblige the airport to adopt the company structure, because it is franchising the airport to another company with a profitable company structure.

[Mr. Parris]

That should not be written into the Bill, but I would appreciate my right hon. Friend's thoughts on the matter at a later stage.

One argument against the Bill is that Britain is the first country to think of doing this. It was one of the first countries to develop flying machines and the first to develop a commercial jet aeroplane. The claims for this Bill are much more modest than the advances recognised by those two inventions, but it has its merits and the fact that Britain was the first to recognise them is a cause for pride rather than shame.

10.5 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): If a Ridleyism was defined as locking oneself into an ideological trap and then writing a Bill with so many escape routes as to provoke the anger even of one's hon. Friends, this Bill is full of Ridleyisms. The Secretary of State has listened to a series of hon. Members telling him that, although they support the overall principle, they have many doubts about individual clauses and the Bill's implementation. In his opening speech, the Secretary of State failed completely to give satisfactory reasons for the inclusion of those ideological hiccups.

However, it is not my brief to cover up for the Secretary of State. The Bill is shot through with nonsense. Indeed, many of its provisions are not only nonsense but would actively damage our airport system. What do we make of a Secretary of State who, in response to a question from one of his hon. Friends as to whether local authority airports would be at a competitive disadvantage were they not privatised, shrugged his shoulders and said, "Yes, but it is for the local authorities to do something about it."?

The Secretary of State should not need reminding of the fact that he is charged with the nation's airport policy, and if he believes that those airports would be better if they were privatised, he should tell the House the truth, and tell us when he intends to privatise them, since the provisions of the Bill give him the power and the ability to do so. Although he became a little upset by the earlier suggestion that the power to privatise was explicit in the Bill, he cannot deny that the power is already implictly defined in many clauses.

Although the Bill has caused great anguish in Manchester, it causes anxiety to many other local authority airports. In recent months in Manchester, the dirty tricks brigade, working from Conservative party head office downwards, has put heavy pressure on local councillors and attempted to sabotage agreements that were nearly reached in the Greater Manchester area. We saw the unedifying spectacle of the Conservative leader of Trafford borough council, who had proposed a plc structure for Manchester airport, being reprimanded by some ideological backwoodsmen and put under great pressure from local Members of Parliament, thus forcing him to break his word, given with the agreement of his group on the council, that a plc would be set up.

Interestingly, the Conservative groups in most of the districts of Greater Manchester were happy with the agreement. There was no split among the bulk of greater Manchester authorities, but one highly ideological group in one area managed to sabotage an agreement that would have been in the interests of the entire area. The Secretary of State, who encouraged that—I am fully aware of the exchanges between his Department and the local authorities—now takes to himself powers under clauses 14 and 20 to strangle a local authority airport if its performance does not conform to his desires. He could strangle it very easily under clause 14 should that local authority not come forward with a company structure that suits the demands of the Secretary of State.

The Bill would allow the Secretary of State to impose an insistence that shares be sold off, that in effect the company should be privatised. Do I detect a sign of life? Is the Secretary of State shaking his head at that? Does he want to argue this point on clause 14 about whether or not he has such powers? If he could give us a reply to that, it would be reassuring to the people in areas with local authority airports.

What is more sinister and worrying is that the Secretary of State has taken powers under clause 20 to guarantee that local authority airports will not have access to the capital market. The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) when I questioned him about this, seemed to be either indifferent or not aware that that was the case. The hon. Gentleman dismissed the point by saying, "This is how local authorities always operate." If Manchester airport is to develop, it must have access to finance on an equivalent basis to other airports.

If this Conservative Government of ours are adamant that competition is the right way to go, why do they not allow Manchester airport to compete on equal terms? If the Government are insistent upon the efficiency of free market mechanisms, why do they not allow the free market financiers to decide whether investment in Manchester airport would be efficient or not? Surely that is the test, the attitude of would-be investors, and not an insistence by the Secretary of State to truncate development with what can only be one aim in mind—to force privatisation on local authorities, of whatever political complexion, which will be reluctant to have it.

The right hon. Gentleman knows Greater Manchester will be reluctant, and particularly the city of Manchester, because it took the risk and played the entrepreneurial role. We hear a lot of talk about that on the Government side. Manchester did that, and the Government are now saying that Manchester airport and the authority will not be allowed to take advantage of the profits that their risk in the past have brought to fruition. That is the dishonesty about the whole operation. It is dishonest because the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends do not believe this nonsense about a wider share of ownership for all the people, because we already have that share. We already own the asset of Manchester airport through our capacity as ratepayers. He and his hon. Friends want rich pickings for their rich friends and nothing for the rest of us.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that the matter at issue here is prosperity for the consumer in relation to airport policy? Everything he says is based on a Socialist doctrine, but what matters to the consumer is the value he gets for his money. This Bill provides an opportunity for people at local authority and airports authority level to get something that represents value for money.

Mr. Lloyd: That is an interesting idea, but it is not in keeping with what the Secretary of State has said. He said that the interests of the company should take precedence over the interests of councils. There was no mention there

of the consumer or the regional interests. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in the needs of our airports, he should bear in mind that an airport is increasingly a vital part of our national economy and should not be divided for the advantage of individual consumers.

The single-minded doctrinaire approach of Government Members is fundamentally damaging to the future of an airports policy. If the hon. Gentleman is worried about the interests of the consumer perhaps he could explain why the Secretary of State proposes to sell off as a monopoly the British Airports Authority, which many hon. Gentlemen opposite have complained about. In many senses they have complained rightly, because there are inherent dangers for the consumer in that sort of structure.

Mr. Cash: The laws of competition apply equally to an airports policy as they apply to anything else, and that is as a result of the treaty of Rome. If the hon. Gentleman does not know that, he has not studied the Bill or its implications.

Mr. Lloyd: If we had a system in which competition was incapable of working, the hon. Gentleman would still wish to pursue his ideological claptrap in such a way as to prove that it is a completely imperfect situation for all concerned. That surely is the case.

I move on, conveniently prompted by the hon. Gentlman, to the BAA.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): My hon. Friend should bear in mind that when an intervention comes his way which is a pearl in its own setting, he should be able to reply to the word "competition" by asking who the competitor is to BAA. It will be a private monopoly. We have not yet heard whether any competitor exists.

Mr. Lloyd: If I had the experience of my hon. Friend, I am sure that I would have answered the intervention in that way. However, whoever replies to the hon. Gentleman is still replying to an argument shot through with nonsense and many ideological non sequiturs.

Mr. Litherland: Will my hon. Friend advise the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) of the initiative of our forefathers in bringing about the airport, the ship canal, the clean air legislation and the water authority? Where will such initiatives come from when enterprises are likely to be privatised at a later date by Conservatives?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. Such legislation is not only galling but disgusting. No recognition is given to our entrepreneurial ability and to those who took the risks and provided the risk capital. Conservative Members are not interested in that side of the theories. They are simply interested in the snouts in the trough, the rich pickings for their rich friends, and, no doubt, the rich pickings for some of the hon. Members who take part in our debates. That is what the public in Manchester and many other places will recognise.

The position of the BAA has already been strongly criticised by Conservative Members. Some have justified the system of cross-subsidisation under which Stansted will be allowed to continue as a necessary initial investment. That is an interesting idea, but it shows that, however little that airport is needed at present, however that issue was thought to have been resolved in the House a year ago, all that will now be ripped up by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has now sabotaged all the assurances that people thought had been given in the early debates on Stansted, and which we thought we had on the possibility of the development of regional airports, whether in Scotland or the north of England. The Secretary of State says that he will reply on transparency to prevent cross-subsidisation. He kids nobody but himself if he really belives that.

Perhaps the final and most ridiculous ideological non sequitur in the Bill is that the Secretary of State—who claims, but timidly, to be an apostle of the free market—arrogates to himself such tremendous powers in the Bill that almost any aspect of airport policy can be overriden by the diktat of the Secretary of State. That is the Government revealed in their true colours. The Government mouth the language, and sometimes practise the obscenities, of private entreprise and the free market economy, but when it comes to the final reality they grab themselves powers more dictatorial than those possessed by many Governments of nations which we would describe as centralist and which are not prepared to let local initiative thrive. Those powers kill and attempt to snuff local initiatives and the achievements of local government and have not been replaced by a more democratic private sector, even if that were philosophically possible. That has been replaced by the diktat of the Secretary of State.

The fact that many Conservative Members who represent or claim to represent contituencies in the north-west of England will tonight march through the Lobby in support of the Secretary of State will not go unremarked in their area when they betray the investment of their communities over many years.

Airports Bill

10.19 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I welcome the Bill for two reasons. First, it encompasses the privatisation of the British Airports Authority and, secondly, it produces, through clause 29, the means of limiting the amount of activity at Stansted airport.

Those purposes should receive little challenge from the Conservative Benches. We will encourage the Government in the direction in which they wish to go, and the points that we take up will be without prejudice to the Bill's objectives.

I start with a number of general comments. This is a very regulatory Bill, which is a contrast to the liberalisation that characterises many other aspects of the Government's civil aviation policy. It seems weak on competition, and the interests of the customer could have been made a little more apparent.

Hon. Members know my constituency interest in Stansted, but I hope that, as on previous occasions, I will not speak in a narrow, parochial way. My colleagues often inquire how my constituents have taken the decision to expand the airport. The BAA and its pollsters have been hard at work again and we are told that there is a 5:1 majority in favour of the expansion. However, when one reads the small print, one discovers that three quarters of those polled live in East Hertfordshire, Epping Forest and Harlow.

There is still some resentment in my constituency about what has been done. The exient of that resentment is hard to measure; there has been some reluctant acquiescence. I should tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the atmosphere might be helped if some matters were clarified fairly soon. We should like to know a little more about the finances of the proposed rail link so that we are satisfied that it is being done in an open and above-board way.

We are anxious to know about the disposal of safeguarded land that the BAA is to disgorge and we are anxious that the Government should back up their words about constraints on planning and development in the area. I know that that is not a matter for my right hon. Friend, but we are keen to ensure that there will be proper protection for the environment.

Hon. Members will recognise that there is some irony in the nature of the safeguard that those around Stansted have been offered in respect of the limit of 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. We are being asked to endorse a power that was first brought before the House in the ill-fated Civil Aviation Bill of the previous Session. I note that my right hon. Friend did not chance his luck by calling this measure the Civil Aviation Bill. He obviously hopes that the change of name will improve the fortunes of this measure.

The protection to which I referred is the only one on offer, and it is better than nothing. I do not mean to be grudging, but I cannot fail to be aware of the innate clumsiness of that instrument. It is viewed with suspicion in professional quarters, and the Heathrow scheduling committee responded to the Government's consultations by saying that expressions of capacity of an airport over a period of a year are meaningless, would be difficult to administer and cannot be related definitively to physical capacity. We shall certainly wish to examine that matter carefully in Committee.

I assure the House and my right hon. Friend that I am not trying to fight yesterday's battle. The House has endorsed the Government's airports policy and I do not seek to undermine the House's decision by weasel, back-door means. I emphasise that because there are some, maybe outside the House, who are all too ready to believe that I will use any opportunity to try to frustrate the will of the House. That is simply not so, especially in connection with the points that I wish to make about privatisation.

It seems extraordinary for me to have to complain—I am not considered the purest of all in my competitive free market instincts—that the Bill does not seem to meet the full spirit of competition as I was brought up to understand it. That reservation has been expressed in other places about Biritish Telecom and British Gas. I am inclined to give the Government the benefit of the doubt in those cases. But the BAA? Handing all the London airports over to it is a profound worry.

Even Her Majesty's Government concede that the BAA has not enjoyed the best possible reputation with users. What confidence can we have that, when given a lucrative monopoly in London, the leopard will change its spots? The BAA's influence is written large on the Government's proposals. Yet, the BAA itself is said to be worried at the volume of regulatory controls proposed.

I am not convinced that the controls will be used in ways that will seriously discomfort it. In the main essential it will be left to mine the seam of gold which Heathrow represents, knowing that that airport can be filled without problem. There is also the seam of silver at Gatwick. When both those profit centres have used up their capacity, everyone will be told to go to Stansted, which will make that airport profitable. It will not require much effort or ingenuity to make money in such circumstances.

What incentive will there be for the British Airports Authority to improve its airports? How responsive will it be to the airlines, its customers? The discipline of the international market will apply. Some business might be lost to Schiphol and Charles de Gaulle, but the tourist who wants to come to London because he wants to see London and because the value of the pound makes it particularly advantageous to come to Britain, will want to come to London. He will not go to Paris or Amsterdam. Similarly, the business man who has business in London will not satisfy his need by flying to Frankfurt. He will still want to come to London.

The cash registers will continue to ring at Heathrow and Gatwick, house full signs will be erected, and latecomers will be directed down the road to Stansted. It is a cosy little formula, but it is a formula for inefficiency and lower customer standards.

We shall want to test the argument that my right hon. Friend's way is the only way to privatise the British Airports Authority. My right hon. Friend intends to regulate closely. That will ensure that some of the disadvantages which he fears from the separate privatisation of London's airports will be avoided. It is hard to understand why the same regulations cannot apply equally to airports under separate ownership.

Heathrow, as the real money spinner, will raise a good price on its own. There is no question of that. The system for allocating slots at Heathrow could continue to serve its

purpose irrespective of ownership. After all, if the airport is full, planes will have to go elsewhere. So what is the difference? If the owners of Heathrow plc face the prospect of business going from them to airports not in their ownership, they might become a little more determined to extract the maximum possible use out of Heathrow and to invest more to maintain their primacy in the system. To be more specific, they would have to have more interest in the Perry Oaks site than any multiple owner.

Those of my hon. Friends who represent Heathrow interests might take fright at that reference, but it is essential that Perry Oaks be brought into the boundary of Heathrow airport, whatever is done with it. It is a marvellous opportunity to redesign and redevelop Heathrow 40 years after it was conceived. It could be put into the best possible shape for dealing with the civil aviation demands of the next century.

Stansted could operate profitably at a 2 million to 3 million passengers per annum level as other airports have demonstrated, especially if its development costs are written off before the facilities are open. The owners of a Stansted plc would be out to sell the attractiveness of their modern airport. That would be a competitive element.

I do not see how separate privatisation makes a prospectus more difficult to write. The future is always uncertain. People would still have a shrewd idea of what they were being asked to buy. I do not believe that a blind man could be deceived by a prospectus on the sale of Heathrow. Heathrow will be red-hot property. I am sure that the public purse will in no way suffer. However, knocking down the lot to the BAA in its present shape becomes even more worrying when one realises that the runways will go as well. What hope then of any competitive force being given access to those runways?

Another concern is the prospect that the BAA, so strong to begin with, can become the eventual purchaser of regional airports. It already has management arrangements with three other airports outside the London and Scottish system, so on what possible philosophical grounds can the Government oppose the BAA takeover of Manchester or Birmingham if they have at the outset cast their blessing on the biggest monopoly of the lot in London?

The fervour with which the Government seem to be arguing against competition is disturbing. It should sound a warning to the Conservative Benches that the proposals, however welcome in general—I shall vote for them—should be subjected to friendly but minute scrutiny. If only because the legislation will have a massive effect on the direction of civil aviation for several decades, that is what must surely happen.

10.31 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I should declare an interest as a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers Union. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) began his remarks by placing on record his appreciation of the excellent job done by the 7,000 BAA staff and other airport staff in the United Kingdom. I am sure that we are all grateful to those workers who keep the airports and aircraft operating all year round in all but the most harsh weather conditions. Yet what is to be their reward for their loyal and devoted service? Like the bus workers, as a result of the Transport Act 1985, the airport staff may find that their pension arrangements, let alone their future wages and conditions, will be undermined. Yet again, the work force is most likely to pay the price for Tory party ideology. Tory party ideology is being put first. The Government's obsession with private enterprise and privatisation is taking precedence over what is in the best interests of air transport and Britain.

The real reason for the Bill is not to do with transportation but the wish to provide another £500 million worth of assets for stripping. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North suggested that the true value of the BAA may be more than £1 billion. In an article entitled "Airports Going Private" in the January/February 1986 edition of "Airport", Mike Costello, a senior analyst at Grieveson Grant and Co., stated:

> "Will the BAA be another Telecom? Its smaller size will inevitably lower the profile. In some other respects, however, the BAA can be compared with BT: it is essentially a growth business which has enjoyed a good measure of success, and it is in the public eye. Its enviable record of profits growth in all but three years since 1965 does not tally with conventional perceptions of a nationalised industry . . . The BAA last year reported profits after interest, but before tax, of £63·9m—up 39 per cent. on 1983/4 . . . The reported profits of £63·9m have to be carefully considered when compared with most commercial enterprises. The BAA revalues its assets on a replacement cost basis and depreciates them accordingly. This approach does mean that profits are more conservatively stated than in many other companies . . . At this stage any valuation must be approximate. However, we see the BAA achieving a realistic value in the range of £450m to £520m."

Yet the BAA could be worth well over £1·2 billion. That is what the Bill is about—another sale of the century, another scandal of £500 million of public assets—our assets — being given away to the get-rich-quick merchants in the City.

As a Scottish Member, I am worried about the future, not only of our airports but of our service patterns. I fear that, although the BAA may be privatised into one company and may even have a separate holding company for its Scottish airports, there is nothing to prevent that privatised BAA from deciding subsequently to build up Glasgow airport and sell Prestwick, which would, in effect, be its death knell. The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) more or less suggested that in his intervention.

As a Glasgow Member, I, of course, want to see Glasgow airport built up substantially, and although there is spare capacity at Glasgow at the moment, if future demand begins to approach the traffic forecasts of the Department of Transport there will be a need for additional facilities at Glasgow and for Prestwick.

Prestwick needs a breathing space. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) put the case for Prestwick extremely well. He was correct to draw our attention to the agreed all-party report of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs which he so admirably chairs.

In Scotland, Prestwick like Ravenscraig is an emotive issue. Its wartime role may have something to do with that. However, there are good practical reasons for supporting a future for Prestwick, apart from giving the Secretary of State for Defence a seat in the House. Instead of arguing about Prestwick's future, we should be consolidating it.

It is irksome for us to see the almost unlimited resources provided to improve links between London and Heathrow, London and Gatwick and London and Stanstead, and the billions of pounds of private money made available for a Channel tunnel when nothing is done to improve the links

[Mr. David Marshall]

between Prestwick and the rest of Scotland. Prestwick can and must be given a role in the future of aviation and it is up to the Government to do all that they can to help achieve that.

On the future of Anglo-Scottish services, may I quote from the CAA consultative document on air traffic distribution in the London area, published in October. Under the heading "Displacement—Domestic Scheduled Services" paragraph 3.23 states:

"Another possibility would be to split the domestic trunk route services which now operate into Heathrow, for example by frequency capping. (This technique could be applied to other routes too.) While Glasgow and Edinburgh both contribute a large number of interline passengers to Heathrow, the proportion of total route passengers who are transfer passengers is relatively low. If terminal passengers on the Glasgow and Edinburgh routes are, all other things being equal, indifferent between the four London airports there might be a case for transferring say a third of these services away from Heathrow. The operators on the route would have every incentive to try to ensure that those who travelled on the route into Heathrow were interlining passengers."

That is completely unacceptable to airline passengers in Scotland. It would create confusion and treat us as second or third-rate travellers.

The Bill will not help air transport or airports in the United Kingdom. I shall join my hon. Friends in the Lobby against the Bill.

10.37 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), I welcome the change in the name and nature of the Bill. I welcome and support the Bill's main purpose, although some of the detail will require deep examination and discussion in Committee.

As I understand it, the Bill's purpose is to ensure and secure the efficient and profitable operation of the airports. It will provide the airports with the opportunity to meet the challenges of the future.

I wish to speak only about the matters which affect the local authority regional airports. I declare an interest because Norwich airport is in my constituency. Its turnover is somewhat in excess of £1 million a year, and that airport will be affected by the Bill.

I must refer to Norwich airport's history to make the points that I want to get across. Surface communications in the Norwich area are poor. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be aware of the continual lobbying that they receive from Norwich and East Anglian Members about the roads —the A11 and the A47—and the rail network. I should like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the former Minister of State, Department of Transport, because we appreciate the work that she did to promote and help with the improvement of the road network in Norfolk. We shall be continuing with the pressure to improve communications in Norfolk and in East Anglia.

Twenty years ago a decision was made to establish Norwich airport under joint control between Norwich city council and Norfolk county council. Since then, thanks to North sea oil and other business activity in the area, the airport has developed steadily and now 90 per cent. of the traffic in the Norwich airport is business-related. Recently the Department of Transport granted special capital allocation to Norwich airport for the building of a new terminal at a cost of about £4·5 million. That will hopefully be completed towards the end of 1987.

At the moment there appears to be, and I hope it will continue, a general consensus in Norwich that the aim of the Bill — to encourage that airport and other local authority airports to become Companies Act companies —is and should be supported. I welcome the decision which is now being taken by the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities and the local councils to separate the industrial estate from Norwich airport so that the element of cross-subsidy will cease and the airport will be able to stand on its own two feet in the future. I know that that is what my right hon. and hon. Friends want.

There is a general consensus in Norwich and the surrounding area that the survival of Norwich airport is paramount. That must continue to develop for the benefit of commerce and jobs in Norwich. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the staff and management of Norwich airport for the good work that they have done, particularly in recent years.

I see from local newspaper reports that local union leaders in Norwich are expressing fears for the future, but I do not see any evidence to support those fears. The Bill is broadly acceptable locally and is acceptable to JACOLA and to business and commerce. I am confident that the Bill will provide opportunity for Norwich and for those employees at the airport. Because of the commitment to the new terminal by the local authority and by JACOLA, it will be some 10 years before Norwich airport, standing on its own, will move into profit, although I see encouraging reports of significant improvement in the past year.

There are two factors in the Bill which could affect the survival of Norwich airport—firstly, the timing under which it will move over to become a plc, a Companies Act company; and, secondly, the power of local councils to support and make loans to that associated company whenever it is formed. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport will answer or clarify my questions when he replies. I understand that, under clause 12, the Secretary of State may give direction to the airport or to the authorities for the airport to become a Companies Act company. I understand that to mean that there will be a discretion or an ability to negotiate between the Secretary of State and the appropriate authorities in Norfolk as to exactly what the timing will be and when the airport will become a Companies Act company. I hope that my hon. Friend will answer that for me. Under clause 23, the council will have the power to make loans to the new Companies Act company. Again, I ask the Under-Secretary whether the authorities will or will not require the Secretary of State's permission to make those loans. My understanding is that they will not, but it is important that we have the answers to those questions.

In their recent letter and press report, the union leaders asked the local Members of Parliament to make a stand to safeguard the operations of Norwich airport. Certainly, the local Members of Parliament want to make a stand to provide the best future for Norwich airport and jobs in the area. It is essential that there is a gradual transition so that the local government commitment remains, because it is now committed to substantial investment in the airport. Therefore, I support the Bill as it now stands. I am delighted that the Government are bringing it forward.

Norwich airport, is, perhaps more than many others, in the middle of a residential area in my constituency. In particular, the residents of Old Catton and Hellesdon are deeply interested in what will happen to the airport in future. Therefore, I intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), when he talked about accountability and the teeth that the local council will have in the new arrangements, enabling it to bring forward constituents' views. I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's point, and I shall be interested to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about how consultative committees and the local council will operate, so that local residents will have their say about the future of the airport in which they are all interested, for various reasons.

Financial control under the new arrangements, as well as public spending controls, have been mentioned tonight. I have become a little uncertain about that, and I hope that my hon. Friend will clarify it. A letter that I received from the administration department of Norwich city council, quotes my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who was reported in the *Financial Times* of 17 January as saying:

"'Local authority airports will no longer be subject to public spending controls'."

That is not quite what we have heard tonight. I am not giving a view or judgment on that, but it would be helpful to me and the local authorities in Norwich and Norfolk if we could have a little clarification of exactly what the position is.

Norwich airport can and will benefit from the opportunities provided by the Bill, for increased passenger traffic, increased commercial activity and increased offshore activity. I hope that the questions that I have posed can be clarified, either now or in Committee. I welcome and support the Bill, which will help towards more effective management of local and regional airports such as Norwich.

10.47 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Experience in the House of Commons shows that Governments often make the great mistake of allowing their philosophies to become obsessions, whatever subject they touch. This is such a case. We have not yet been convinced in the House by debate or argument from the Secretary of State, today or on any previous occasion, that the Bill merits support. Indeed, there is sufficient cause for concern in that Conservative Members with special interests and experience, and representing their views in a most balanced way, have conveyed serious reservations to the Secretary of State.

In such a situation, we are bound to ask: what are the benefits of the Bill for which the Secretary of State is seeking a Second Reading? Let us put aside for a moment —not too far away—the loyalties to party, and ask: are we convinced that there are any real benefits to the nation from the Bill? We have a public monopoly. Of our 140 airports, the BAA has control over the major seven—Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, and the four airports in Scotland. That is 80 per cent. of the passenger traffic, so we are dealing with a very powerful authority. The Secretary of State has made it clear that the BAA is not to be sold off in parcels with the possibility of some competition and the injection of entrepreneurial expertise. It is to go, lock, stock and barrel, as it is. When the Bill has passed through Standing Committee, Third Reading and the other stages and is enacted, we shall still have the present chairman and board with the present personalities.

The second question then arises. By what test shall we say that these honourable men of professional standing have lapsed in running the public undertaking to justify its becoming a private monopoly? That is a very important and interesting question. If we have to have the notion and semblance of competition, there has to be a competitor. At least when British Telecom was sold off there were powerful competitors to make the running. Here there will be none.

Conservative Members have adequately expressed the concern arising from those two simple questions. Nevertheless, the sale is to take place. To what extent will the nation benefit? As I understand it, there are four main reasons for the Bill.

First, it will reduce the size of the public sector. That may or may not be desirable, but it is not a sufficient argument to support a particular private enterprise exercise —unless it is agreed that the reduction of the public sector is of paramount importance. I suggest that that cannot be argued in this case.

Secondly, we are told that it will widen share ownership. One can be pedantic about that. As was pointed out earlier, there is already public share ownership.

Thirdly, it is argued that it will increase employee involvement by allowing employees to buy shares. It is within the qualifications of the present legislation and within the powers of the House, the Secretary of State and the BAA to involve all the employees in profit sharing. What is the difference? The Company has 17 years of profits. I am sure that the employees would be just as happy with a profit-sharing involvement as with buying shares.

Fourthly, it is said that there will be greater freedom for management. Yet when the chairman and board approached the Secretary of State not long ago with an idea for managerial flexibility and initiative to bring private interests into play in setting up hotels in British airports, the Secretary of State was not satisfied with that competition and rejected the proposal.

All those reasons having been set aside, we still do not have adequate evidence to support the need to translate a public monopoly into a private monopoly. I suggest that investors will have a hybrid form of investment. It is clear from the information that most of us have that operations involving BAA administration, including terminals, runways and other plant are running at a loss. The profit is solely in the retailing done at airports. For all the regulation envisaged by the White Paper and the Bill, there is no evidence to suggest that the retailing element will not burst out and have an impact on retailing business around airports. If the profit arises from duty-free goods, that is another cause for concern—will someone say, "Stop the duty free."? Where will the retailing end of the business go then? There is bound to be some uncertainty, even for investors.

Before the Secretary of State's obsession is enacted, he should prepare himself for a Committee stage in which we shall want to satisfy ourselves that there is adequate protection for the airport user, the customer and the investor. More than that, we must ensure that the exercise does not deny the national interest.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Can my hon. Friend say with conviction that privatisation has benefited the consumer? For example, it is clear that some parts of British Telecom which used to be efficient are not so any longer, so the consumer is suffering.

Mr. Leadbitter: I agree. There has been much comment on the investments and investors in BT.

More important than privatisation, competition and value for money is the national interest. It is important to consider local authorities in areas such as mine. We on Teesside felt that it was of fundamental importance to have an airport to improve our communications with the rest of Britain and the continent. We had the most dire problems — the highest level of unemployment in the United Kingdom and rapidly declining heavy industries. We had to bring in new, active and lively industries.

Cleveland county council, and its supporting districts, and Durham county council made a judgment. We did not have profit in mind when we developed Teesside airport. We can now pursue profit, however, because the airport generates new activity. It was essential to improve our communications so that we had a chance of bringing new industries to the area. To that extent we have had some success.

Clauses 12 and 13 provide the qualifications under which a commercial undertaking can be set up as a company, and the Secretary of State saywns that in commercial practice we must work at arm's length. That might conceivably be correct in relation to buses — where they were competitors—but how does one work at arm's length when there is no competitor and when we cannot have the support of the county councils? In those circumstances, the Cleveland and Durham county councils, the north-eastern region and the airport at Teeside are placed in danger.

The Secretary of State should take account of the pleas that have been made on behalf of the local authorities. In particular, he should take account of my special plea on behalf of a very special area that has a very special problem.

11.1 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Unlike many of our debates, this one is about the present and the future rather than the past. We often talk about the past and are concerned about the loss of jobs. In this debate we are dealing with the present and the future, when jobs will exist and when more jobs will be created if we do things properly.

I must at the outset declare an interest. I am a director of two aviation companies. Therefore, I approach the Bill with some knowledge of the problems that must be faced.

The fortunes of the airlines and the airports are inextricably linked. The airlines depend on the provision of facilities by airport authorities that are fundamentlly important to airline operating standards, prices and services. The adequacy of an airline's facilities and prices and charges can have a profound effect on its commercial results, and that is the basis on which the airlines are looking at the Bill.

In the short time at my disposal I shall touch on only one or two points, but I hope to have the opportunity in Committee of raising many of the matters that are causing concern to the airlines and to myself. I am one of the rare volunteers who occasionally emerge in the House.

I place on record my welcome for the Bill. It is long overdue. It was necessary to do something about the problems facing our airports. For more than 40 years various Governments have in different ways attempted to deal with those problems. The result is what we have today, and none of us can claim that we are happy with it.

I understand the problems faced by the Government in trying to privatise anything, because that requires the co-operation of management and, as far as possible, of unions. I understand that that can inhibit some of the things that the Government wish to do.

I remind the Government — as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) did so well — that competition is an important element in our philosophy. We should not apologise for that, because the customer benefits. Anyone who thinks differently need only travel regularly between Glasgow, Edinburgh and London to realise what competition has done for the travellers on those routes. Therefore, competition pays.

The Bill deals with airports, but we should remember that airports are merely runways with facilities to get aircraft and people in and out. We should remember that if someone else comes along later and wishes to invest his capital in a facility and to compete, he should, as of right, have access to the runways and taxiways. Unless that is so, we shall not open up opportunities for competition as the Government would wish. At the end of the day competition will give customers the best service.

Since 1945 a major political issue has been: who determines the need for additional airport capacity, principally in the south-east? Recently, it has fallen to the BAA to make planning applications which are subject to extensive public inquiries. The Bill is almost silent on that. I must point out to my hon. Friend the Minister that the BAA does not own the Perry Oaks site. If an enterprising group of people puts up capital, as in the Channel tunnel project, and says, "We should like to provide an airport facility here" — as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden said, one would not build a palais de dance there—"but we cannot get access to the taxiways, runways and other facilities as of right", there is no future. I hope that that point will be considered.

There is no provision for competition in the supply of aviation fuel to the airlines. We should consider that carefully, because fuel prices are far higher than they need be, certainly compared with the other side of the Atlantic. There is inadequate competition.

As I am the only Scottish Conservative Member called to speak, it will not surprise hon. Members that I wish to put forward our views on Scottish airports. As far as I am aware, there is complete agreement about the future of Prestwick airport, and we welcome anything that will ensure the development and future of that fine airport. We are also pleased to note that Scots will decide on the appointment of the directors to the Scottish end of the BAA. I hope that is correct. It is important that decisions affecting Scottish airports are made by people who understand the Scottish dimension. Lest anyone should think there is no such thing, I remind the House of the problems that this Parliament has suffered because of a failure to understand it.

The Highlands and Islands airports are an important part of the Scottish transport infrastructure. It is right to set up a private limited company for them and to examine the real costs in detail.

Mr. Robert Hughes: When the Government tried to sell the Highlands division, they could not even find a buyer, so what is the point of setting up a plc?

Mr. Walker: I am not trying to sell the airports. I never thought that that was a viable proposition. However, we can know exactly what it costs to operate those airports. If their overheads include a substantial part of the CAA's overheads, we should not be surprised if the figures are distorted. I have never believed that the figures published for those airports were accurate. They were distorted by other factors. There is scope, certainly in the CAA airports, to privatise the management of the Scottish airports, provided it can be shown that the privatised management can make savings in the deficiency that is made up by the Scottish Office. If we can show that savings can be made to the benefit of the airports and consumers, that should be done. I look forward to seeing something in the Bill to provide scope for that.

Mr. Loyden: Evidence of the tragedies that have taken place at airports shows that in the view of all reasonable minds more regulations are required in airports rather than a relaxation. The tragedies that have occurred in Britain and throughout the world show that airports require greater constraints on their activities, not the removal of them.

Mr. Walker: I am sorry that I allowed the hon. Gentleman to intervene. He has made no attempt to study what I am trying to say. Nothing that I have said suggests that the safety aspect should be diluted. I have spent my life flying in and out of airports. The last thing that I want is an airport that is unsafe. Obviously one wants safe airports, but safety is not necessarily achieved by extra costs and expense. That has not been my experience. We want airports to be run more effectively and efficiently.

I wish to consider slot allocations and air traffic control. The Bill should provide for appeals against decisions of the national air traffic control services. That was mentioned earlier in the debate. I believe that is a weakness in the structure of the arrangements. Ministers are in a better position to consider appeals. I should like a formalised procedure, as there is with planning applications, for appeals against the national air traffic control services if its decisions—taken for whatever good reason—have an adverse affect on others using the area.

The airlines believe that the slot allocation, as operated by the scheduling committee, is sensible because it does not attempt to achieve artificial figures. It is involved in the art of the possible. The airlines make arrangements between themselves. I repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Waldon said. To publish annual aircraft movement figures is nonsense. Those figures are hourly and daily and can vary from time to time. The airlines are the best equipped to determine them.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to remember that airlines are the customers of airports. Airlines and airports exist to provide a service to air passengers. They do not exist for any other reason. Competition provides the best deal for the customer. I remind those who doubt that to travel regularly between Glasgow, London and Edinburgh to see what competition has done on those routes.

11.13 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I warmly welcome the withdrawal of the Secretary of State's earlier Bill. That demonstrates the flexibility shown by the Government in so many areas where things do not command the approval of the House. They have seen the light.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce an air transport movement limit on Heathrow and Gatwick. That is a welcome sign, but I have reservations about the fact that he is taking powers to impose limits. I understand the need to impose limits on Stansted, because that is part of the agreed deal that my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) was able to extract. However, I fear that if we were unfortunate enough to have a Labour Government, they would be keen to exercise those powers at airports other than Stansted. Of course, that prospect has receded after the performance of the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon.

My second point relates to the London airport system and traffic distribution. I still disagree with the desire of my right hon. Friend to privatise the three London airports en bloc. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I hear what my hon. Friends say. It is interesting to note that, about a year ago, few people were calling for the privatisation of the three airports separately. However, as time has gone by, the argument has become more and more persuasive that those three airports could and should be privatised separately. A measure of the complexity that has resulted from our not doing this is the fact that one third of the Bill deals with economic regulation designed to even out the problems that will be caused by privatising the BAA in its present form.

My right hon. Friend rejects our proposal on the ground that it might result in the smaller airlines being squeezed out of Heathrow. But, in reply to an intervention from me, he said that the British Airports Authority already squeezes people out as part of its plan not to allow traffic to flow naturally into Stansted, but to squeeze it into Stansted. That process would continue under British Airports Authority plc.

I cannot believe that the entrepreneurial future which my right hon. Friend envisages will be as entrepreneurial as he or I would wish. If and when Heathrow is full, the company which operates that airport will have no real incentive to maximise Heathrow as the jewel in the crown. There will be no incentive to develop terminal 5, as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden rightly said, as the key to taking out the centre of Heathrow, which is an old-fashioned airport system, and making it into a modern system, at the same time increasing airport capacity. There will be no incentive to build a STOL runway between the A4 and the M4. There will be no incentive to put airport terminal management out to franchise to another operator. Therefore, when BAA plc decides arbitrarily—as the BAA quango now does—that Heathrow is full, it will direct to Stansted that traffic which it no longer wishes to take at Heathrow.

What would happen if the three airports were run separately? The present position with the slots at Heathrow and Gatwick is clear. There are a few slots left at Heathrow, and Gatwick is pretty full. If we had been having this debate 10 or 15 years ago, it could have been argued that Stansted was a white elephant. But the fact that Gatwick is almost full and that Heathrow is getting that way means that Stansted cannot be regarded as a white

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

elephant. I believe that someone would be willing to buy Stansted as it is, with the prospect that it would take some of that overflow traffic.

I shall quote some remarks from the Heathrow scheduling committee and point out to my right hon. Friend that that committee schedules movements for no fewer than 86 airports. Its submission states that there is no need for further distribution rules, and continues:

"It should be stated that the current Scheduling Committee System for the allocation of scarce airport resources has operated successfully for many years and is far more robust than is generally thought by those outside the industry. Every carrier is acutely aware of the increasing risk that it will not achieve its desired slots and that decisions will have to be made on how best to cope with this situation when it arises. The options include acceptance of sub-optimal timings, a rearrangement of historic and the sub-optimal timings offered to achieve a satisfactory compromise, the acceptance of more optimal slots at an alternative airport and the use of higher capacity aircraft. As pointed out in our submission to the Department Transport, carriers prefer to order their own destinies by making their own decisions when faced with such problems. Government interference in such matters through the promulgation of sweeping artificial rules destroys freedom of choice by the carriers, normally motivated by the wishes of their customers and the closely associated profit motive. It is a paradox for government to advocate deregulation of air transport and at the same time introduce new regulation, punitive for some carriers, in order to enable it to happen."

Upon that I rest my case on scheduling.

Birmingham is the airport serving my constituency, and a number of points have been raised on it. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to comment upon those if he can. One is the requirement for the CAA to grant permission to levy airport charges and impose conditions in that respect. As the Birmingham airport people point out, in the White Paper this control did not apply to all airports. They see this as representing an extension of the provisions in the White Paper. They and I would like to hear the Minister's comments on that.

They also looked at the provisions in the Bill about the privatisation of the British Airports Authority and compared them to the changes in local authority ownership, which they see as being

"extremely difficult as the majority of powers in relation to the conversion of the BAA rest with the Secretary of State."

One good point they make is:

"It is proposed to extinguish all the BAA debts to the Secretary of State. This can hardly be seen fair to Local Authorities who are very unlikely to be able to do likewise and it is possible that some of the early Stansted development expenditure will be written off in this way prior to privatisation, thus improving Stansted's financial position."

I certainly do not want to see anything done at Stansted that would involve the writing off of taxpayers' money at the expense of Heathrow.

I support the Bill, despite my reservations. It will help the employees of the British Airports Authority. At least they will have a stake in their business. A lot of detail still has to be worked out. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree, as with the Transport Bill dealing with buses, to seek to fashion a better Bill in Committee.

11.23 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I welcome the Bill and the opportunities it brings to employees to buy shares. I hope that those opportunities will be at least as generous as the ones made available to employees in British Telecom. I am glad this Bill is coming after the main decisions have been taken on the expansion of the London airports system. The right decision has been made to privatise that system as a whole. I accept the need for the regulation of traffic, and I accept that for the reasons that have been given by the Secretary of State.

I represent a constituency near Heathrow and I welcome the relief afforded to Heathrow and Gatwick by expansion at Stansted. The methods that have achieved success for Gatwick could equally well be applied for the success of Stansted. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) who said that there is no reason why Stansted cannot be a success in the way that Gatwick has been a success. During the debate, some hon. Members have said that Stansted is likely to be unsuccessful, but that was also said about Gatwick in its early stages.

I should like to make two comments about parts of this Bill. First, in relation to part III and clause 29. I should like to see specific provisions for consultation with bodies other than and in addition to those inside the air transport industry. That process of consultation could usefully be widened.

Secondly, I am concerned about the limitation of ownership of shares. I am attracted by the solution put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) of a golden share provision. It would also be worth looking at the possibility of limiting the percentage holding of any individual shareholder because there are plain dangers if the airport system comes under the control of either a single airline or group of airlines or foreign interests, against the public interest of this country. Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to look carefully at the limitation of shareholdings in that way. I ask him to bear in mind that this is the first measure for the privatisation of airports and caution in that regard is worth considering.

The Bill is none the worse for the element of caution in other regards which has been criticised by some hon. Members because the Bill recognises the particular difficulties of privatising the airport system. Therefore, I commend it to the House.

11.26 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I want to concentrate on one aspect. It is fascinating that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State have, between them, probably been the most effective and successful Ministers in aviation policy for a long time. They have done a great deal for regional airports and for freeing air transport for passengers and they have tackled some of the thorny problems, including the Stansted decision.

Therefore, it is odd that the Bill comes not quite right. It is in the process of spoiling their achievement. Let me describe what I think my right hon. Friend is seeking to do and say why the Bill slightly misses out. As I understood it, the object of the exercise is to create an airport structure in Britain which is as responsive as possible to consumer demands. My right hon. Friend has to do that in the context of a highly regulated international system and in the context of heavy demands in some airports which are rather greater than the supply at the moment.

My right hon. Friend grasped the nettle on that point by giving planning permission for Stansted up to between

7 million and 8 million passengers a year or so ago. That decision was crucial because it made available at Stansted additional capacity for the London system. In the Bill my right hon. Friend has added to that a curious superstructure which I must confess mystifies me.

I am told that my right hon. Friend has set his heart on privatising BAA in one lump. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) and others have made powerful arguments as to why it should be done in separate airports. I have no doubt that that could be done in separate airports if my right hon. Friend wished. When we had discussions about the matter before, my right hon. Friend went to some lengths to secure fair competition between airports and he spoke, for example, of commercial rates of interest between the holding company and Stansted and also of the transparency of accounts.

I gave considerable thought to his propositions in those respects but I have come to the conclusion that neither are adequate for the purpose that he set himself. I do not believe that the two measures he proposes provide adequate competition between airports.

It is difficult to determine what is a commercial rate of interest when one is being underwritten by a holding company that has the booze at Heathrow at its back. Secondly, the transparency of accounts depends on the attitude of the management, and we know that the BAA wishes to develop the system around London as one airport. It will use its powers to direct, entice, bribe or in other ways ensure that airlines go to Stansted.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) was talking about whether Stansted will be successful. I have no doubt that it will be successful. My right hon. Friend's decision on planning has ensured that the airport will grow. However, in the past 12 years, Stansted has been unprofitable. The BAA has run it unprofitably, largely because it has overinvested and sought to make Stansted's capacity greater than its requirements. Nothing in the Bill will prevent that system from continuing. If Stansted were a separate airport, the requirement to develop at a proper speed would be much more firmly placed on its board.

I will not go into greater detail, but it is a pity that the Bill misses the opportunity to create a structure under which all the airports—BAA and local authority airports —would operate competitively as best they could. I noted that my right hon. Friend said that one reason why he could not privatise airports separately was that there was no practical way of producing competition between BAA airports. That is not the point. The point is that there should be competition between all airports — local authority and BAA airports. We are concerned with the whole airport structure.

I can understand why clause 20 is in the Bill. It reflects the current state of local authority airports, but if they become public limited companies, they will be subject to corporation tax. If we are to make them subject to private restraint in one sense, we cannot make them subject to public restraint in another.

My right hon. Friend has a wonderful opportunity to set all the airports on the same competitive basis, able to operate in response to market forces, subject only to international control. I ask my right hon. Friend to think again, as he pilots the Bill through the House, about the central issue of whether the BAA should be disinvested in one lump.

11.33 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): In many ways, this has been one of the strangest debates that I have heard in the 12 years that I have been an hon. Member.

It appears that the Conservative party favours privatisation and generally supports the Bill, but, without exception, every Conservative Member who has spoken has qualified his view that this is a good Bill, and those hon. Members have hedged their bets on the effect of the Bill on their local or regional airports and, in the case of Scottish Members, on the impact of the Bill on Scotland's airports.

Listening to most Conservative Members, one would have thought that there was little that was good about our airports and the way in which they are run. I am sorry that, with the exception of the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), no Conservative Member could find the time to praise those at all grades and levels in our airports who, largely through their own efforts, have made the British airports industry a comparative success in recent years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) and others asked the key questions: what is in the Bill for Britain? What impact will the Bill have on our aviation industry? Will the Bill be good for this country? Answers have been sadly lacking from the Government.

Those who have made representations about the Bill —to hon. Members on both sides, I am sure—are many and varied. Their collective view is that the Bill will not be beneficial to British aviation or to the airports industry in the United Kingdom. Even the British Airports Authority, which appears from the first parts of the Bill to be a beneficiary, is less than wholehearted in its support. Like management in any walk of life, it would rather not be under Government control but make its decisions in the commercial market.

The BAA is repelled, as are some Government Members, by the amount of central control that will be in the Secretary of State's hands. I understand the reluctance of Government Members to place too much responsibility in the hands of the Secretary of State because he is a reckless soul. One would not give him any greater task than boiling a breakfast egg because he would probably make a mess of it. I understnd the reluctance throughout the aviation industry and among Government Members to give the right hon. Gentleman the central role envisaged in the Bill.

Concern about the Bill's impact has been expressed by the users of British airports and by hon. Members on both sides of the House. British and foreign airlines have voiced their concern. In a letter dated 23 January, the British Caledonian head of government and industry affairs says:

> "Generally our main criticism is that nowhere in the Bill is the BAA actually charged with responsibility for providing adequate facilities and services at airports for users. We are also unhappy about provisions for consultation and the limited provisions for users"—

that is, the airlines—

> "to refer matters, particularly those relating to charges, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission."

I am sure that the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) will be delighted that I have put that on the record, because a successful, privately owned airline is expressing in no uncertain terms its reservations about the Bill.

[Mr. Peter Snape]

Not only British airlines have expressed strong reservations. In a joint submission, Pan American and TWA express their deep concern about the Bill. They say:

"The deficiencies in the proposals are as follows: As a proposal for regulation the Bill is seriously deficient . . . The main defects are that there is no duty on the BAA to provide any services or facilities or meet any proven demand . . . The CAA has insufficient power to regulate directly the level of charges. The interposition of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission makes the procedures laborious and ineffective . . . The charging standards to be applied are not laid down in the legislation."

They detail another four fundamental objections which foreign airlines have about the flaws in the Bill.

The views of another group have never been sought, yet I am sure that if they were it would say that there was no need for this doctrinaire nonsense. No one has bothered to ask passenger and freight customers whether they are satisfied. No one has bothered to solicit the views of those who use our airlines to send cargoes all over the world. The Government, in their habitual burst of blind ideology, believe that the privatisation process, by one method or another—in this case, by the back door—is necessary to bring about a better service, but no one else believes that. Such a belief has never been properly amplified in this debate.

Given the lack of time, I regret that I am not able to comment in detail on all the views expressed by hon. Members. I shall refer to just a few. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) gave his usual effective defence of Manchester international airport. Basing his comments on his knowledge and constituency involvement, he referred to the belief of all the grades of people who work at Manchester airport that the Bill's proposals will not be good for the future of the work force or of the airport. Like many other hon. Members, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe referred to the lack of assurances on the abolition of the Stansted subsidy and the effects on Manchester and other airports if that subsidy is not removed.

The hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) rightly pointed out the unfairness of writing off the BAA's debts yet leaving local authority plcs saddled with the debts which they have, for good reason, incurred over the years. He rather stood reality on its head by saying that there was no need to force passengers to use airports such as Birmingham. The reality is that passengers from the Birmingham area—the constituency of the hon. Member for Meriden—are forced to use airports in the south of England because of the impact of existing policies on regional airports. I regret that the hon. Member for Meriden has not yet shed his illusions as successfully as he has shed the pounds in recent months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) made his usual able defence of Scottish airports, especially in relation to Prestwick's future.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) demonstrated a number of illusions dear to his heart. Obviously, he failed to understand the difference between a local authority and a Companies Act company. When asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) why a BAA successor company should be afforded the facility of open market funding when a similar facility was denied to a plc under the control of a local authority, the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale gave no answer. We are entitled to ask: why is there an inherent unfairness in treatment? Why should the BAA be allowed access to the open market and local authority plcs?

We saw a typical example of the blinkered ideology of the Secretary of State. He fails to understand that the employment of private capital is not necessarily tied in with share capital. Surely, private interests invest in undertakings when they can secure a proper return on their capital. It might surprise some Conservative Members—it will surprise the Secretary of State because he knows nothing about these matters—that millions of pounds of private capital are already tied up in airports such as Manchester international airport. Private capital—I pay tribute to it—put up £10 million to build a cargo terminal at Manchester airport. Private capital would not have put up such an amount if it had any fears about the way in which Manchester airport was operating or would operate in future. Private capital invested to show its confidence in Manchester airport's public ownership. That is a truism that the right hon. Gentleman fails to understand.

I return, as have other hon. Members, to the subject of the restructuring of the airports in the London area. No fewer than 10 hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed their desire to see the ending of the subsidy to Stansted airport. There is a big difference between eliminating that subsidy and showing it in Stansted's accounts. Until and unless we receive that assurance, the reservations that I have expressed will bother hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that they will continue to exercise hon. Members' minds in Committee.

It would be remiss of me if I did not refer to the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst). He rightly reminded the House of the shambles that the right hon. Gentleman made of his Civil Aviation Bill. I am not the one to remind him of that, because when I asked him about his back-door privatisation a few hours ago he told me that I would not understand because I was thick. I will take that from many Conservative Members, but I have some difficulty in accepting it from the right hon. Gentleman. I might not have gone to the same school as he did, and I might have left school a good few years before he did, but I have not been in court three times in the past two years, and it has not been said about me by a High Court that I have acted illegally, irrationally and improperly, as has been said about the right hon. Gentleman on no fewer than three occasions.

We need no lectures from the likes of the right hon. Gentleman on who in the House is and who is not thick. I hope that we shall see him at least fleetingly in Committee, because if he does not know much about the Bill, he knows how to make us laugh. We might need a few laughs in Committee. When the Committee deals with the ideological rubbish that is before the House we shall need people with some knowledge of aviation from both sides of the House. Despite what has been said by the hon. Members for Saffron Walden and for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester)—I normally disagree with him, but I pay tribute to his interest in these matters—I hope that they will be on the Committee to give the right hon. Gentleman the benefit of their knowledge of these matters.

I even hope that we shall see the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on the Committee because he is always good for a bit of chuckle if he does not know much

about the subject. I hope the right hon Gentleman does not exclude those of his right hon. Friends who helped the Opposition humiliate him on the Civil Aviation Bill, because if anyone needs humiliating it is the right hon. Gentleman. The Bill is not even accepted by most of his hon. Friends.

That is a nice set of molars that the right hon. Gentleman has and I appreciate the view. If the Bill is not improved drastically in Committee, he will be doing a great deal of yawning.

11.49 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I feel that I must speak on behalf of my constituents, because over 12,000 housing applications have been made to the East Herts district council since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced his decision to expand Stansted airport. According to the report on Stansted, 12,000 houses are required for the expansion of that airport to take 15 million passengers per annum. Those 12,000 were in Bishops Stortford alone.

I shall speak in note form, in view of the time. I very much welcome the Bill because it will prise the British Airports Authority away from the dead hands of the Department of Transport and the Treasury and enable it to operate more rationally and competitively. I am sorry, as are my hon. Friends the Members for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), that the competition element of the Bill is seriously limited. We will end up with a series of plcs, mostly owned by local authorities, plus the British Airports Authority owning the whole of the London system and the Scottish system. The London system will not be properly competitive unless the airports are denationalised separately. I hope that my hon. Friends will join me in Committee in persuading the Secretary of State to accept a amendment to denationalise them separately.

I agree that Heathrow cannot possibly be redeveloped as is necessary, because it is now reckoned to be not just a second-rate airport but a third-rate airport. Many travellers from the United States of America and friends of mine say that it is the worst airport in the world for tourists to travel to. What a reputation.

It is the British Airports Authority, which runs Heathrow, to which the Secretary of State is going to give the monopoly to develop the whole of the London system. It will be a disincentive to the development of London airport not to take in the Perry Oaks site and the land to the M25; the whole airport needs a total redevelopment and I hope that it happens quickly.

I do not believe that the air traffic movements limitation in the development of Stansted which my right hon. friend the Secretary of State has used to try to redeem his pledge to restrict the number of passengers to 8 million per annum, can possibly be effective. Any measures taken by the Government to limit airline access to the airport that they want to go to will have serious international repercussions which my right hon. Friend, the Foreign Office and the Government will be unable to withstand. Therefore, I do not believe that we can implement the limitation at Stansted and I do not believe that my right hon. Friend can direct airlines and refuse it. Nonetheless, as a cosmetic measure, I suppose we will have to be satisfied with it. It would be much better if my right hon. Friend allowed proper competition between the airlines.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will make clear to the House what he means by the financial write-off which has been described. If he means writing off the development expenditure at Stansted airport, he is going back on his pledge that Stansted would not be cross-subsidised from other airports belonging to the British Airports Authority. I am grateful for the limited time that I have been given to speak on the matter and urge my right hon. Friend to accept amendments in the way I have suggested.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. Anthony Steen.

Mr. Snape: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is customary in such matters for agreement to be reached between the usual channels about what time the wind-up speeches start. If I had known that two hon. Members would be called after me, I would not have considerably truncated what I have to say on the matter. We know that there is little honour in the party opposite these days because we saw that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sure that he realises that the Chair has no knowledge of the usual channels. However, I know that the House decided at 10 o'clock to exempt the business.

Mr. Loyden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I represent a constitutency in which there is an airport. I have been on my feet on four occasions and have not been called, but hon. Members from the Conservative party have been called.

11.53 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is not the only one who has had to make a truncated speech, and he is not the only one who has waited through the evening to speak. I hope that I can make a short contribution to the debate.

Mr. Loyden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have sought to catch your eye on at least five occasions. I represent a constituency in which there is an airport. I think that it is reasonable to argue that in those circumstances a Labour Member should have been called. I support the views of my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) who takes exception to the fact that four or five Members have been called from the Conservative Benches and not one Labour Member has been called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made two or three interventions, but I have not seen him rising.

Mr. Steen: Because of the late hour, I propose to confine my remarks to two issues. The Bill, which I wholeheartedly support, has two principal omissions. The first is that restrictive practices exist in the British Airports Authority. The Bill is silent on those practices. They exist at both trade union and management level.

I take provincial airports as an example. At East Midlands airport only one oil company provides oil for all the airlines that land at the airport. That does not lead to competition. Leeds is also a local authority airport, and there is only one caterer there permitted to put in bids. The same goes for Belfast, where Trusthouse Forte has a monopoly catering for all airlines that land at Belfast.

I suggest to the Secretary of State that in the provincial airports and the BAA airports, such monopolies should not

[Mr. Steen]

be allowed and the Bill should spell that out. That is also true of ramp handling at Heathrow and airport servicing at Gatwick. I should declare an interest in one airline, British Midland, which flies out of Heathrow, and is prevented from doing ramp handling of its own.

Secondly, the principal shortcoming in the Bill is in clauses 28 and 29, which provide centralised control for the Secretary of State in the shape of air transport limits, if and when they are reached. Those limits have not been reached. Rather than look at the scheduling committee, the Government should look at the national air traffic control services, which is riddled with bureaucracy and has a strong bias towards the military. It refuses to allow London traffic to grow as fast as it should. Yet the inspector at the terminal 4 inquiry permitted air transport limits at 240,000 and the Secretary of State allowed them to grow to 275,000. The CAA has now said that they can grow to 325,000. I believe there is more capacity, and this needs to be utilised.

Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State not to penalise the airlines but to allow natural growth to occur. However, the NATCS should be investigated to see what spare capacity there is. We believe for this reason that as much as 30 per cent. of airport capacity is left at both Heathrow and Gatwick.

This is clearly not the time to cover all the points that I would like to make. I was going to mention noise and other issues. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loydon) is not the only one to feel aggrieved. Some of my hon. Friends feel equally aggrieved. Perhaps we can debate this issue in Committee.

11.58 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool. Garston): I support the view expressed by hon. Members from the northern region, who argued that there has been a shift in the balance of airports towards the south, which is a serious and important economic factor. I say that in passing because I do not want to deal with that matter. The case has been well argued in the House by hon. Members representing Manchester and other constituencies.

I wish to refer to the apparent disregard of regional airports in the Bill. The airport in my constituency provides important services, particularly to the Isle of Man and Ireland, but those services are totally disregarded by the Secretary of State in his consideration of regional airports. I should have thought that it was generally accepted that air traffic of that kind is part of modern life and that the development of airports should be encouraged wherever they are proved to be enhancing the industrial life of the area. The Secretary of State has left those airports in grave doubt about their future, as the concern being expressed by the local authorities shows.

The regional airports are not only an important part of the development of internal air traffic throughout the United Kingdom, to which I hope that we all subscribe, but certain airports have special interests which must be considered. At present, the Isle of Man and Irish trade is mainly served by Liverpool Speke airport, but its future is now in doubt. When the Bill goes into Committee, proper consideration must be given to the regional airports and the service that they provide to the economy generally and to the regional economies particularly.

If the Bill deprives us of those services it will create a further downward spiral in areas such as Merseyside. The Secretary of State must not disregard the shift in the centre of gravity of the airports industry from the north and to the south and he must give proper consideration to the special interests of Liverpool when considering future airport development generally.

12.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) accused the Government of electioneering. Presumably he meant that the Bill would be very popular. I assume that that is why he lapsed into less than total coherence when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked whether the Labour party would renationalise the BAA if it ever returned to office.

As I suspect that the House wishes to reach a fairly rapid decision, I shall pick up just one or two of the major points raised in this informative and closely argued debate and leave the points of detail for consideration in the Standing Committee, as has been suggested.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) accused the Government — certainly he was accusing somebody—of not paying enough attention to regional airports. I suspect that no Government in the history of this country have done more for regional airports than we have, both in the traffic rights that we have obtained for airlines and in capital allocations to those airports. Therefore, I completely and utterly dismiss that charge straight away.

Mr. Favell: What will happen to the regional airports will be what has happened before. Liverpool has been under the dead hand of municipal Socialism for years. That is why the airport has failed. The Bill will leave airports, such as Liverpool, to town hall incompetence. That danger also faces Manchester airport. Will my hon. Friend please reconsider allowing the privatisation of Manchester airport? The London airports will undoubtedly be a great success, but the regional airports must not be jeopardised by leaving them in the hands of municipal authorities.

Mr. Spicer: Perhaps I might consider Manchester airport and its future immediately as it was a major consideration in the speeches of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I understand that there was a failure to agree on the immediate future ownership of the airport at a meeting of the Greater Manchester district councils last Friday.

The Bill is clear about the airport's future. As it has a turnover of more than £1 million, its local authority owners will be required to submit a scheme for approval to the Secretary of State by which the airport will become a plc. The uncertainties about the airport are to do with its immediate future. Manchester city council refused to meet the terms of Trafford district council that the airport should be turned into a plc, subject to conditions outlined in the Bill.

The Government have already made their stance clear in a parliamentary answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on Friday 6 December. We are dissatisfied with certain aspects of the scheme for the formation of a plc proposed

by Manchester city council. If the council secured the unanimous agreement of the district councils and went ahead with its scheme, we would not be able to prevent that, but we would reverse those parts of the city scheme of which we disapprove once we had the powers to do so after the Bill had been enacted.

I am going into some detail as what I am saying is of general application to local authority airports. We dislike the idea that the airport company should look exclusively to Manchester city council for the supply of specialist services. The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) was also truncated, but I know that he is worried about this. We say that the airport should at least have the choice of looking elsewhere for its services.

We also believe that, under the Manchester city council scheme, airport management would be less than adequately represented on the board of directors. We reject any condition imposing a tight restriction on the sale of shares in the airport to the private sector, and we dislike the proposal that would enable Manchester city council to strip the airport of all of its physical assets, which it would lease back to the airport company. We have made it quite clear that all of these proposals would undermine our objective of turning Manchester airport and other local authority-owned airports into businesses operating at arm's length from their owners.

Under the Local Government Act 1985, if the districts of the Greater Manchester county council do not unanimously agree to the arrangements for the allocation of the county council's present interest and for the operation of the airport, the Secretary of State will consider tranferring the county council's interests to the passenger transport authority. As the new structure must be in place by 31 March and as orders giving effect to the new structure must be put before Parliament at least 21 days before 31 March, I see little practical alternative now to the PTA solution for Manchester airport, given that all of the parties—we must all agree on this at least—especially the management, must be given time to prepare themselves for the new structure.

The other major theme of the debate has been the privatisation of BAA airports, and it has been mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), for Meriden (Mr. Mills), for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), for Withington, and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). The Government considered such a proposal seriously. We eventually came down against it for the reasons that I shall now give. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), we were unconvinced that the three London airports could be set in genuine competition with each other.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Withington. As Heathrow would be so overwhelmingly the preferred choice of airlines into the foreseeable future because of the benefits of interlining that it offers, the distribution of traffic between the airports would not be so much the product of competitive pressures as of regulations and traffic distribution policies that we would have to lay down.

Secondly, we are concerned to maintain the rights of independent domestic airlines to serve Heathrow airport. This policy of providing competition among British carriers would be much more difficult to sustain if Heathrow were privatised independently, when the overwhelming pressure on the airport owner would be to maximise the use by large international carriers. Put a different way, it is much easier for us to ensure that Heathrow does not discriminate against smaller carriers if we have given the airport owner sufficient scope and capacity elsewhere within his own system.

Thirdly, with Heathrow and Gatwick already about full at peak times—I accept that it is only at peak times—and with a forecast annual increase in traffic of about 4 per cent. per year to 1995, we believe that there is an immediate need for extra capacity to be provided within the London system. We debated that at length last summer. A separately privatised Stansted might not provide sufficient capacity in time to meet the need. I readily acknowledge that this is one reason why those who do not wish to see the expansion of Stansted favour the separate privatisation of that airport.

Fourthly, the problems of selling the airports separately would doubtless delay the process and benefits of privatisation. That argument will appeal to my hon. Friends if not to the Opposition.

All this having been said, we very much agree with the views expressed by several of my hon. Friends that there should be firm safeguards against potential monopolistic abuse by the BAA company. With this in mind, we have built some quite specific controls into the Bill.

For a start, each of the seven BAA airports will be formed into individual companies with separate and totally transparent accounts. Any transactions between the parent company and the subsidiaries will be completely open. Loans by the parent company to the subsidiaries will be made at market rates of interest. Above all, the CAA will be given direct powers to prevent the imposition of predatory charges by any one of the airports.

In direct answer to my hon. Friends who asked about cross subsidies, loans at market rates will be allowed and perhaps even a measure of equity financing. Cross investment will also be allowed, but cross subsidy will not. Every five years the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will make a complete review of all the business activities of the airport, including commercial activities such as car parking and car hire concessions. If the commission finds any activity that it considers against the public interest, it must report these to the CAA. The CAA then has the duty under the Bill to impose conditions on the airport owner to remedy the practice. I hope that in some way that will meet the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

I listened carefully to the arguments of my hon. Friends the Members for Cannock and Burntwood and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). As they know, we have asked the CAA, after consulting the industry, to make recommendations to us about traffic distribution. I hope to receive shortly at least an indication of these recommendations.

The Government have laid down certain conditions that they will wish to see maintained in any arrangements that are made for traffic distribution. The most significant of these are that competition between airlines must be maintained to the benefit of the user and that satisfactory access to Heathrow and Gatwick must be provided for domestic airlines. We must also maintain London's position as the world's most important centre of international air travel, with Heathrow remaining

[Mr. Spicer]

London's main scheduled international airport and Gatwick its second hub. We must also avoid undue dislocation to the airlines using the airports.

I am, of course, deeply conscious of the anxieties of the airlines about traffic rules. If we make new rules—and it is by no means inevitable that we shall—we shall have a very strong regard for the views of the airlines and, indeed, for the way in which existing voluntary arrangements have worked through the operation of the scheduling committee.

If passed by the House, the Bill will unashamedly play its part in reversing the ratchet effect of Socialism which in the 1960s and 1970s some people had begun to believe represented the natural course of history. The energies, resources and discipline of the private sector will be harnessed directly to the development of the London and Scottish airport systems. The right of ownership will be spread to employees and to local residents.

The local authority airports will be given the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of the BAA. At the very least, those airports will be given the commercial framework and greater autonomy, but also the greater level of accountability, which will flow from being turned into public limited companies. That has enabled us to give to local authority airports the right to reinvest their profits freely without requiring the permission of central Government.

If the opportunity is grasped by the local authorities to sell a majority of the shares in their airports to the public, the development of the airports will be free from all capital controls. Subject to planning controls, they will be free to expand at a pace determined by Market demand. They will also be able to attract private resources to help them to do so.

Ten of the 16 local authority airports which are relevant to the Bill make losses. The experience of Southend airport and, indeed, Southampton suggests that with private sector involvement, more robust marketing, more imaginative development and more determined cost control, many of them would stop making losses.

Unashamedly in the Bill we are setting a new pace. We are giving the opportunity to the public, employees, local residents and travellers to participate directly in the ownership of one of Britain's most dynamic industries. It is a fact that Britain is at the crossroads of international travel. Heathrow and Gatwick are the first and fourth busiest international airports in the world, and Manchester is one of the most successful in Europe.

The Bill accepts that the airport business no longer needs the protection and capital controls which exist in the public sector. We wish to liberate the energies and the talents of the industry to the economic benefit of those who participate in it and the nation as a whole.

Amendment negatived.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 257, Noes 180.

Division No. 51] **[12.17 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral, W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Major, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*

Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jonn, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

AIRPORTS BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Airports Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(*a*) any expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of the successor company (within the meaning of that Act) or rights to subscribe for any such securities;

(*b*) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the provisions of that Act;

(*c*) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the extinguishment of the liabilities of the British Airports Authority to the Secretary of State (other than accrued liabilities) in respect of—

(*a*) the Authority's commencing capital debt; and

(*b*) loans to the Authority made, or having effect as if made, under section 6 of the Airports Authority Act 1975;

(3) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

DISABLED PERSONS (SERVICES, CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Erith Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

12.29 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise on this Adjournment debate a subject that concerns not only my constituents, but many of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend)—the future of Erith and district hospital. Although I do not wish to indulge, at this late hour, in a history lesson, extolling the good work that the hospital has done and the great service that it has given to the community in the past, at the outset I wish to place on record my determination to see the hospital developed and expanded, and to consider the recent events that have brought it to its present position.

Erith and district hospital has been serving the community in my constituency since the day it was opened in 1924. It was built by public subscription and even today it continues to depend heavily on support from its league of friends who give funds, organise events and take a great interest in the hospital and its patients. It the early days it was known as the Erith cottage hospital, and, though the name has changed, the atmosphere is still that of a cottage hospital providing a much needed service to the local community.

My constituency forms the northern part of the Bexley health district. Like many other outer London areas the public transport routes run from east to west, that is, into the centre of London. Unfortunately for my constituents, the sole district general hospital, Queen Mary's, lies in the south of the borough in Sidcup and is difficult to reach by bus. Queen Mary's is a first-class hospital, but it too is experiencing difficult days because of shortage of finance. Consequently, my constituents rely heavily on the Erith and district hospital and, to a lesser extent, on hospitals that are outside the health district but to the east or the west and therefore within easier reach. One of these is St. Nicholas hospital in Plumstead which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health advised me recently will shortly be closed.

For a district in the supposedly affluent south-east of the country, Bexley is severely under provisioned and underfunded. We have one district general hospital and one small local hospital where facilities are being constantly reduced, that is, the Erith and district hospital. The underprovision dates back to the break-up of the larger area health authorities, in our case Greenwich and Bexley area health authorities. Regrettably for my constituents, when the area authority was split up, the majority of hospitals and services were on the Greenwich side of the divide. This problem has become even greater now that district self-sufficiency is the order of the day. That is one of the reasons why the facilities of the Erith and district hospital are so important to me and to my constituents.

Erith hospital has two wards open and a third ward, Hawkins ward, permanently closed. As my hon. Friend will agree, it is sad to see any ward closed. At present, minor surgery is provided together with some geriatric care, and altogether around 475 inpatients are cared for each year by the Erith and district hospital. In addition, 14 weekly outpatient clinics are held covering a wide range of specialties and caring for some 12,500 patients a year. There is also an excellent physiotherapy unit and a surgical

fitting facility that brings the total number of outpatients dealt with up to nearly 32,000 a year. There is a great deal of work to be done and the potential to do a lot more in this small hospital.

The other facility of particular importance is the accident and emergency department. It can best be described as a walking wounded facility. It cannot and does not attempt to deal with ambulance cases. But it provides an important local service, particularly to local industry. It is, of course, in my constituency that the boroughs industry is concentrated and so its importance to industry will not be missed by my hon. Friend. Last year the accident and emergency department dealt with almost 7,000 cases.

I have not quoted to my hon. Friend the number of patients cared for without a real purpose in mind. What concerns me is that, despite all the efforts of staff within both Erith and Queen Mary's hospitals, the number of patients on the district waiting list has increased in 18 months from 1,077 to 1,399, an increase which should concern us all, particularly in Bexley. This is at a time when the national trend is downward, a my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues have regularly informed the House.

In my constituency we are endeavouring to replace the old and dying industries with new and dynamic ones in order to create jobs that are so vital in the economy today. We have the industrial sites in Thamesmead, Belvedere and Erith itself. We urge industry to locate in our area where there is a skilled work force, plenty of space, and, thanks to the efficiency of Bexley council, low rates. Yet despite all those advantages, and others such as a good location with motorways nearby, we are hampered by a lack of local hospital faciltiies for both industry and the families that boosting local industry brings.

The value of Erith hospital is known to local people and to Bexley health authority alike. The chairman of our district health authority has long championed the cause of Erith hospital and is in the forefront of the campaign to improve services in the area, services which regrettably have been allowed to decline for decades. The decline of Erith and district hospital in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s has been allowed to go on for far too long. I want to arrest that decline and begin the long haul back to prosperity and better services in Erith. Erith hospital is important to our quest to renovate and revitalise our local area.

Obviously there is a great need for the kind of facilities that only a large hospital, such as Queen Mary's, can provide and I am the first to acknowledge, having recently been round that hospital, the first-class facilities provided there in Sidcup. But there is also a need for better local health care at Erith hospital. At the moment it provides a good local service but a better service is needed by the local community. That the authority recognised, and it published proposals for the upgrading of Erith hospital to be effected in the mid to late 1980s.

That scheme was widely welcomed locally as being positive, progressive and practical. The changes proposed would have cost just over £2 million and would have increased running costs by about £800,000 per annum. But for that sum, which is not a great deal of money, even for a badly underfunded district like Bexley, a whole host of new services would have been provided. Those would include new day surgery facilities, the reopening of Hawkins ward for the provision of general practitioner beds, a facility much in demand in an area such as Erith town ward where the population is stable, aging and close knit; the establishment of a geriatric rehabilitation unit and an elderly, severely mentally impaired day care facility.

Those changes would have provided much-needed facilities in the north of our district and made the district self-sufficient in terms of geriatric care — of great importance to us and, I believe, to the Government. But I regret to have to advise my hon. Friend this evening that in November last year, as a result of the district's cash crisis, those plans were put on ice, to be shelved until 1993. In my mind and in the minds of many local people associated with the hospital, both as staff and as patients, that means for ever.

Regrettably, I also have to advise my hon. Friend the Minister that even abandoning the scheme has not solved the financial problems of the district and it is unlikely that the money will ever be found to carry out the development unless additional funds are forthcoming—from, I hope, the regional health authority.

It seems that the bubble has burst and that my constituents, who live in an area with an increasing population and expanding industry, will not get the facilities that they want and which I believe that they need. It seemed almost beyond belief when the Bexley health authority said that this modest scheme had to be shelved. Yet the worst was still to come. A few weeks ago, Bexley health authority announced that it had overspent by a further £100,000 and that more savings were being sought. One proposal put forward by the authority was that all surgery and inpatient care at the Erith hospital should be terminated.

At a meeting of the authority a few weeks ago, members refused to vote in favour of such a proposal. They believed — correctly, in my view — that ending such facilities at Erith hospital would mean an end to its viability and, therefore, bring about its closure by default. They clearly saw the true effect of the proposal and refused to implement a cut which would have been fatal to the future of Erith hospital. The decision has been referred to the regional health authority to obtain its agreement to an overspend. The decision of the regional authority is awaited.

I wrote to Sir Peter Baldwin, the regional chairman, and was interested in his reply, as it contained an important admission. Sir Peter admitted that Bexley district health authority is underfunded, getting only 89 per cent. of its funding needs at present. We in Erith and Crayford already knew that—we witness it at first hand—but it was nice to have it confirmed by the experts.

How such a situation can occur in a part of greater London, an area where health care provision is supposedly so much better than elsewhere, is beyond my comprehension, yet I know that health care facilities in my constituency and in Bexley district health authority are poor and that unless drastic action is taken they will get a great deal worse. Despite that evidence of the problems, we are a RAWP-losing area—a fact which is hard to believe, let alone understand.

I ask the Minister what can be done. I believe that the crisis faced by the Erith and district hospital and by Bexley health authority could have been avoided if a more realistic approach to funding the district had been taken by the South-East Thames regional health authority in the recent past.

[Mr. David Evennett]

Of course, the historic legacy of the area having been divided into districts has left Greenwich with twice as many hospitals as Bexley and, as surrounding districts have reduced services and, thus, limited out-door care, the demand in Bexley district has increased. Combined with the underfunding and underprovision, there is the reduction caused by RAWP. Urgent action is needed.

The lack of funds and facilities has stretched the district to breaking point and the weakest link in the chain—the one that I fear will break—is Erith hospital. If facilities have to be cut at one of the two hospitals in Bexley, the main general hospital will be protected. That must be right, because it is the principal hospital in the district. However, that means that Erith hospital will have to suffer and that I cannot swallow.

Unless action is taken, the much-needed local facilities at Erith will be lost for ever. Sacrificing services, as my hon. Friend will agree, has nothing to do with good health care. I hope that the chairman of the regional health authority and my hon. Friend will take note of that. A campaign to save an improved Erith hospital is being conducted. It is not partisan. It is a cry from the local community.

I accept that this Government, who have my total support, have done much to aid the National Health Service. We have seen many improvements and much has been done for health care. But in Bexley the evidence seems to be to the contrary. We seem to be at the suffering end, through no fault of our own.

I urge my hon. Friend to visit Bexley to see at first hand the area, its two hospitals and the many problems. A delegation from the community health council will shortly visit the Minister to discuss the problems. Such an opportunity to exchange views is always welcome. Action is required, not words.

This is a cry from the heart from myself and my constituents. It comes particularly from the elderly and those who have elderly relatives in the area. We hear so much about the need for geriatric care. We have evidence to support that need and a scheme to meet it. We have an opportunity in Erith and district hospital to do much more beyond that. We now need support. I urge my hon. Friend to do whatever he can to assist and support us and so ensure a good future for Erith hospital.

12.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the problems outlined tonight. I pay tribute to the diligence with which my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) pursues this, as he does all issues within his constituency.

First, I shall set the issue in the national context. By doing that I hope to set at rest some of the forebodings about the future of the Erith hospital. It is important to recognise, as my hon. Friend said, the Government's record nationally. It is important that the transfer of resources in real terms is felt throughout the country, not least in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Since 1979 we have increased spending on the NHS more than any other Government. We are talking about 20 per cent. in real terms. The announcements for next year —1986-87—will represent an increase of 6·7 per cent. or over 2 per cent. more than the currently forecast inflation. Within that will be the effects of the cost improvement programme which is planned to total £150 million during the year. Capital spending is also being increased each year. So the general national picture is good and belies the impression which is given in the House, by the media and by interests whose objectives are to paint unnecessarily black and bleak pictures of what is happening in the National Health Service.

We are sadly familiar with the acronym RAWP—the policy of redistributing resources between different parts of the country. That policy has been followed for about 10 years. We are set to continue this policy. The aim is that regions that have historically received less than their fair share of resources or have rapidly growing populations will receive the largest increases.

The decision on the 1986-87 allocation reaffirms our commitment to redistribute resources more fairly. Substantial progress has been made since the arrangements recommended by RAWP and, as regions move closer to their targets, it becomes increasingly important that the targets are a reasonably accurate measure of need. That is why, in December, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked the NHS management board to review the operation of the RAWP formula, particularly the ways in which relative needs in different parts of the country are measured, taking account of such factors as the patterns of illness across the country and the special problems of the inner cities. We are certainly not insensitive to the impact of the RAWP formula on the London regions.

The south-east Thames region is a RAWP loser, but that is not the case with the Bexley health district. The south-east Thames region was 13 per cent. above target when RAWP was introduced in 1977-78. In 1985-86, it is 5·6 per cent. above target. Long-term revenue plans have assumed annual reductions of just 0·3 per cent., which is equal to a reduction of 2·86 per cent. by 1993-94. Following last December's statement, the position of the four Thames regions and the special health authorities is marginally better than originally assumed. South-east Thames region will receive an increase of 5·8 per cent. compared with forecast inflation of 4·5 per cent.

In addition, the Thames regions, with their higher unit costs, have been achieving higher levels of cost improvements than other regions. They are expected to continue to do so. I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that we have understood the region's problems and that, within the natural constraints of general financial policy, which my hon. Friend supports, we are moving towards meeting them.

I well understand the points that my hon. Friend made about the origins of the Bexley health authority and the issues it has created for Bexley. Bexley is a RAWP gainer. My hon. Friend referred to Sir Peter Baldwin, the chairman of the regional health authority, who suggested that Bexley's revenue funding is 89·6 per cent. of its RAWP target. It is planned to increase that to 95 per cent. by 1993-94. This means that there will be a small but steady gain in the district's revenue allocation until 1993-94.

It is true that Bexley faces a somewhat difficult financial position caused by the overspending which has been gradually building up over the past three years without being tackled. This financial year it is projected to total £400,000 out of a total budget of £28 million. This is creating a challenge for the district—there can be no

doubt about that. The new district general manager, who was appointed in July 1985, has accepted a priority task to develop a financial strategy over the next three years with the aim of ensuring that any early measures to restrict spending do not further restrict the district's long-term RAWP manoeuvre. I hope that its achievements will solve the problem.

We are looking for cost improvements. The region has proved to be one where significant cost improvements have been recorded. The district's cost improvement performance has been disappointing. In 1984-85 cost improvements amounted to 1·1 per cent. which is well below the regional performance of 1·88 per cent. The proposed district target for 1985-86 was less than 1 per cent. and the district has been asked by the region to consider raising that figure to the 1·5 per cent. average which is set for all the districts in the region.

That is the financial background against which the current matter is proceeding. I recognise the history, which my hon. Friend explained, of the plans that were in hand for the Erith hospital. The decision rests with the district and then the regional health authority. It is not yet with the DHSS.

At the authority's meeting on 15 January, the district general manager put forward a suggested package of measures for effecting savings, a major part of which was the closure of in-patient facilities at Erith. Those suggestions were rejected by the authority and a decision was taken to continue to try to provide the present level of services at Queen Mary's and Erith hospitals.

On 6 February, there is to be a further meeting. The district general manager and the treasurer will meet their regional counterparts to discuss the financial position in Bexley and explore ways in which regional bridging finance might be made available to meet revenue commitments to enable present services to continue.

No further proposals for Erith hospital will be made or formulated until after that meeting, but the district general manager has been asked to present other revenue savings options at the next authority meeting.

I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that there is some sensitivity about the future of Erith hospital. I take careful note of the support that he has shown and that Erith hospital clearly enjoys in the local community. I am certain that what my hon. Friend has said, and the support the hospital enjoys, will be noted by the district and regional health authorities. I assure him that, before any further decisions are taken, that point will be taken into account. Should any decisions come to the Department —we are a long way from that stage—we should also take careful note of what my hon. Friend has said.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

GREAT YARMOUTH OUTER HARBOUR BILL

IPSWICH PORT AUTHORITY BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

PONTYPRIDD MARKETS FAIRS AND TOWN HALL BILL
Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Community Care

1. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the second report of the Social Services Committee on community care.

14. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing the recommendation on day care for the mentally ill of the second report of the Social Services Committee on community care.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The Committee's report and the Government response to it have made a valuable contribution to clarifying aims and encouraging progress in developing comprehensive local mental health services. Day hospital and day centre places have both increased in recent years, consistent with Government policy and priorities.

Mr. Blair: Does the Minister accept that there are still tremendous competing pressures on areas such as my own, where Winterton hospital is situated? The pressure is on the hospitals to release people into the community and on the ground from people who want people put into hospitals, particularly elderly people. Does he agree that there is still a real danger that, in the name of community care, we are simply loading a burden off the state on to families that cannot cope?

Mr. Hayhoe: That is not the intention of successive Governments or of those who have studied the matter with great care. The whole concept of community care is not a cheap option; it is a desirable social policy. Of course, I appreciate that there are the difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Patchett: The report comments on the need for special care units for the severely handicapped. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will not handicap local authorities which are already developing the units by any further cuts in the National Health Service, thereby perhaps discouraging other local authorities from taking the initiative that the report recommends?

Mr. Hayhoe: I accept that there is pressure on resources, but I must repudiate any suggestion that there have been cuts in the financial provision for the NHS. There have not been cuts; there have been increases in real terms over the period of this Government.

Mr. Galley: The policy of community care is obviously right for the patients, and my right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the progress that has been made so far in implementing that policy. However, does he accept the Select Committee's concern that there should be individual care plans for everyone discharged from hospital, and is he taking steps to implement that recommendation?

Mr. Hayhoe: I believe that patients must be treated as individuals. To treat them in any way as groups is entirely wrong.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend know that the report also recognised that the fashion for community care has, in some respects, gone too far? Does he accept that many mental patients need continuing institutional care and should not be placed in the community, however alluring that phrase may sound?

Mr. Hayhoe: Of course a proper balance must be struck, but I believe that, generally speaking, the move from institutional care to community care is desirable. I think that anyone who knows about, for example, young children who have been kept in Victorian institutions and who have now been released into the community to a fuller and better life must see the advantages of the policy. Of course, that does not extend to everyone, as my hon. Friend has rightly said.

Mrs. Renée Short: I am sure the Minister understands that his policy is generally accepted. However, does he understand that the major obstacle preventing the policy from being implemented is the lack of resources for local authorities and voluntary organisations, which are expected to take over the responsibilities for patients who are removed from large mental institutions? If he understands that, will he ensure that resources are made available to those organisations and local authorities to start the process?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who speaks with authority as the Chairman of the Social

Services Select Committee, for her broad endorsement of the policy. Having met representatives of the local authority associations and voluntary organisations that are principally concerned, I understand their desire to obtain more resources, especially bridging finance. These matters must be considered in the context of the overall constraints on public expenditure, which, in the Government's judgment, are absolutely essential.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware of the imaginative proposals put forward by East Berkshire health authority in conjunction with Berkshire county council for the development of community care for the mentally handicapped? Will he consider carefully the need for some bridging finance to facilitate that transfer?

Mr. Hayhoe: Regrettably, I have not the knowledge that my hon. Friend clearly has of those particular plans, but he will undoubtedly draw them more firmly to my attention in future.

Mr. Kennedy: What evidence and figures does the Minister have, regarding the welcome policy on community care, about mentally ill and mentally handicapped people being readmitted as a result of insufficient back-up services and support mechanisms in the community?

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no figures before me on that matter. I shall certainly write to the hon. Gentleman if those statistics are available.

Mr. Meacher: As there are 5 million carers in the community providing sustained care for elderly and disabled relatives, without whom the cost to the state of providing alternative institutional care would be enormous, why are carers uniquely denied any special support, such as a premium, under the Social Security Bill? How can the Government seriously claim to believe in community care when tens of thousands of severely disabled people will lose between £40 and £50 a week under the Bill, as a result of which they will be forced against their will from their homes into institutions, at a far higher cost to the state?

Mr. Hayhoe: The hon. Gentleman's comments are most revealing. He should believe in what most of us would regard as normal civilised behaviour, namely, being concerned about members of our own families who need care. Yet he believes that that responsibility should devolve to the state and that the state should have a primary responsibility in that area. The hon. Gentleman's view—it certainly is not mine—is of a great big nanny state.

Child Care Law Review

2. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, when the responses to the child care law review have been considered, a final report will be published; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): The Government will be considering how best to take matters forward in the light of the responses to the report of the child care law review, and we will make our intentions known in due course.

Mr. Michie: In view of the consistent research findings that the provision of day care facilities for children reduces the need for committal to local authority care also and in view of the high cost of state care for children, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that in the child care law review local authorities will have a statutory duty to provide adequate nursery places? At the same time, will he assure us that he will provide the financial wherewithal to carry out that statutory duty?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman takes us further than the child care law review goes. So far, the response of officials to the report, which was published last October, has been favourable; but, having said that, I have the strongest sympathy with the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. Day care facilities of the kind that he sets out are an important contribution in this area.

Mr. Baldry: Having regard to recent cases and the report of the National Children's Home into children in danger, is it not vital to have full public confidence in the law in relation to every aspect of child care and dealing with children? Is there not a danger of this matter being tackled in a somewhat piecemeal fashion?

Mr. Fowler: There is a danger if this is dealt with in a piecemeal fashion, and that is one reason for the report. The Government accept the need for reform of the law. It should be dealt with as one, and I hope that we shall be able to put proposals to the House in the not too distant future that will enable that to be done.

Canterbury and Thanet (Blood Shortages)

3. **Mr. Gale** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many operations were lost in the Canterbury and Thanet health authority area between 1 and 31 December 1985 as a result of the failure of the blood transfusion service to supply the Margate and Kent and Canterbury hospitals; why this failure to supply was allowed to occur; what steps will be taken to prevent a further seasonal blood shortage next Christmas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Due to a seasonal shortage of blood donors, the Canterbury and Thanet district health authority postponed 18 non-emergency operations over the Christmas period. The blood transfusion service will continue to make special efforts to encourage donors to come forward over the Christmas and new year periods in future.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply, although he does not give the figure that I requested. I trust that that will be forthcoming later. My understanding is that 50 elderly people had their operations postponed as a result of the failure of the transfusion service. Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that next Christmas, not only locally but nationally, there will be an advertising campaign to ensure that this kind of shortage, which is eminently predictable, does not occur again?

Mr. Hayhoe: The figure that my hon. Friend requested was given. Eighteen non-emergency operations were postponed over the Christmas period by that health authority, and there was sufficient blood for all emergencies that might have arisen. I understand that historically there has been some pulling back by donors during the Christmas season, perhaps for the understandable reason that they are involved in other matters. Special

appeal letters were issued, reminders were sent to regular donors, and there was special advertising. Those special attempts to get people to come forward and donate blood will continue in future.

Mr. Frank Cook: If, as the Minister says, the shortage of blood was seasonal, surely that was foreseeable. If so, why were operations scheduled when the blood for them could not be expected?

Mr. Hayhoe: The shortage was not of blood but of donors, and that shortage occurred only in this one region, which shows that the national blood transfusion service is a highly efficient and excellent organisation. I hope that the comments that have been made in the House this afternoon will in no way detract from the considerable public service that is provided by the transfusion service, nor from the public service of those who donate their blood. I hope that all hon. Members will encourage donors to come forward.

Private Residential Care (Elderly People)

4. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last visited a private residential care home for the elderly.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): Such visits are made from time to time by Ministers. Most recently I visited such a home in Southampton on 15 January 1986.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sure that the Minister will agree about not only the physical but the emotional needs of elderly patients. Therefore, what plans does he have to improve social work training for careers in those homes, given the present abysmal level, where less than 10 per cent. have any social training qualification at all?

Mr. Major: The hon. Lady makes an interesting and useful point. She will know that the registration of homes is the responsibility of social service departments. They must satisfy themselves about the level, adequacy and nature of staffing provided in those homes. They are fully aware of the hon. Lady's point.

Mrs. Currie: May I invite my hon. Friend to visit a private residential care establishment for the elderly in my constituency, where he will find that the standards are first-class? They could be copied throughout the rest of the country. Does he agree that, sooner or later, we will need some form of assessment system for people entering private residential care, to ensure that the large sums of public money being spent are being allocated appropriately?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend has extended an enticing invitation, which I shall bear in mind. I entirely agree with her observation.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that the inflexible restrictions on supplementary benefit payments for residential care are causing great distress and tend to hit the nursing element of care? If the Social Security Commissioner upholds the decision of the local tribunal in Leicester of 3 December, which delared that the restrictions were unlawful, will the Minister undertake immediately to withdraw those restrictions?

Mr. Major: I cannot anticipate that result. We have considered the levels in the Ernst and Whinney report, which we expect shortly. We are committed to a review of residential and nursing home limits within 12 months of their implementation. That is not far away now.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that tens of thousands of elderly and disabled people risk acute anxiety as a result of the decision not to cover the rising costs of residential care due to inflation, as a result of which they run a real risk of eviction? Is he further aware that elderly and disabled people whose capital has been depleted below the supplementary benefit level since April last year still have no guarantee of security of tenure? Will he give an absolute and unquivocal guarantee that no elderly person will be evicted from residential care because of the DHSS's failure to cover the full cost of residential charges?

Mr. Major: Even under the Government of which the hon. General was a distinguished luminary, that happy circumstance did not not apply. Handicapped people and those who have been in homes for some time might be entitled to special hardship provision, for which my right hon. Frind the Secretary of State has discretion.

Mr. Meacher: That is not a guarantee.

Supplementary Benefit

5. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the new rules on supplementary benefit for persons living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We are reviewing supplementary benefit limits for all types of board and lodging allowances in the light of the Department's general monitoring of the arrangements since April 1985, information from local offices and representations from individuals and organisations affected. We shall also take account of the results of the management consultant's study that we have commissioned on residential care and nursing homes when they are available. Our aim will be to reach conclusions in time for any changes that are shown to be needed to be made at the time of the general uprating in July.

Mr. Taylor: As bed and breakfast accommodation in Southend is about £7 a week above the amount allowed in the regulations, the result is a great deal of hardship. Will my hon. Friend act on the representations made by Southend tenants and landlords, observing that it is quite ridiculous that Southend, a seaside town, should charge a rate £5 below that allowed in Peterborough?

Mr. Newton: We shall consider the representations that my hon. Friend made in correspondence with the Department with other representations in the context of the review.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware of the difficulties experienced by refugees and others seeking asylum in Britain? Will he take their needs and circumstances into account in the review?

Mr. Newton: We have had correspondence with the British Refugee Council. I assure the hon. Gentleman that during the review we shall take account of any problems that we are convinced must be tackled further.

Mr. Dickens: During the review, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that although many people would welcome

some form of adjustment, they do want him to lose sight of the fact that thousands of people are ripping off the taxpayer, and that that must be the central fact to be borne in mind?

Mr. Newton: We have been anxious throughout to strike a sensible balance between meeting real needs and preventing exploitation. That will remain our aim.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister recognise that his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has admirably highlighted the fact that the limits are inadequate for those in bed and breakfast accommodation, just as they are inadequate for the elderly in residential and nursing homes, and especially for the physically and mentally handicapped? Does he also recognise that in saying that the limits will be reviewed in time for the July uprating he is saying that the review will take place after the date of the year's grace given to the physically and mentally handicapped, when their benefit can no longer remain at its original level? That is the time when people may have to move out of their homes. For the Minister to say that the uprating will be considered in July, when those people face the need for removal in April, cannot be right. Will he reconsider the timetable for the review?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred to the existence, under the new regulations that came into effect in November, of the capacity to deal with individual cases of hardship. Against the background of the July uprating, it is obviously sensible that we should seek to consider all the issues, together with general benefit levels, that will have to be set for that time.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister tell the House what guidance he has given to officials on the interpretation of the exceptional hardship exemption; and will he place a copy of that guidance document in the Library?

Mr. Newton: I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's request.

Hip Replacement Operations (Leicester)

6. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for hip replacement operations at the Leicester city general hospital; and how this compares with the waiting time for such operations nationally.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Ray Whitney): Such local information is not routinely held by the Department. I understand that the typical waiting time for hip replacement operations at the Leicester city general hospital is currently 24 weeks. The corresponding figure for England in 1983, the latest year for which figures are available, is also 24 weeks.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. However, will he redouble his efforts to improve that waiting time and to speed up the admission of patients, especially elderly people who so often need that type of operation? As there is much harassment and stress involved in waiting, will he do his utmost to shorten the waiting time even more?

Mr. Whitney: One of our objectives is to reduce the waiting time for hip replacement operations. That is one of the four priorities in the development of the acute sector services.

I understand that during the next three months the Leicester health authority is to appoint a resource manager. One of his principal functions will be to improve waiting times for hip operations.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister accept that he is totally misleading the House by quoting the figure of 24 weeks — *[Interruption.]* It is clear that members of the Government mislead the House practically every day—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That touches upon the honour of hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that remark.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has not been specific. That is not in "Erskine May." Do not withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw his allegation?

Mr. Dobson: If my remark was out of order, I withdraw it. Will the Minister confirm that 24 weeks is the median time? His written answers to my questions show that the mean average, which is what most people consider to be the average, is 35 weeks. Will he confirm that the figure is 35 weeks nationally and 35 weeks in Leicester?

Mr. Whitney: Through several written answers I sought to explain to the hon. Gentleman why the median time is used.

Mr. Skinner: Twister.

Mr. Whitney: It has been used as the routine method of giving the best indication of waiting time. That was the method used by the Labour Government and by this Government. Median time gives the clearest indication, free of the distortions that a few atypical incidents can create. Fifty per cent. of patients wait less than the median time.

Maternity Benefit

7. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secrertary of State for Social Services how many women he estimates will be affected annually by the changes in the payment of maternity benefit proposed in his White Paper.

Mr. Major: Provisional estimates are that an additional 5,000 to 10,000 women will qualify for maternity allowance for the first time. About 75,000 to 85,000 women will no longer qualify because they were not working when their pregnancies began. However, many of those women will be eligible for some sickness benefit as a result of their previous national insurance contributions. As to maternity grant, the abolition of the £25 lump sum will affect an estimated 750,000 women, but this will be replaced by a payment of about £75 to low income families.

Mr. Nellist: Given that the Tories are the party of family, why is it that *The Times* estimated last year that 500,000 women would lose entitlement to maternity grant, and that the new payment, which will go to 220,000

women, is about £62·88 less than they would have received had the Government increased the grant to the equivalent of its 1969 level? How much does the Minister estimate is the cost of essentials for a new baby? Does he agree with the estimate made by *The Mirror* last year that the cost is about £450, not the miserable £75 which the Government propose?

Mr. Major: I rarely agree with *The MIrror*. In this instance, to restore the maternity grant to the 1969 level —I am bound to say that it was not restored adequately by the Labour Government—would mean providing a grant of £125, at a cost of about £70 million to the Exchequer.

Mr. Favell: Far from the Tories not being the party of the family, would it not be far better, as the Minister for Health suggested earlier, for families to look after their own fathers and mothers, to look after their own children and to provide for their own maternity?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. It might be worth drawing to the attention of the House the fact that our changes in maternity benefits have several important features that will benefit mothers. For the first time, pregnant widows will receive the statutory maternity allowance as well as the widow's allowance.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Minister realise from the figures that he read out that many women will lose altogether? Does he know that more than 1 million families live on or below the poverty line and that an increasing number of children are born into low-income families? With the changes that the Government propose in the Social Security Bill, more pregnant women will suffer stress and will have to go, with a begging bowl in their hands, to the social fund, but will get nothing. That, together with the cut in child benefit, will lead to a worsening of family support.

Mr. Major: I cannot agree with the hon. Lady. The reality is that most of the families of whom she speaks, and for whom she cares a great deal, will be entitled to the £75 maternity grant from the social fund, which is triple the sum presently paid.

Tobacco Products (Promotion)

8. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress he has made in negotiations with the tobacco industry over a voluntary agreement on the advertising and promotion of tobacco products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Discussions are continuing. My hon. Friend will, of course, understand that I cannot give details at present, but I shall inform the House of their outcome as soon as I can.

Mr. Sims: I appreciate my hon. Friend's position. In negotiating the agreement, will he take into account recent figures suggesting that, by the age of 16, nearly 40 per cent. of children smoke? Therefore, will he pay special attention to curbing the advertising and promotion of cigarettes that are likely to appeal to children?

Mr. Whitney: We are considering all aspects of the agreement during the current negotiations. As my hon. Friend rightly says, there is special concern about the incidence of smoking among young people, and that is a subject on which we shall concentrate.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the Minister examine the file which shows instances of the breaking of the voluntary agreement by tobacco companies during the past three years? Will he try to include sanctions in the agreement so that the Government can impose a penalty on those who break the voluntary agreement, instead of allowing them to get away scot-free as they do at present?

Mr. Whitney: I cannot discuss the details of the negotiations on the agreement, but I assure hon. Members that all aspects of the agreement are being considered.

Mental Health Act Commission

9. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Mental Health Act Commission.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no present plans to meet the chairman.

Mr. Proctor: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the speed of the investigation of complaints which the commission decides to investigate? When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the commission, will he consider with the chairman instituting a clear investigation into the complaints procedure?

Mr. Hayhoe: As I have said, I have no plans to meet the chairman, but if I do plan to meet him I shall certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend said.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister confirm to the House that he is aware of the tragic murder of Isabel Schwartz, a dedicated psychiatric social worker at Bexley hospital, who was murdered by a former client of hers, Sharon Campbell? Did the Minister know that Sharon Campbell was discharged against her wishes and did not get the appropriate treatment, care and support in the community that her desperate illness required? Will the Minister set up an inquiry into the events leading up to Isabel's murder? Will he recognise that there are a number, albeit a small number, of seriously mentally ill people who, if they are discharged under the community care policies and do not receive the support and treatment that their illness requires, will be a danger to themselves and to the community?

Mr. Hayhoe: That has nothing to do with whether I have plans to meet the chairman of the commission, but I certainly appreciate the seriousness and sincerity with which the hon. Lady has raised this matter, and I will give it careful consideration.

McColl Report

10. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why publication of the McColl report on services received by patients at artificial limb and appliance centres was delayed.

Mr. Newton: It became necessary for the Department and the working party to consider the implications of legal advice about the terms of the report. As a result of that, the working party consequently decided to make some amendments to its report, none of which, however, affected any point of substance or any of the report's conclusions or recommendations.

Mr. Flannery: I believe that the report came out yesterday and I have not yet had an opportunity to read it.

Can the Minister assure me that the points I have raised regularly with him about battery-powered wheelchairs are dealt with in the report? Many thousands of people, often elderly and chronically disabled, are not able to get out of their homes because they lack that facility. Can he assure me that a recommendation is contained in the report and that money will be forthcoming to buy battery-powered wheelchairs for the chronically disabled?

Mr. Newton: Because of the interest of the hon. Gentleman in this matter, I have already arranged for him to have a copy of the report. It contains recommendations about the provision of occupant-controlled outdoor wheelchairs. We shall certainly approach those recommendations in a positive spirit, though I must make it clear that the committee recognises the problem of resources, and, among other things, suggests that those resources should be found by curbing increases in the mobility allowance. I suspect that that is a proposition about which many Members, including myself, will have reservations.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that Professor McColl's report underlines the inability of bureaucracy to meet people's needs efficiently and effectively? Could my hon. Friend expedite the recommendation for a new management board, and in particular could he see that it has a chairman with proper commercial experience?

Mr. Newton: I readily accept that the vigorous criticisms in the report demand an equally vigorous response from me and from the Department. I am confident there will be such a vigorous response.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The report is a profoundly important one for disabled people. One of its most crucial sentences is that action to put right the defects is already overdue. Since the cost of delay will be preventable pain and discomfort for amputees, how quickly will definitive action be taken? Will the NHS management board's findings be published, and if so, when can they be expected? What action will the Government take on what the report says about the late delivery of limbs to 53 per cent. of amputees, about seeing to it that surgeons who carry out amputations have experience of the problems, about excess profit-making and about ensuring that disabled people themselves are consulted at all stages?

Mr. Newton: We have already told the contractors that we shall wish to discuss future contracting arrangements in the light of the report. I have asked the NHS management board to report to me on management proposals and other matters by the middle of the year. Whether it would be appropriate to publish that advice, I shall wish to consider. The most important thing is to reach a stage of ministerial decision and necessary action, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman would agree.

NHS (Management)

11. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation of general management in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Implementation is progressing well. All regional and district general managers have been appointed and about two-thirds of the unit general managers are now in post. Overall, these new posts reflect a reasonable balance between those from within and outside the service and between disciplines within the service.

Mr. Galley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that comprehensive reply. What measures of savings, service expansion and policy improvement will he be taking into account in assessing the success of general management? Will he also take into account the requirement that, whilst general management is applied firmly and flexibly, there needs to be adequate consultation with all Health Service professionals concerned?

Mr. Fowler: I endorse entirely what my hon. Friend said in the second part of his question. It is no part of the management process that it should in some way be stacked on the service without proper consultation. Savings have already been reported by health authorities. One region has made savings of £1·25 million a year from the restructuring.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that in many regions nursing teams and medical professionals are being replaced by the throw-outs from any industry that wants to get rid of its surplus executives at 50? Far from improving the management of the Health Service, the result is materially damaging the chances of good management for patients.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely reject what the hon. Lady has said. The Royal College of Nursing itself has accepted the principles of general management. It is right that it should have done so. We share its concern, however, that the principles should be implemented in a way that enhances patient care. To talk as the hon. Lady has done is nonsense.

Mr. Latham: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there is no reason why nurses should not hold the post of district general manager?

Mr. Fowler: Absolutely, and the situation is that at the moment about 10 per cent. of unit general managers are nurses. I should like to see that percentage increased throughout the Health Service.

Northern Regional Health Authority

12. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the level and quality of National Health Service provision within the Northern regional health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: Governments can never be entirely satisfied with the level and quality of health service provision. In common with the rest of the service, however, the Northern regional health authority is treating more patients than ever before and, backed up by real increases in resources, is making significant improvements in the range and quality of its services.

Mr. Clay: Given that since 1979, in that region, 18 hospitals have been closed, with the loss of 845 beds, and given, as the Minister must know, that the regional health authority estimates that next year the development of service provision will be less than 1 per cent., while at the same time the increase in workload will be over 2 per cent., how on earth can he make such a complacent and inaccurate reply to my question?

Mr. Hayhoe: For the simple reason that there have been very significant increases in activity levels in that region. Since 1979 the number of inpatient cases has grown by 15 per cent., day cases by 61 per cent., outpatient cases by 9 per cent., and accident and emergency cases by 3 per cent. That is a record of improvement based upon an increase in real resources in that area.

Social Workers (Training)

13. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in his consideration of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work training proposals, he will take into account the training proposals of the report of the inquiry in the death of Jasmine Beckford.

Mr. Whitney: We shall be taking into account the recommendations on social work training in the report on the death of Jasmine Beckford when considering, with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and the other Government Departments and organisations affected, the proposals for qualifying training made by the council.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon Friend agree that the House has shown little hesitation in increasing the responsibilities of social workers over the years, and that it is now important to move on the question of training, not only for the benefit of the profession, but for the confidence of the public?

Mr. Whitney: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. As I said, the Department is in very important negotiations now with all concerned to improve the level of training of social workers.

NHS Expenditure

15. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the proportion of National Health Service total expenditure allocated to salaries and wages; and how this figure compares with six years before.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1984-85, 60 per cent. of National Health Service expenditure was devoted to salaries and wages, compared with 63 per cent. in 1979-80. The proportion varies between services. For example, staff costs accounted for 74 per cent. of health authority revenue spending in 1984-85.

Mr. Chapman: Total expenditure on the Health Service has increased by more than 20 per cent. in real terms over that period. Do not my right hon. Friend's figures underline the fact that expenditure on medical equipment and services and new hospital building has risen at an even greater rate? Should he not spell out those facts to the public more clearly in the months ahead?

Mr. Hayhoe: There certainly are misunderstandings about the increase in real resources for the Health Service during the lifetime of this Government. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me another opportunity to draw attention to the facts of this matter.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend probably did not receive a copy of *The Times* this morning, like many other hon. Members, did she therefore have time to reflect that it must be in the public interest that our great national newspapers are produced as efficiently as possible? Does she agree that newspaper employers are right to use the Employment Act 1980 to the full to prevent industrial secondary action and picketing? Does she also agree that one person, the Leader of the Opposition, must be relieved at not getting his copy of *The Times* this morning, to save him from the embarrassment of the extremist activities of his friends?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that Fleet street employers are fully entitled to use all the legal remedies available to them. Restrictive practices have dominated Fleet street for far too long and there has been far too great a resistance to technological change. When that happens, the change, when it does come, is much sharper than it would otherwise have been. I hope that the matter will soon be resolved and that we shall have *The Times* with our breakfast again.

Mr. Bidwell: May I draw the attention of the right hon. Lady to the brutal murder of Mr. Tarsem Singh Toor, the general secretary of the Southall Indian Workers Association, and the inevitable feeling that this was a political killing by an assassin? In view of the effect that it is having on my constituency, will the right hon. Lady assure the House that every possible step is being taken to bring the killers to justice?

The Prime Minister: I agree most earnestly with the hon. Gentleman. This was a brutal shooting and the Metropolitan police are taking urgent steps to investigate it. Action has also been taken by the police with regard to the security of Mr. Toor's relatives and others who may be at risk. Everything possible will be done to assist them and to track down the perpetrators of this brutal crime.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: In view of the fact, as indicated in *Hansard* yesterday, that the Government have decided to take the European Assembly to the European Court because of the illegal budget, but nevertheless to pay the money in the meantime, will my right hon. Friend take every possible step to make sure that the Commission will not spend the money that it may eventually have to pay back?

The Prime Minister: I take my hon. Friend's point. It is quite true that the Council and we, this country, are taking the matter to court, but it is customary to offer to pay the full budget in the meantime. I share my hon. Friend's view, and I hope that the money will not be spent.

Mr. Livsey asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livsey: In view of the furore over the leaking of a Government letter, does the Prime Minister not agree that now is the time to institute a Freedom of Information Act?

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Hirst: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Howden group of Glasgow has recently announced a $50 million sale of wind turbine equipment, thus making this group the world leader in medium-sized wind turbine equipment? Is she further aware that the research and development and manufacturing of this order were carried out in the west of Scotland? Does not this welcome news contrast very sharply with the picture of industrial gloom that the Opposition seek to portray of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I congratulate the Howden group of companies and all those who work for it on being so competitive as to get this excellent order, and I wish them well for the future.

Mr. James Lamond: When the Prime Minister received the report last week from her Cabinet Secretary about the leak, did the report refer to a difference of understanding among civil servants?

The Prime Minister: In my speech yesterday I set out the full circumstances — *[Interruption.]* — of the establishment and the outcome of the inquiry. Its accuracy was checked with all those concerned. I have given the right hon. Gentleman — *[Interruption.]* — reports, of course, are confidential.

Q3. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowden: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing anger among parents at the refusal of the NUT to negotiate, and will she condemn the planned strikes, which can only do more damage to the education of the children of the country?

The Prime Minister: We deeply deplore the strikes. We are very glad that there is a prospect of an end to the damaging disruptions. I share my hon. Friend's view that it is deeply disturbing that the NUT was not part of those negotiations, but I hope that it will consider adopting the ACAS solution.

Q4. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carlile: On 20 January this year, late in the evening, the Prime Minister, or someone acting on her behalf, telephoned Miss Colette Bowe while Miss Bowe was sitting in her London club. *[Interruption.]* There was also a call from the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, (Mr. Brittan). *[Interruption.]* Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister told us yesterday that she knew nothing about the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks—*[Interruption.]*—having authorised the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter until 22 January, will she tell the House what was said—*[Interruption.]* —during those telephone conversations with Miss Bowe?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. and learned Friend said yesterday that he could and did confirm that the statement I made was correct with regard to all the facts in his knowledge. I have nothing else to add.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present time might be a favourable opportunity for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, and does she further agree that if we were part of that mechanism real interest rates might not need to be at such a high level for the purpose of protecting the pound?

The Prime Minister: Not just now. Indeed, I think that had we joined a few months ago there might have been readjustments with regard to the deutschmark, so I do not think that now is the right time to join. It will, of course, continue to be considered. I understand that there may be a debate on this in the near future.

Mr. Kinnock: If a Department of State seeks agreement from the Prime Minister's Office and gets acceptance, is that not acceptance acquiescence? There really can be no misunderstanding about that.

The Prime Minister: I made a full statement yesterday, and I made a full one previously. I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Kinnock: If there is no dispute, if there is no disagreement, if there is no refusal and if there is no objection, is not the acceptance of a request for agreement acquiescence? Will the Prime Minister give a straightforward answer to a straightforward question? Is it acquiescence—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I do not share the right hon. Gentleman's view of a straightforward question. My authority was neither sought nor obtained for the disclosure. I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that her time would be better spent getting back to proper matters of state rather than listening to the waffle about Westland from the windbag opposite? Yesterday, she was found guilty of two things—tolerance and loyalty to officials and Cabinet colleagues. With faults like that, who needs qualities?

The Prime Minister: I assure my hon. Friend that my time is spent dealing with the great strategic matters and political issues of the time that must be solved.

Q3. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: In view of recent events, does the Prime Minister think that the best possible deployment of the new polygraph, the lie detector, would not be at GCHQ, Cheltenham, but at Downing street?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I have already given.

Q6. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forsyth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a head teacher of a primary school in Edinburgh has seen fit to issue gloves to the teaching staff because he believes that they are at risk of contracting AIDS from the children in their care? Is that not a gross overreaction to the area's drug problem? In view of such ignorance, will my right hon. Friend ask the Health Education Council to mount a campaign to explain the causes of AIDS and to target those groups that are most at risk?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important to dispel ignorance about this disease. I understand that the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland is considering the matter urgently. I shall see that my hon. Friend's views are passed to the Health Education Council.

Mr. Dalyell: Referring to what my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) said, may I ask whether, in the Cabinet Secretary's report of the leak, there was or was not any reference to "differences of understanding" between civil servants? Does the Prime Minister understand that she has put distinguished civil servants in an invidious position? It is a matter of honour for all politicians, whether in office or not, to see that those civil servants are at least given justice.

The Prime Minister: As I said, one of the reasons for having an inquiry was to enable officials to put their view. I said in my speech yesterday that the accuracy of all the facts was checked with all those involved.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: As the Government have shown their willingness to intervene in the markets to keep down interest rates, and as the Exchequer has lost some £1·5 billion in revenue as a result of the fall in oil prices, will the Government now respond to calls by OPEC and other oil producers to discuss with them ways of managing the fall in oil prices in order to achieve more stability in the oil markets and thereby reduce the pressure on the pound and help other economies?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, I do not think so. The United Kingdom maintains the freest oil province in the world. Subject only to technical limits, decisions on production levels are entirely in the hands of the producing companies. There has been no change in that policy.

Q7. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: After the successful evacuation from Aden by the royal yacht Britannia and others, can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the Government will do everything possible to protect the safety of British nationals in Uganda?

The Prime Minister: We stand ready to provide assistance for an evacuation of the foreign community in Uganda, should it be necessary. There appears to be no immediate need for such an evacuation. The high commissioner has reported that the British citizens in Kampala are safe, and that the airport is expected soon to be opened to normal traffic.

Q8. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: Will the right hon. Lady give a truthful reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond)? Is she aware that the House will not allow this Westland affair to be swept under the carpet? A number of other questions need to be answered. Will she assure me that she came to the House yesterday and gave the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

The Prime Minister: As I said, the accuracy of what I said was fully checked with those concerned. I repeat that I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We know of your great traditions in trying to improve conduct and behaviour in this House during Question Time and during debates. Was it in order for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), to intervene twice from a sedentary position this afternoon? In the first instance he criticised your judgment in asking the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to withdraw. In the second instance he called the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health a twister. This is not the behaviour that we seek in this House. Would you please ask him to withdraw both remarks?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear those remarks. If I were to ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw everything that he says from a sedentary position, I would be on my feet for most of the day.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My point of order is brief, Mr. Speaker. Over the next few weeks, and indeed months, there will be many of my hon. Friends who will wish to ask questions about the Westland affair. May I have an assurance that whenever Government Members intervene from a sedentary position to prevent my hon. Friends from asking questions, you will immediately intervene to protect them? Today during Question Time, and yesterday during the Leader of the Opposition's speech, and in the debate, whenever the Prime Minister was criticised, Conservative Members insisted on drowning out Labour Members. The House seeks your protection. May I have your assurance that you will give it?

Mr. Speaker: I thought that the debate yesterday, in the light of the very highly charged atmosphere, proceeded very well. I shall be, as I have always been, entirely even-handed in my protection of both Back Benchers and Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, arising out of questions, Mr. Speaker. There clearly remains a great deal of dissatisfaction about the Prime Minister's statement and her answers. Is there any way in which the civil servants at No. 10 and at the Department of Trade and Industry who were involved can be brought before the House so that we can try to find out precisely what happened with respect to the leakage of the letter from the Solicitor-General?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows the answer to that. He knows also that a Select Committee is dealing with that matter.

Mr. Ryman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Prime Minister's Question Time, when the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) asked a

number of searching questions about the leaking of the letter, there was a deliberate campaign by the Conservative party to drown his questions—so much so that he had to repeat them several times before he could be heard. Surely you can protect hon. Members who wish to ask relevant questions about the Prime Minister's conduct in this affair, so that hon. Members can put their questions sensibly, shortly and quietly.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member makes a valid point. He has been a Member for as long as I have, and he knows that frequently there is a good deal of background noise at Question Time and during debates. I wish that that were not so.

Mr. Sheerman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many Opposition Members believe that there is a new censorship and control of freedom of speech in the House. This is a serious situation. I have been a Member since 1979 and I am familiar with the normal level of hubbub in a normal debate, but there is a new conspiracy on the Government Benches to stop Labour Members from asking questions and receiving a fair hearing when Government Members do not want to hear the responses to the Westland issues and other questions.

Mr. Speaker: We have a heavy day in front of us. I cannot be a party to any conspiracies. I do not know whether there are any—I hope that there are none. I shall continue to do as I have always done to ensure a fair hearing for every hon. Member.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Prime Minister questions about telephone calls to Miss Colette Bowe—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—[HON. MEMBERS: "The noise is coming from Conservative Members."] Order.

Mr. Carlile: I asked the right hon. Lady specific questions about telephone calls to Colette Bowe on the night of 20 January——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a point of order for me? It sounds very much like a continuation of Question Time. I know that the hon. and learned Member will not do that. Will he put a point of order to me, please?

Mr. Carlile: I asked the Prime Minister a question through you, Mr. Speaker, on specific matters. I do not believe that the right hon. Lady could hear my questions relating to telephone calls to Miss Colette Bowe on 20 January——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that this is a clear case of trying to get a second bite.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today during Question Time, on a genuine point of order —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]— Oh, yes. At that time my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), the Opposition spokesman on health, referred to the Government misleading the House. He was subsequently pulled up by a Tory Member. You confirmed, Mr. Speaker, that my hon. Friend should withdraw any references to the Government misleading the House.

I have to remind you—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—Oh yes. Only a few days ago—it is recorded in *Hansard*—when one of my colleagues referred to the Government deliberately misleading the House, you asked him to withdraw the word deliberately. The rest was OK. We cannot make up the rules as we go along. The Tory Government do, but it would be better if you did not follow their example.

Mr. Speaker: Let me clear the matter for the whole House. Over the centuries we have proceeded in civilised debate and it has always been our practice and the rule of the Chair to rule out of order matters which touch upon the honour of any right hon. or hon. Gentleman on either side of the House. That is precisely what I did this afternoon.

Local Government (Financing)

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, I should like to make a statement. Together with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland, I have today presented to Parliament a Green Paper entitled "Paying for Local Government". It makes major proposals for the future financing of local government in Great Britain.

The central theme is the need to bolster local democratic accountability. To do so, we need a way of paying for local government which narrows the gap which exists between those who use, those who vote for and those who pay for local government services.

The three fundamental weaknesses in our present arrangements are: the complex and uncertain effect of Government grants to local authorities; the way in which businesses can be heavily taxed to pay for excessive local spending; the unfair burden on householders of domestic rates.

May I deal with non-domestic rates? Business and commercial ratepayers foot 60 per cent. of the local tax bill but have no vote to influence local elections. For businesses, rates are uncontrollable overhead costs which can and do vary from year to year very significantly. Increased business rates lead to higher costs; to lower pay or job prospects; or to reduced investment. Those who are ultimately affected are quite unaware of how these extra burdens arise.

For all those reasons, non-domestic rates should not be a local tax. We propose therefore that a uniform non-domestic rate poundage should be set centrally. Businesses will be protected by indexing the poundages to inflation so that they can predict their liability with confidence. All of the yield of non-domestic rates would continue to support local government expenditure but it would be pooled and redistributed as an equal amount per adult in all authorities. Transitional arrangements would be required in each of the three countries to allow for an orderly move to the new system. We are setting in hand a revaluation of all non-domestic properties so that new rateable values will be available from April 1990.

I turn to the question of Government grants. The present grant arrangements are unstable and complex. They obscure the link between what people pay for local services and what they get for their money. But the clarity of that link is essential to local accountability.

We therefore propose a new two-part grant structure. First, a needs grant to compensate authorities for their different needs. Secondly, a standard grant—to reduce local tax bills by a standard amount per adult. Both grants would be fixed in cash, in advance, for the year in question. Local authorities would then know where they stood. We would remove the whole paraphernalia of schedules, tapers, multipliers and close ending.

Taken together with our proposals on the non-domestic rate, these grant arrangements would produce the clearest possible relationship between changes in spending and changes in tax bills. Every extra pound spent will be met in full by local domestic taxpayers. Every pound saved would benefit them in full. And that would be true in every authority in the country.

On the subject of domestic taxes, at present in England around 35 million adults are eligible to vote in local elections. Only 18 million are directly liable as ratepayers. Of these, 3 million have their bill met in full by housing benefit. In many authorities well over 50 per cent. of the voters pay no local rates and therefore have little interest in restraining spending by the local authority; indeed, they have a clear interest that it should spend more.

Under the new social security proposals, every ratepayer will have to pay part of their rate bill. That still leaves 17 million adults with no liability to pay for the local services they use. It still means that the single pensioner or the single parent will face the same bill for local services as the house next door with four earners.

Rates are a tax on property. They are unpopular because the rates burden is carried on too few shoulders and needs to be spread more widely and fairly. There are broadly three alternatives—a sales tax, local income tax, or a flat-rate community charge. The Green Paper sets out the many difficulties we see both in sales tax and in local income tax, and the reasons why we prefer a community charge. It would be more closely linked to the use of local services and would give all adults a stake in local spending decisions. As with rates, there would have to be assistance for those on low incomes. Each local authority would set its own charge and there would have to be registers of all adults. The registers would be entirely separate from the electoral register.

This proposal would lead to the same local tax bill for the same standard of service in all areas. That would lead to significant changes in the distribution of local tax burdens between authorities. There would have to be transitional and safety net arrangements.

In England and Wales the community charge would start at a low level, with a corresponding cut in rates. The whole burden of any increased spending would fall on the community charge from the start, so that a clear link would exist between higher spending and higher community charges. In subsequent years there would be further transfers from rates to the community charge. In some areas rates would disappear within three years, and they would be eliminated in all areas within 10 years.

Under the proposals, some people would be paying local taxes who presently pay nothing. But those living on their own who presently pay more than their fair share, including many of the poorest households, would be better off.

The Green Paper illustrates the effects of the proposals, had they been in force in 1984-85. The illustrations show that the changes would be modest for most people, and that the shift to the new tax would be both gradual and manageable in terms of household incomes.

There are also proposals in the Green Paper to reform the capital control system on which I am inviting comments.

Those proposals amount to the most thorough reform of local government finance this century. It is right that there should be a substantial period of consultation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have asked for comments by 31 July. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will make a statement tomorrow. The pace of further developments in England and Wales will depend on the outcome of the consultation process.

The message from our studies is clear; the way we now pay for local government undermines local accountability. That is no basis on which to run democratic local government. It has drawn central Government deeper into

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

conflict with local government. The alternatives are clear. We can continue down the present path—that is the road to closer central involvement in local affairs and increased central control—or we can face up to the weaknesses in our present arrangements and provide local government with a financial system to bolster local democracy. The Government prefer that course, and I commend it to the House.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The Secretary of State has made a major statement on what is by any test a very important Green Paper. Will he accept that the Opposition are prepared to support any genuine attempt to increase local accountability and to return to local government the freedoms and local democratic control that have been consistently eroded during the seven years of the Prime Minister's Administration?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Opposition welcome the Government's recognition that after seven years of Conservative Government local authority finance is in a bigger mess than ever before? Does he realise that we agree with his message last week in a letter to Tory councillors nationwide that the system that his Government have created is unfair and stifles local accountability?

Does the Secretary of State recognise that, after seven years of successive failure in local government finance, the Green Paper announces yet again the abandonment of the Prime Minister's oft-repeated promise to abolish domestic rates altogether in this Parliament? Is it not clear that the Prime Minister has comprehensively ratted on that promise to the ratepayers? Is not the general proposition at the heart of the Green Paper a proposal to introduce a poll tax to be imposed on every adult regardless of income or ability to pay? Will that not also be a tax on the right to vote, as the Green Paper makes abundantly clear? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that no other Western industrial democracy employs such a grotesquely unfair system as the basis of the major source of local government income?

What has changed since the Government rejected these very proposals in their 1983 White Paper on rate reform? The Government rejected the proposals then on the basis that they were expensive and bureaucratic to administer, bearing harshly on low-income families and a tax on the right to vote. That was revealed in the Government's White Paper two years ago.

Is it not the case that every ratepayer, regardless of means, will have to pay a minimum flat-rate charge under the Government's proposals? Why has the Secretary of State, in his statement and in the Green Paper, been so obscure about the proposals to help low-income families get over the major impact of the new impositions?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that his proposals for a uniform business rate are a further huge centralisation of power which will undermine local democracy and accountability and not enhance it? It will leave in the hands of Ministers massive additional controls over local authorities regardless of their political persuasion. Will not this mean higher business rates in many Tory local authority areas? I ask Conservative Members to study the proposals carefully, because that is the implication. That is what is at stake, especially if the yield is to remain the same as at present.

Why do not the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friends address themselves to the far higher costs to industry and commerce of interest rate charges which result from the Government's policies? What are the distributional effects of changes on people in different circumstances in different local authority areas? The figures that he has given relate to regions and national situations, not to specific local authority areas. In that sense, the figures quoted are nothing short of misleading.

Is not the right hon. Gentleman asking his right hon. and hon. Friends to accept a time bomb ticking away under them in their constituencies and local authorities? These proposals will bring shock waves of horror to many Conservative Members who believe in some craven way that they and their constituents will benefit from them. Will the right hon. Gentleman publish the data and studies that he and his right hon. Friends have used and made to give the examples in the Green Paper?

Is not this exercise a vain attempt to redeem the pledges of the Prime Minister and to cast a cloak of obscurity over the failure of the Prime Minister in seven years in government to deliver that simple, if not cynical, promise to abolish domestic rates? Is not the reality right through the Green Paper simply that rates will be here long after the Government have gone?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman asks my hon. Friends to study the Green Paper carefully. I hope that he takes such advice himself, because rarely has the House heard such a thin and empty comment. I have tried in the Green Paper to set forward the central issue of what I hope will be a great debate upon the future of local accountability in local government. During the course of that great debate the Labour party will have to say what system of local government finance it will support. From the hon. Gentleman's concluding comments, and from those of his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) recently, I assume that he will favour the retention of the rating system.

Dr. Cunningham: Answer my questions.

Mr. Baker: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's questions. The hon. Gentleman argued that the community charge is unfair and regressive and will hit the poor, but I remind him that rates are also regressive and unfair and bear little relationship either to ability to pay or to the use of local government services. If rates are to be kept, there will have to be a major revaluation and that will create a turbulance in family incomes much greater than what I am proposing to the House.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about those who will benefit. Let me consider those who will face lower bills under my proposals. Eighty-six per cent. of all single pensioners will receive lower bills. Eighty per cent. of single adult householders will face lower bills. Businesses in the north, the midlands and the north-west will face lower bills. Areas of high unemployment will face lower bills.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether the proposal was a tax on the right to vote. It most certainly is not. The registers will be separate. There will be people on the community charge register who will be liable to the community charge who do not have the right to vote—for example, foreigners resident in our country. What I

have made clear and what I do not disguise is that we are widening the tax base. We are spreading the burden more widely and more fairly to increase local accountability.

Most of us here subscribe to the notion of no taxation without representation. The hon. Gentleman believes in representation with no liability to taxation. He wants a right for those who contribute nothing to impose the full cost of their demands on those who contribute everything. I should be careful about going out to dinner a la carte with the hon. Gentleman because, under his system, I would be left with the bill.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the return, after many decades and not just the last seven years, of the nexus between taxation and representation will be widely accepted and welcomed in the country both by those who have to pay and those who are conscious of their democratic rights? A far greater control over local authority spending will be achieved by the payer through the ballot box if taxation and representation are equated than by a cumbersome central Government apparatus.

Mr. Baker: I endorse what my hon. Friend has said; it goes to the nub of the question. The choice before the country in financing local government is whether one depends upon the constraints operated through the ballot box with a wider base of taxpayers or whether one goes for more central control. I reject the move towards more central control.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Why are there no plans for the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement on a matter of great importance for the Principality? Why is the Secretary of State for Wales hiding behind the Secretary of State for the Environment? I happen to know that the Secretary of State for Wales is at least part author of this iniquitous proposal of a poll tax.

Mr. Baker: There are important differences between the proposals as regards England and Wales and those for Scotland. However, the proposals for England and Wales are substantially the same and we thought it appropriate for one statement to be made. The hon. Gentleman's comments have been noted, and he may wish to pursue the matter through the usual channels.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): My right hon. Friend's announcement of the introduction of a national business tax will be welcomed widely by industry and commerce which has no voice, no sanction, no vote and no say in the way that profligate councils spend their money. Will my right hon. Friend accept that the introduction of a community charge may create some losers as well as some winners? To avoid any possibility of retrogression, will he extend the consultation period beyond 31 July so that the consultation may be as wide as possible?

Mr. Baker: I entirely agree that the proposal for a national business tax will be widely welcomed. The proposals are well founded.

As regards the consultation period, the local authority associations have already represented to me their wish for a longer time than 31 July. I am prepared to consider the matter, but I would not want to extend the period beyond October.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): If the right hon. Gentleman is serious in what he said about no taxation without representation, why have the Government not brought in a concept of local income tax? This has been argued for a long time and is extremely successful in Sweden. Is it not clear that the right hon. Gentleman and the Government are proposing to put further burdens on the shoulders of ordinary working people and not on those who can afford to pay? Is it not clear that the Government's proposals for registration are leading to a situation where criminal sanctions — I should like to know what the criminal sanctions are—will be against people who, for various reasons, may decide not to register.

Mr. Baker: We have looked at the various proposals for a local income tax. There are several variations and varieties, but all are administratively complex and would require a register, as the local community charge requires a register. If one moved to a form of local income tax, it would on average put an extra 4½p on the basic rate. The rate depends on the spending of various authorities and would range from an extra 2p to an extra 11p on the standard rate. I do not believe that many people would welcome the prospect of an uncontrolled capacity to raise local income tax which would be left in the hands of Mr. Bernie Grant or Mr. Hatton. In their hands it would be confiscatory.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Is my right hon. Friend prepared to say whether there are any interim, short-term proposals in the Green Paper which will help to ensure that shire counties are not faced with the same difficulties next year and ensuing years as they face this year? May we assume that the business tax will ensure that there are virtually no businesses which will be worse off under that tax than they are at present?

Mr. Baker: I announced today that there would be a revaluation of business properties starting at once and coming into effect in April 1990. That will lead to an adjustment between the older properties, probably in the north, and the newer properties, probably in the south. That will have to be phased in over five years.

As for striking the average at national poundage, we put forward the idea in the Green Paper that, taking the mathematical average, the poundage could be reduced by 5 per cent. or indeed by a lower figure. The discretionary 5 per cent. will be left to the local authorities if they wish to charge it.

My hon. Friend asked whether there would be any special transitional arrangements, for the three years from 1987 to 1990 before the new operation comes in. Clearly there will have to be transitional arrangements even before this operation starts to avoid the type of debate that we had last week which I do not want to have again.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): The great debate is not starting today—it began in 1974 with the setting up of the Layfield committee, whose recommendations were rather better based than those before the House today. Does the Secretary of State recall his own Government's White Paper of August 1983 which, after extensive consultation, totally rejected the idea of a flat rate community charge because it would be unfair, complicated and expensive to administer? Why is the right hon. Gentleman now recommending something which his Government rubbished two and a half years ago?

Mr. Baker: The reasons set out in the 1983 White Paper for rejecting a community charge were largely

[Mr. Baker]

operational. The hon. Gentleman will see that if he studies the White Paper. The new grant system introduced in 1981 did not check the high spenders because there was insufficient local accountability under the rating system. That led to the introduction of rate capping and greater central control. A path has to be chosen by all parties in the country: do they want further central control, more control from Whitehall, or do they want to increase local accountability for the domestic taxpayer? That is the central issue.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that few, if any, local authorities which are profligate in the use of taxpayers' money would have been elected, let alone re-elected, if there had been a closer relationship between those who vote and those who pay? The broadening of the tax base will be widely welcomed not only by Conservative Members but in the country as a whole. My right hon. Friend's proposals constitute a great advance in equity of taxation.

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend, and agree with him. When the local elector goes to the ballot box and tries to make up his mind whether he should support the council, it is very difficult for him to determine whether the rates have gone up as a result of the high spending of the local authority or as a result of what has happened to the grant. There is no clear link. The new grant system which I have announced today will allow that link to be established. The local elector will be able to make his own judgment. In future, as a result of the new grant system and the standard national business rate, all the spending decisions will depend upon the council and upon it saying to its electorate, "This is what you want, so vote for us".

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As a sizeable number of poor people will be made worse off under these proposals, what measures does the Secretary of State propose to introduce to compensate them?

Mr. Baker: The Green Paper says that there will have to be a system of support for people on low incomes. One of the features of a community charge is that it will reduce average bills for the lowest income households with net incomes below £75 a week. There will be a rebate system that applies to the community charge as it applies to rates. For people on the lowest incomes, the community charge would be 2·4 per cent. of net income whereas rates would be 3 per cent. of net income.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that our objective is genuine independence and genuine accountability in local government? Does he agree that his plans take considerable strides in that direction? Will he reassure us that his plans for new grants and for the community charge, which I warmly welcome, will not be put at risk or overthrown by short-sighted Treasury intervention in the name of vague and hazy macroeconomic goals?

Mr. Baker: I think so. I welcome my right hon. Friend's support for increasing local accountability. I hope that the system will produce the checks and balances which I believe are necessary. We say that some form of selective rate capping may be needed for the transitional period, but I hope that it will be possible to phase that out.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): How will the cost of preparing a community charge register and collecting this new tax compare with the present system?

Mr. Baker: We estimate that it will cost about £30 million a year to prepare the register. The cost to the valuation office of domestic properties alone is about £30 million a year. If we were to keep the rating system and have a domestic revaluation, it would cost about £65 million.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the proposal to include higher education students in the new community charge would be acceptable if it were not for the fact that they are already suffering from loss of grant and benefits, as proposed by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Social Services? Are they covered by the low-income provisions?

Has my right hon. Friend discussed this with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Mr. Baker: The answer to my hon. Friend's latter question is yes, of course.

It is proposed in the Green Paper that students should also be liable to the community charge. I should like to say something about this as the circumstances regarding students and rates are complicated. There is an allowance in students' grants for housing costs. In addition, universities pay local authorities something for rates for students who live in halls of residence. In addition, students in digs who pay rent contribute towards the rates in their rent. Students who live at home may or may not pay their parents. We shall have to explore such factors much more fully during the consultation period.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that registration will be done on the basis of the electoral register? If so, how will he calculate for people who do not register? His answers have implied that industry will be better off, that pensioners will be better off and that the poor will be better off. In areas such as mine, where there is 20 per cent. unemployment, who will pay?

Mr. Baker: I have made it clear that we are broadening the tax base and that more people are to be brought into tax. The Green Paper sets that out fully. There will be a separate community charge register, which will not be the same as the electoral register.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many small business men, including me, who will be profoundly grateful for his announcement about the business rates? That is especially true for those of us who were forced to stop trading in areas where rates had risen so much as to make our businesses unviable. What are the implications for the precepting authorities such as the Inner London education authority and the police?

Mr. Baker: The arrangements for precepting will remain the same. District councils will levy and collect the community charge. I strongly agree with what my hon. Friend said about the national business rate. Businesses pay £1·50 for every £1 paid by domestic ratepayers. In some areas, local authorities have milked businesses. For example, in Camden businesses pay £4 for every £1 paid

by domestic ratepayers. Moreover, we shall link any increases in the national business rate to the rate of inflation.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is the Secretary of State aware that the alliance parties accept his two premises — that the rating system and rate support grant system are indefensible, and that there must be more accountability? Is he further aware that the policy conclusions that he reaches show that the Government are unsound in policy, just as yesterday's announcements showed that they are unsound in their practices, as the poll tax is the most reactionary proposal since 1601?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the majority of ratepayers will be worse off? Does he agree that Government control will be increased? Will he confirm that local income tax would provide better accountability, reduce local government's dependence on the Government, and reduce Government-imposed income tax?

Mr. Baker: I do not know which brand of local income tax the Liberal party will eventually settle on, but it does little for extra accountability. Before the hon. Gentleman gets too enmeshed in supporting local income tax, perhaps I might tell him what it would do to tax rates in his constituency. I have taken the rate for Southwark and calculated what it would represent in extra income tax. The standard rate for taxpayers in Southwark would increase from 30p to 41p.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, for those of us who have called for rate reform for at least 20 years, my right hon. Friend's statement is most welcome? In view of the long history of Green Papers and the failure of Lord Wilson, when Prime Minister, to allow the Redcliffe-Maud commission even to consider local finance or local taxation, why do we have to waste a year on a Green Paper rather than proceed immediately to a White Paper and to a Bill?

Mr. Baker: I entirely appreciate my hon. Friend's impatience, and I thank him for what he has said about the proposals. This is the most fundamental change in local government finance this century. It changes the grant system, the business rates system and——

Dr. Cunningham: Has the right hon. Gentleman already decided, then?

Mr. Baker: No. These are the proposals which the Government are putting before the country. All interests should have adequate time to comment on our proposals.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Many of us are aware that the financing of local government is too complex and far from perfect, but does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if some people, groups, or categories pay less, others will have to pay more? Why is it right for the 3 million poorest families in the country to pay more?

Mr. Baker: I made it clear that there will be assistance for those on low incomes. There is a high level of poverty in single-person households and those people will benefit from a community charge. For those on low incomes the community charge is less regressive.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I join the welcome for my right hon. Friend's statement, as I welcome any movement towards the abolition of that dreadful anachronism, rates, especially with the excessive increase of 25 per cent. that is facing my constituency. Does my right hon. Friend accept that we in Wales view with concern the suggestions in the press that the Principality is to be used as a proving ground for rate reform? Does he accept that we would need to scrutinise closely any such idea?

Mr. Baker: I assure my hon. Friend that, from the point of view of timing, the changes in England and Wales will run in harmony. There is no proposal in the Green Paper that changes should be made in Wales prior to being made in England. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making a statement tomorrow about rates in Scotland.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Is it not the central philosophy of the Green Paper that only the votes of those who pay will have any real validity? Is that not an outdated concept? Is it not better to embrace the concept of one-person, one-vote, which is a much more democratic principle?

Mr. Baker: One reason for the breakdown between voting and paying for local services is evident in the borough of Islington. In that borough, as a result of excessive spending, the average rate bill is now almost £700. I do not believe that it would have reached that figure if more people——

Mr. Heffer: Is that all?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has even higher ambitions to increase the rate bills in Liverpool.

I do not believe that that high figure would have been reached if there had been a better connection between those who vote and those who pay for local services.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his proposal to spread the cost of local government services more widely will be welcomed by the hard-pressed ratepayers in my constituency and more widely still? However, as the teachers' dispute has shown that local authorities alone cannot pay for the cost of teachers' salaries, has he given any consideration to taking that biggest single item of expenditure out of local finance and putting the responsibility on the central Exchequer?

Mr. Baker: We have considered that possibility, as have previous Governments. It would appear to be a simple and seductive answer to take a large part of expenditure off local government rates and meet it through the central Exchequer, which would involve higher income tax or higher VAT. However, there is a great disadvantage. If the annual financing of education is removed from the local authorities, ultimately the power will end up with a central education service. I know that some hon. Members have favoured that solution, but if the financing of education is moved to the Department of Education and Science or to a central agency, it is taken away from local government. It is not only a matter of allocating money. A central agency would have to decide how many teachers there should be in a primary or secondary school and it would have to decide on all sorts of expenditure. I ask my hon. Friend and those who feel that that is an easy answer, to consider and reflect what that would mean to local government. The powers and responsibilities of local government would be considerably diminished.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Does the Secretary of State expect that the standard business rate will lead to the introduction of rate equalisation under which money would be transferred from the prosperous local authorities in the south of England which have much industry to those local authorities in the north, which have lost most of their industry?

Mr. Baker: Two matters will affect the distribution of the business rate. The first is the revaluation of industrial property. Much property in the midlands, Manchester and the north of England was valued in 1973, when those areas were relatively more prosperous. For that reason, adjustments must be made. They will run alongside the second factor, which is the movement towards a national business rate, to be phased in over five years.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Rate reform will be widely welcomed in the country and I urge my right hon. Friend to reject the party political points made by the Opposition. Does he agree that the present rating system is a poll tax in that a single occupant of premises pays a similar amount in rates as the person next door in similar accommodation, who shares with four of five adults? Does he agree that it is essential to have a different register from the electoral roll? Many foreigners should be paying rates but they are not on the electoral roll. It is essential that we do not use only the electoral roll.

Mr. Baker: I agree completely with my hon. Friend's point about the position of foreigners. There is also a proposal in the Green Paper for a collective community charge, for example, for boarding houses, which have a rapid turnover of occupation. The landlord or the owner would be responsible for registering the occupants. That is an important point.

On the matter of basic unfairness, I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In two houses, side by side, one occupant could be paying the full rates while four are paying them in the next house. They are all using local government services, but the four occupants, who could be earners, are getting an excessively good deal compared with a single person living alone.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If the Secretary of State believes that rates are a harsh tax on the one-parent family and old-age pensioners, why have the Government spent their last seven years transferring as much of the burden as possible from central Government to local government, thus worsening the position? If the Secretary of State believes that those who vote at local government elections consist of a mixture of those who have no need to pay rates, but expect to get a bonanza from the local council, and those who are worried because the rates are so excessive that they cannot pay them, why is the turnout only 35 per cent. to 40 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: We have tried to improve local accountability by reducing the support that flows from central Government. The system can only operate with an effective, wider tax base, which is what we are proposing.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, while all of us will study carefully the radical proposals, the likely result of his announcement is that rural counties, such as Cheshire, will suffer from the standard business rate levy? The majority of middle-income earners in the rural county of Cheshire will pay considerably more. Is that a correct assessment?

Mr. Baker: I urge hon. Members to reflect upon the consequences of the proposals on the business rate and the figure at which the national average is struck. On that depends whether there will be more gainers or losers in the business world. The Green Paper proposes to strike the rate at the national average — 180p, in 1984-85. It further proposes that that should be reduced by 5 per cent. which would bring in many of those who are close to the national average who would have to pay more if it were struck at a higher level—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] The answer depends upon the level at which the national average business rate is set. That is a matter upon which we shall take advice and consult.

Regarding the incidence of the tax burden upon people in different areas, the broad result of the proposals will be a transfer of the tax burden from householders to non-householders.

On the question of resource equalisation, the answer to my hon. Friend's question lies in chapter 4 and annex J.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to protect the business for today, because there is the introduction of Members, a Ten-minute Bill and an important debate. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes, but then we shall have to move on.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government's proposals mean that people who are now granted concessions because of their low incomes will have to pay rates in the future? Will that not be seen by the elderly, especially elderly widows, as a further tax upon their incomes, and almost as a standing charge? Would not the aged and widows be better served by allowing them the existing concession of complete or partial rate rebates according to their incomes?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman's comment is more appropriate to the Social Security Bill, which we shall discuss later today, since that proposal is enshrined in the Bill.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Does my right hon. Friend realise that many of us share his objective of reducing the conflict between central Government and local government? Two areas of chief conflict have been the Government's desire to control aggregate local authority expenditure and the method of distribution of the rate support grant. Does the Green Paper mean that the Government have abandoned their objective of controlling the aggregate of local government expenditure? How will the needs element be distributed?

Mr. Baker: The answer to my hon. Friend's penultimate question is; not entirely. The distribution of grant will be much simpler and clearer under the new system. It will consist of two elements: a standard grant which all authorities will receive on a per capita basis as of right, and a needs grant. The present grant amounts to about £8 billion. About £4 billion will be available for the standard grant, and about £4 billion will be available for the needs grant. On the needs grant, we shall have to devise a system that is simpler and clearer than the present GREAs.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Secretary of State answer the important question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)? When the right hon. Gentleman

talked about no taxation without representation, he meant no representation without taxation. That principle goes to the heart of democracy. The logic of the right hon. Gentleman's position is that the unemployed and non-taxpayers will have removed from them the right to vote in elections.

Mr. Baker: No right to vote will be removed, but it cannot be right that, in some authorities, 50 or 60 per cent. of those who vote make no contribution to the payment for local services.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that throughout Langbaurgh, Middlesbrough and the whole of Cleveland and the north of England his proposals will be welcomed, especially if they mean the elimination of the current practice in Cleveland of appointing political assistants to the leader and other members of the council?

Mr. Baker: Such incidents happen because there is no effective ballot box control on excessive expenditure. We must move to a better system. I thank my hon. Friend for his support.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): How will those who are involved in properties or land that is currently derated be affected by the proposals? Will the proposal for a local income tax be extended to those who currently pay no rates? Does the Secretary of State accept that the echo that he senses among many working people for reform of rates is not caused by the present method of paying rates but by the fact that, in seven years, the Government have taken £10,000 million from local councils and could halve all rates if they returned grant to the 1979 level?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman accused me of introducing a local income tax——

Mr. Nellist: A community fine, then.

Mr. Baker: No, it is a community charge, and it is not based upon the ownership and possession of property. It is based upon a people's tax.

Mr. Michael Cockeram (Ludlow): Does my right hon. Friend realise that he has opened a Pandora's box that will affect every household in the land and that we are now launched upon a long-running period of protest beside which the Westland affair will be but a brief interlude?

Mr. Baker: I simply do not believe that the present system of local government finance can continue. That is why we introduced the proposals. The present system contains basic unfairnesses and inequalities. I have published a Green Paper because I want the proposals to be examined and debated throughout the country so that each party can put forward its proposals and be able to justify them.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Why is the Secretary of State inviting us to discuss the matters in the Green Paper after the passage of the Rates Act 1985 and the abolition of the metropolitan authorities rather than before then?

Mr. Baker: As I said in reply to an earlier question, in 1981 we introduced a system which we hoped would act as a brake upon excessive local spending. That did not work, so the further controls were introduced. I have said clearly that that should not be the path forward for local government and that there must be a more equitable base for true local accountability. I favour local accountability, because local democracy will not survive without it. When I am asked about gainers and losers, I always reply that the biggest gainer will be local democracy.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that to many of us it is pleasing that a promise made many years ago by a former Secretary of State for Education and Science, who has now become Prime Minister, that we should consider what changes are to be made has been fulfilled? But does he agree that, as there is no such thing as a free dinner, there is no such thing as a free rating system? Will we have a system whereby the Government not only decide what is spent but are willing to pay for what they impose on local authorities? If not, does he agree that, whatever system we devise, local ratepayers or taxpayers will be unable to afford it?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right to mention that important point in local government, which is always complaining that central Government impose duties upon it and do not provide it with the cash to carry out those duties. The proposals for standard grant recognise that some national services are required. That should meet my hon. Friend's point. As he comes from the west midlands, I should say that the area does badly under the present system, because its average incomes are about 5 per cent. below the national average, but its average rateable values are about 5 per cent. above the national average.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does the Minister realise that the thrust of his arguments will be deeply offensive to hundreds of thousands of people, many living in Conservative-controlled areas, who cannot pay their full rates? Is he not betraying an insidious attitude to democracy and individual rights when he relates the democratic right to vote to the ability to pay?

Mr. Baker: I have answered those points several times. The hon. Lady, who represents a constituency in a high-spending inner-city authority, should be fully aware of the inequity of the present rating system and what it means to many of her constituents.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in April, the Comptroller and Auditor-General commented that the existing RSG system failed to prevent overspending, failed to protect the priorities of local government spending, and showed a poor distribution of the financial burden among ratepayers in different areas. Does he agree that the system that he is now proposing is clear, will work and is comprehensive? It will be extremely welcome in local authorities and should be introduced as soon as possible.

Mr. Baker: I could not have said it better myself.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not true that the proposed poll tax — there is no need for fancy names, because that is what it is—is the most regressive system of revenue-raising that the Minister could have found? Did not all his predecessors as Secretary of State in the Conservative Government reject the proposal for the obvious reason that it is unfair, unjust and will especially penalise those on low incomes?

Mr. Baker: The basic fairness of what I am suggesting is that those who benefit from local government services should be involved in paying for them. The country will not perceive that as an unfair principle.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend will understand that the many elderly, single, owner-occupiers in my constituency will welcome what they regard as the death knell of an unfair rating system. They will also appreciate the re-establishment of the link between taxation and representation. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that this will not mean that those who are taxed without representation—small businesses in the south east—will ever again be asked to subsidise profligate inner city councils?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend touches upon the national business rate. There will be consultations about that with the representatives of local government. The CBI conference voted against the national business rate. Since then, the CBI tax committee has come out in favour of it, and I believe that the chambers of commerce are on record as favouring a national business rate.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The Secretary of State talked about winners and losers. Can he confirm that one of the winners under this proposition will be the occupants of the Thatcher retirement home in Dulwich?

Mr. Baker: In widening the tax base, which should be widened in this way, one has to ask whether the local government system should be financially redistributive. More than half of local government money comes from the national taxpayer. That is, of course, principally a redistributive source.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): While welcoming the Secretary of State's proposals, may I draw his attention to the tremendous number of abortive man hours, particularly in local government, that were expended on discussion of previous White Papers and Green Papers and the Layfield report? Will he give an assurance that the Government will have the determination to implement the proposals before the House so that the discussions will bear fruit? Does he agree that the proposed reorganisation is not a message for any local authority to increase its spending?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend's last point. I have already said that during the transitional period some control will be necessary to ensure that certain local authorities do not take the opportunity substantially to increase their spending. I also note the point that was made by him and by several of my hon. Friends, that they want the Government to get on with this.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his admission that industrial rates in the north will go up? I am sure that that will bring a lot of joy to many industrialists in Cumbria. Will the right hon. Gentleman come clean? He has told us who gains. What about telling us who loses? It is all here in the Green Paper. Will he tell us the key statistics about those who lose? Are the losers not several million people?

Mr. Baker: I have admitted quite openly that if the tax base is broadened more people will pay tax. Slightly more households gain than lose. The figures are clearly set out in the Green Paper.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend accept that businesses in the north will look upon what he says as long overdue, because there is a great need to have a uniform business rate and evaluations? Surely it is also long overdue that we get rid of the holdback, the clawback and targets and all the other panoply of the existing system. However, none of those things needs a poll tax. A poll tax is only tolerable if it is small. Will he therefore look again at education expenditure, and particularly teachers' salaries?

Mr. Baker: I was asked about this earlier. I appreciate that many hon. Members feel it would be an easy solution to take a large part of education expenditure off the rates. That would have profound constitutional implications, because one cannot remove the responsibility for financing a large part of expenditure without moving power to the centre. It is almost impossible to devise a scheme. That is a centrist approach and the way the French system works, but it has enormous implications for local government and I would not want it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Secretary of State will not pull the wool over the eyes of the people, however much he might succeed in doing that to some Tory MPs. Successive Secretaries of State have come to the Dispatch Box year after year for the last seven years, and they have all declared that they have a new system of rate support grant that will be wonderful for everybody. The net result is that £16,000 million has been removed by central Government and ratepayers have had to foot the bill. From our point of view this proposal is a little more helpful, because during the course of the Green Paper consultation and up to the next general election we shall be able to tell every constituent in every target seat how much the rates will go up as a result of this latest blunder by the Tory Government.

Mr. Baker: I do not know what has impinged upon the consciousness of the hon. Gentleman. I am not proposing an increase in rates, I am proposing a replacement of rates.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend not agree that any system in which 100 voters may vote for increased local expenditure but only 30 of those voters are called to pay for it is utterly iniquitous? What he seeks to introduce is direct accountability between the wish to vote and have a voice in local government, and the willingness to pick up the bill for that vote.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend goes to the heart of the matter and I am sure that the country generally agrees with that proposition.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): If the Secretary of State is aiming to increase local accountability, why is he proposing in the Green Paper to take complete authoritarian control over the capital expenditure of councils? Why is the consultation period so short? The poorest households pay no rates at present, but is it not true that all poor households will be worse of as a result of these proposals? If the Secretary of State can give illustrations by local authority of the impact of a local income tax, why can he not do the same for the impact of a universal business rate and this poll tax by local authority? Is the reason why he is ducking such illustrations the one spotted by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram), that business rates and overall burdens in many Conservative

heartlands will rise? When Conservative Members read the small print of the proposals they will understand that this is yet another own goal by an incompetent Government.

Mr. Baker: When the hon. Gentleman has had time to read the proposals on capital expenditure, he will realise we are putting forward two proposals and consulting on them. He asked about further information. I cannot think of many Green Papers that have contained as much information as this one. If after studying it the hon. Gentleman or local authorities want more information, I will consider their requests and that information can cover the levels of community charges and the effect of the national business rate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will give priority to those hon. Members whom I have not been able to call today when this matter is subsequently discussed.

Standing Order No. 10

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we had an important and vital debate. It was so important that it was broadcast in its entirety. I noticed yesterday that before it commenced a Member of the Liberal party made an application under Standing Order No. 10. On previous occasions when we have had important and vital debates that were broadcast it is my recollection that precisely the same thing was done. It is not for me to say that the Liberal party is more interested in publicity than in politics. Others may say that. May I suggest, however, that in future, when debates are broadcast, Standing Order No. 10 applications, important though they may be, should come after the debate, particularly as in this case it was a Standing Order No. 10 debate?

Mr. Speaker: I have to take a decision about whether an application under Standing Order No. 10 is in order. It was in order to make that application. It would be the same for any hon. Member who happened to choose that day.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): May I help, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think I need the hon. Gentleman's help.

Mr. Skinner: It is helpful.

Mr. Speaker: If it is helpful I will hear it.

Mr. Skinner: The secret lay in the moving of Standing Order No. 10. When we had the debate on teachers last week, the Liberal party spokesman was so full of the emergency debated yesterday that he said "I support both sides and wish them well". He was trying to put right the mess that he had made only a few days before.

Mr. Speaker: Not all that helpful, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

NEW MEMBERS

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath:

Right hon. John Enoch Powell, for South Down.

Right hon. James Henry Molyneaux, for Lagan Valley.

Rev. Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, for Antrim, North.

James Alexander Kilfedder Esq., for North Down.

Roy Beggs Esq., for Antrim, East.

Peter David Robinson Esq., for Belfast, East

Clifford Forsythe Esq., for Antrim, South.

James Harold McCusker Esq., for Upper Bann.

Rev. Robert Thomas William McCrea, for Mid-Ulster.

Ken Maginnis Esq., for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

William Ross Esq., for Londonderry, East

Rev. William Martin Smyth, for Belfast, South.

Right hon. John David Taylor, for Strangford.

Alfred Cecil Walker Esq., for Belfast, North.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Importation of Live Fish of the Salmon Family Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Wages Council Orders Enforcement

5.5 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the automatic prosecution of and the publication of the identity of employers who pay their employees wages below wages councils' statutory minimum rates.

I should like to express my thanks to my union, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union, for its help in preparing this Bill and the case for it, and also to my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) who has a considerable interest in the Bill. I recognise that the Bill proposes to strengthen the role of wages councils when, regrettably, the Government have chosen at this time to move in the opposite direction.

Most workers in the United Kingdom have a direct influence on their pay levels by means of negotiation and voluntary agreement between their employers and their trade unions. Even in such cases, unfortunately, some unscrupulous employers, such as Silentnight, break agreements and treat their employees in an appalling way. This Bill deals with those who work in industries where it is difficult to establish collective bargaining agreements, and where workers depend on minimum wages and conditions as laid down by wages councils. At present some 2·75 million workers in over 325,000 establishments are protected by wages council provisions.

My union has always fought hard for lower-paid workers, and will continue to do so. Wages councils have existed in one form or another since 1910. There are now some 25, the largest being in the hairdressing, hotel and catering and retail trades, but there are others which are also very important. It is important to acknowledge that those workers are in low-paid industries, which makes it all the more appalling that some employers fail to pay the minimum wage rates. I must stress that those workers are very often in very low-paid jobs.

To put it in perspective, at 7 October 1985 wages in the hairdressing industry were £50·25 a week, in the makeup and textile industry £60·64, and in the hat, cap and millinery industry £60·84. All the other figures show a similar, appallingly low wage level. They are extremely low wages, to put it mildly—and one could be tempted to put it much more strongly than that.

Many workers in industries covered by wages councils are women whose income is essential to the family. It is crucial that the system works on their behalf and that they get at least the minimum wage fixed by the wages council. It is true to say that many are afraid to complain to the wages council inspectorate as they fear unfair dismissal. Working in small units, they feel isolated and are fearful of pressing for their legal entitlement and just right.

At present, it is easy for the unscrupulous employer to get away with cheating his employees of the wages to which they are entitled. The number of wages council inspectors at December 1984, when the inspectorate had been reduced by one-third since 1979, was 222. It stands to reason that the inspectorate cannot control and check 325,000 establishments with only 222 staff. In 1982, only 6 per cent. of those establishments were inspected, but that figure is misleading as only 40 per cent. of that 6 per cent. actually received a visit. Other employers were asked to confirm by questionnaire that they were not guilty of illegal underpayment. What nonsense to ask the employer to make the return himself.

In 1984 the percentage of those visited improved—it was 6·9 per cent. of the total. That still means that an employer can expect to be visited on average only once every 15 years. Therefore, the risk of being caught is minimal and the attraction to break the law is substantial.

Those key figures of establishments visited in 1984 having been given, it has to be said that 35·6 per cent. of those establishments were found to be guilty of underpayment. It is interesting to note that, as a result of inspection by visit, 12·2 per cent. of all the workers involved were being underpaid and exploited. The number of those checked by all methods, including visits and the return of the questionnaire, totalled 4·4 per cent. From the figures I have given, it can be seen that the responses to the questionnaire confirm an unbelievably low rate of people being underpaid, and this is understandable because, when the guilty are asked to submit their own forms, obviously they will not tell the truth.

Under the Bill it would be essential to have more checks, an enlarged inspectorate and more visits. It is reasonable to assume that a proper inspection, if it were carried out, would prove that the number of workers being underpaid was in the region of 12·2 per cent.

In 1984 the arrears assessed were £2·5 million. That is the amount of money out of which employees have been cheated by their employers. I would go further and say that it was stolen by the employers. The true figure is likely to be three times that amount—money stolen from some of the lowest paid workers in the country. It is time that action was taken to protect them.

What happens to employers who are guilty when they are found out? The answer is, very little. In 1983, of employers at some 9,842 establishments found to be breaking the law, only two were prosecuted and civil proceedings were taken against another five. However, of the debt for underpaid wages exposed by the inspectorate, 25 per cent. was left unpaid by the employers.

The threat of prosecution is minimal even when employers are caught. The Bill aims to remedy that position. It provides for automatic prosecution in any case where the employer has been shown to be paying below the minimum wage rate fixed by the appropriate wages council. It also provides for the automatic naming of the individuals prosecuted. If they have committed an offence, they should be prosecuted. If found guilty, they should be named. That would be a genuine deterrent to prevent employers stealing money from their employees. If such bad employers were named, prospective employees would come to know of them. Their names should be on display in jobcentres so that they might be seen by those seeking jobs. Indeed, the names could also be on show in libraries, town halls and other public buildings.

Combined with an increase in the number of inspectors, the Bill will pose a serious threat to those employers who attempt to rob their workers in this way. I believe that the very threat of the Bill will herald a speedy end to this appalling scandal, and ensure that the workers in low-paid industries receive fair wages and conditions.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Michael Cocks, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Roland Boyes, Dr. Norman A. Godman and Mr. Tom Pendry.

Wages Council Orders Enforcement

Mr. Peter Pike accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the automatic prosecution of and the publication of the identity of employers who pay their employees wages below wages councils' statutory minimum rates: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 February and to be printed. [Bill 65.]

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill gives effect to the proposals set out in the White Paper on social security published last month. The White Paper itself followed what has been the most extensive examination of the social security system since the war. It started in the autumn of 1983 with the inquiry into retirement. That was followed by an examination of family support, housing benefit and supplementary benefit. The Bill sets out three major objectives which flow from the reviews.

The first objective is to ensure that many more people in this country should have a pension of their own. What we want to achieve is a major extension of occupational and personal pensions. Over the last 20 years, that occupational pension coverage has remained static. That has been the case not just in the so-called years of pension blight at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, as pension provision was debated and re-debated; it has continued to be the case since. The result is that we have two nations in pensions — 11 million who have the advantage of their own occupational scheme, but another nation of 10 million who have no scheme of their own. All the evidence is that people without additional pensions of their own would welcome the opportunity to have one. The Bill makes it easier for both employers and employees to set up new pension arrangement while at the same time preserving the basic pension unchanged and a modified second-tier state earnings-related scheme.

The second objective is to seek to concentrate help in areas where that help is needed. The evidence of the social security review is that the present system fails to do that in a number of ways. The position has changed over the last 20 years. Any diagnosis of need shows that some of the most difficult problems are faced by low income families with children. Families with children now make up more than half of the people living on the lowest incomes — unemployed families, but also low-income families in work. At the same time, there is the totally indefensible position where families can be worse off in work than out of work and where families can lose income as their gross wages rise. Through the family credit proposals and the family provisions of income support the Bill will enable us to direct more help in those areas. It will help us to tackle both the unemployment and poverty traps, and it will enable us to provide more help for disabled people on low incomes who are a group who stand in special need.

The third objective of the Bill is to ensure a simpler system of social security. One of the most common complaints from the public is that the system is at times one of bewildering complexity. This is in the interests neither of claimants nor of the staff who have to administer it. The Bill will simplify the individual benefits and put income support, housing benefit and family credit on a similar basis.

The Bill will go further than that. It will introduce common rules for the different benefits; and it will also simplify the present complexities of the contracting-out rules for the state pension scheme. The point of the changes is this. Over the next 10 to 15 years we will be introducing a new computer strategy for social security. This will be the biggest computer operation of its kind ever undertaken in this country and its cost will be up to £2 billion. The effect will be radically to improve the service we give to the public. Side by side with those changes, we want to achieve a simpler structure for social security. That, too, will help in providing a better service, and that is what this Bill aims to do.

The first part of the Bill deals with pensions and the first six clauses give for the first time in this country the right to a personal pension. What this means in practice is that anyone, whether they be a member of the additional state scheme — SERPS — or a member of an occupational scheme, can choose instead to have a personal pension. In other words, the pension is personal to the individual and is fully portable from job to job. Personal pensions will be accumulated on a money purchase basis, with contributions qualifying for tax relief. Each person will be able to choose the kind of pensions saving scheme that he wants and the kind of body that he wants to run his savings scheme.

The significance of that last measure is that it will not just be life insurance companies which will be able to provide pension savings schemes, but building societies, banks and unit trusts. That will not only give the public a wider choice and a greater say in how their savings are invested; it will also increase competition between providers of pensions, to the benefit of the consumer.

Proof that that kind of system can work effectively in the public interest comes from the United States. There, a wide range of financial institutions can provide individual retirement accounts and over the past five years the number of retirement accounts has increased from about 4 million to over 20 million. But what has been even more significant is that competition has driven down the administrative charges which the public have to bear and improved the choice for the public.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): If the schemes are so successful in other countries and increase competition, why is the Secretary of State giving 2 per cent. as an extra bribe, compared with people who are in occupational schemes, to persuade people to move into personal pension plans?

Mr. Fowler: I shall come to that point. It is entirely reasonable to give an incentive over a five-year period to those people who do not have schemes of their own.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Why?

Mr. Fowler: The 2 per cent. is an incentive given over a five-year period. It seems to be in line with what the public want. If hon. Members study the social security review, they will find that we went to great trouble to find what the public's view was. *[Interruption.]* It is not the view of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). It is what the people of this country want. We

found that the vast majority of people in this country want a pension of their own. The Bill tries to give them that right and encouragement.

If personal pensions are to provide an additional pension on top of the basic state pension, it is clearly right that people should be able to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Clause 2 will allow them to do so. The minimum contribution required to qualify a personal pension for contracting out will be the amount of the contracted-out rebate — the reduction in national insurance contributions at present available only to those in salary-related schemes. As an additional incentive to people to set up their own personal pension arrangements, we shall be adding 2 per cent. to the amount of the contracted-out rebate for the five years from April 1988.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose—*

Mr. Fowler: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

The Bill provides for the administrative arrangements for paying over the minimum contributions and the extra incentive to the personal pension of an employee's choice. Those will be paid through my Department. An employer who does not wish to supplement the minimum contribution will simply pay full rate national insurance contributions. We will then pay over the difference between the full rate and the contracted-out rate to the personal pension provider. That will mean that an employer need not, unless he wishes to do so, play any part in the administration of his employees' personal pensions.

The amount of the contracted-out rebate from 1988 will be the subject of a consultation document prepared by the Government Actuary which I shall be issuing shortly. The amount of the rebate is calculated actuarially to reflect the cost to a salary-related pension scheme of providing guaranteed minimum pensions. Clearly, in a contribution based pension scheme, the concept of a guaranteed minimum pension has not the same application, but an essential feature of contracting out of the SERPS is that the guaranteed minimum pension is deducted from the state additional pension at retirement. We shall reflect that in contracted-out personal pensions by deducting an amount equivalent to the guaranteed minimum pension from the state additional pension which someone with a personal pension will receive.

Hand in hand with choice must go effective investor protection. The Bill, taken with the Financial Services Bill currently before the House, will enable us to achieve a proper measure of investor protection. As clause 2, with schedule 1, provides, a personal pension scheme will be able to be contracted out only if it satisfies proper requirements, and the Occupational Pensions Board will have to be satisfied that it does so before approving it for contracting out.

Personal pension schemes will have to comply with the regulations concerning their investments, the amount of their administrative charges and the calculation and securing of their members' protected rights, which come from the payment of minimum contributions. The bodies providing personal pensions will also be subject to the regulatory framework set out in the Financial Services Bill. In addition, clause 12 provides the powers to control advertising.

Mr. Marlow: I can tell from the complexity of what my right hon. Friend was saying why he wanted to finish the point that he was making.

In response to the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), is it not the case that, even with the additional incentive of 2 per cent. over five years given to the personal pension plan, the individual will have a splendid deal—he will have the choice to provide a pension scheme which suits his own purpose—and at the end of the day, is the taxpayer not better off than if the person were to continue with SERPS rather than have his own personal pension scheme?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. It is in the nation's interest generally that as many people as possible should be building up their own pensions for retirement. My hon. Friend talked about complexity, but the complexity of pensions arises because of the retention of SERPS. As I understood it, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) had been arguing rather vigorously over the last month for just that.

Mr. Frank Field: No.

Mr. Fowler: It is not only personal pensions that we are concerned to encourage but the spread of occupational pension schemes where there is substantial scope for expansion. Up to now there is no doubt that employers, particularly small employers, have been discouraged from starting new schemes by the fact that only schemes promising a benefit related to salary could contract out of the state earnings-related scheme. That is an open-ended commitment which not all employers can reasonably be expected to take on. The Bill provides an alternative route to an occupational pension.

Clauses 6 to 12 enable pension schemes based on a defined level of contribution—money purchase schemes —to contract out of the state earnings-related scheme. In other words, the test that the employer must satisfy is a contribution test rather than an open-ended benefit test. I believe that that will be a real inducement to employers to set up schemes. It will also give the wide range of bodies offering personal pensions new opportunities to set up pension savings schemes. That can be done for individual companies or for groups of companies and one result is that industrywide schemes are encouraged under these proposals.

In essence, the contracting-out requirements for a money purchase employers' scheme will be the same as those which I have outlined for personal pensions. The minimum qualifying contribution will be the amount of the contracting-out rebate, and the 2 per cent. addition to the contracted-out rebate will also apply.

What this will mean in practice is that someone—this emphasises and underlines the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) —who now relies entirely on SERPS can, if that is his wish, instead get a sizeable contribution to his own pension at no extra cost to himself or his employer. As an illustration, with a contracted-out rebate of 5·5 per cent., a man on average manual earnings of £170 a week would, including the 2 per cent. incentive and tax relief on his share of the rebate, have almost £600 a year to put into his own pension. That is the point that my hon. Friend was making.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is there not one further enormous advantage to be gained from going into a private

[Mr. Tony Favell]

pension scheme? Private schemes are funded, whereas the state earnings-related pensions scheme is not. That means that the more people there are in private pension schemes, the better it will be for taxpayers in future generations.

Mr. Fowler: That is substantially correct. There is a point on the whole question of funding schemes, rather than the state pay-as-you-go scheme, to which I should like to refer when I discuss my proposed modifications to the state earnings-related pension scheme. So far as new occupational schemes are concerned, the technical annex published with the White Paper shows that many people could expect to do better by opting for a personal pension rather than by staying in SERPS. On the assumption of a 3·5 per cent. real rate of return on investment, the annex shows how good an investment this can be for everyone of 40 or under.

Clause 11 will ensure that all members of occupational pension schemes and everybody with a personal pension will be able to pay an additional voluntary contribution —that is not a matter of controversy—to boost their pension rights up to the limits allowed by the Inland Revenue. In other words, this becomes a right for the individual, rather than dependent on the decision of the pension scheme.

The remaining clauses in part I provide for modifications to the state earnings-related pension scheme to reduce its costs in the next century. The effects of leaving the scheme unchanged are clearly set out by the Government Actuary in the report published with the Bill. His report shows quite clearly that the earnings-related pension alone will increase in cost from barely £200 million a year now to £25·5 billion in 2033. This means that the total cost of the state pensions scheme—basic pension and earnings-related pension together—would rise from under £16 billion a year now to £49 billion a year in 2033, provided that the basic pension was uprated in line with prices. If, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West advocates, it was uprated in line with earnings, the cost would be almost £73 billion a year — requiring a national insurance contribution of over 27 per cent. That is stated in the Government Actuary's report. I do not believe that, faced with that evidence, any responsible Government can ignore these estimates and predictions.

We know that the cost of the state earnings-related scheme is set to increase sharply. We know that that cost is borne not by a fund which has been invested but on an entirely pay-as-you-go basis by the contributors of the time —our children, young people now starting out on their careers. We know that the ratio of those contributors to pensioners worsens. In other words, there will be an increase of 3·5 million pensioners between 2003 and 2033, while the contributing work force remains the same. We know that if the plans continue unchanged, the decisions of future Governments will inevitably be pre-empted. If those Governments wanted to devote more resources to caring for the elderly, through, for example, the Health Service or social services, the public resources would be already committed.

I do not believe that we should hand that kind of debt down to future generations. It is for that reason that we have modified SERPS so that the emerging cost of the scheme is reduced by about £12·5 billion by 2033.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the Government Actuary's report in no way justifies the conclusions he is trying to draw about the unaffordability of SERPS? Is he aware that the combined employer and employee contributions have, in the six years of this Government, increased by 5·5 per cent.? An increase to 27 per cent. is proposed, which is only slightly more over a 40-year period than has already occurred in the past six years. The right hon. Gentleman has chosen the year 2033, but the report shows that, 20 years on, the 27 per cent. figure falls to 24 per cent. Paragraph 38 of the Government Actuary's report states:

"Growth in real earnings tends to hold down the projected contribution rate."

The only reason it is as high as 27 per cent. is simply because the Secretary of State in this Government is assuming an economic growth rate of only 1½ per cent.

Mr. Fowler: That intervention was very revealing, especially the first point. The hon. Gentleman was clearly saying that we should be concerned about the 27 per cent. national insurance rate because that was something that the nation would be able to afford. I do not believe that that is a fair representation of the position. However, it sets out starkly what the hon. Gentleman is prepared to see in the extra burden of national insurance and of tax.

It is true that after 2033 there is an evening-off, but we have to get through the period from 2030 to 2033. If the hon. Gentleman's position is that 27 per cent. national insurance rates are OK, doubtless this will not cause him any problem, but most people in this country will find it a problem. Paragraph 42 of the Government Actuary's report shows that the modified state earnings-related pensions scheme will mean that national insurance contribution rates will remain constant, but, if SERPS is left as it is, contributions will go up by some 20 to 30 per cent. above current levels.

Mr. Meacher: Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that his latter point only applies because the Government are assuming economic growth forecast rates of half the level with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer likes to regale the House? If it were a 3 per cent. rate, the 27 per cent. joint contribution rate would be nowhere near that level. The rate would probably be in the low twenties.

Will the right hon. Gentleman take on board another point in the Government Actuary's report? Paragraph 36 states:

"The notional rate of contributions to the national insurance fund in 1986-87 on the same assumptions as in the long-term projections regarding unemployment proportions contributing etc. would be 15·7 per cent."

The table below shows that, in 2053, the rate is 15 per cent.—lower than it is now. How can that be such a problem? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the other corollary of his argument is that he is proposing to cut the level of the additional component by half in the next century?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is getting excited, but he always does. He is misrepresenting what the report says. It cannot be denied that there will be a substantial increase in the cost of the state earnings-related pension scheme. No one, apart from the hon. Gentleman, is seeking to deny that. It means also that national insurance contributions will go up. No one, apart from the hon. Gentleman, is seeking to deny that. During that period, the ratio of contributors to pensioners will decrease. I do not

think that even the hon. Member for Oldham, West is trying to dispute that. There will be 3·5 million more pensioners, and the number of contributors will remain the same.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West cited one assumption from the Government Actuary's report. There is a range of others, including an unemployment assumption of 6 per cent. All the assumptions in the Government Actuary's report are not uniquely unfavourable.

I am sure that we shall debate these issues in Committee. I shall certainly serve on that Committee. I should like to correct one report in *The Guardian* today which suggested that the Government were unwilling to have the hon. Member for Oldham, West lead the Opposition in Committee. It is the united wish of the Government that the hon. Gentleman should lead the Opposition in this matter.

I should emphasise that the changes will not affect those nearest to retirement. The changes to SERPS do not affect anyone retiring this century. The rights of anyone retiring up to 1999 are entirely unchanged, while there is a period of transition up to 2010. At the same time, the basic pension remains unchanged by any of these proposals.

The Bill will reduce the cost of the state earnings-related scheme in three ways. First, additional pension rights under the state scheme will be based on a lifetime's average revalued earnings, rather than on the best 20 years, as now. This puts the state scheme on a par with the guaranteed minimum pension from occupational schemes. We recognise that special protection is needed for those who are bringing up children or are looking after someone who is disabled, or who are themselves disabled. In these cases, these years will not be counted in the working life over which earnings are averaged.

The second change is that the earnings-related pension, and the guaranteed minimum pension from contracted-out schemes, will in future be based on 20 per cent., rather than 25 per cent., of average revalued earnings. All rights built up between 1978, when the state earnings-related scheme started, and 1988, when the changes in the Bill will take effect, will be honoured at 25 per cent.

The third change concerns a requirement on contracted-out pension schemes to inflation-proof guaranteed minimum pensions once they are in payment. The state additional pension is fully protected against price rises and, because people get the difference between that and their guaranteed minimum pensions, the state effectively inflation-proofs the guaranteed minimum pension. Discussions with employers and pension interests in the wake of the Green Paper convinced us that it was reasonable to require contracted-out schemes to undertake a limited amount of inflation-proofing.

The Bill therefore provides for contracted-out schemes to inflation-proof guaranteed minimum pensions in payment up to a ceiling of 3 per cent. a year. The state additional pension will remain fully protected. Similarly, annuities from contracted-out money-purchase employers' or personal pension schemes will be increased in line with inflation up to the 3 per cent. ceiling.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): My right hon. Friend knows that Conservative Members strongly support all his personal pension proposals. My right hon. Friend proposes to offer this excellent incentive to occupational pension schemes which become contracted out after 1 January 1986. I am sure that we shall want to return to that point to examine its implications. Will my right hon. Friend briefly confirm that occupational pension schemes and final salary schemes have played and will continue to play an important part in the provision of private sector pension schemes?

Mr. Fowler: That is an entirely fair point. The Government are seeking to provide further options with respect to pensions. We are not saying for one moment that money purchase is the only route. Clearly, there are many excellent final salary schemes. We are saying, however, that for small employers there are sometimes disadvantages in setting up an occupational pension scheme. We are providing extra options for occupational pensions and personal pensions. Of course, the good final salary scheme will remain. We shall support it.

The second part of the Bill covers the three income-related benefits — income support, which will replace supplementary benefit; family credit, replacing family income supplement; and housing benefit. Clauses 19 to 21 basically bring together all three income-related benefits and put them on a common basis. That is a move of major importance. Much of the inequity and complication of present arrangements lies in the different rules for different benefits. At present, for instance, allowances for children are provided at different levels and on different structures in each benefit. The Bill will seek to put that right. All three benefits will be assessed on the same basis. Because we envisage family credit-rates keeping ahead of those for income support, we tackle the unemployment trap.

The common basis of assessment will be net income. People will be assessed on income after tax and national insurance contributions have been paid. That will end the position where a reduction in benefit as earnings rise can actually leave people worse off. The use of net income will therefore virtually eliminate the worst of the poverty trap, where marginal tax rates can be in excess of 100 per cent.

Income support will replace supplementary benefit and will be a significant improvement on it. In particular, it will tackle the complexity which bedevils the present system and which is one of the reasons why supplementary benefit requires 40,000 staff to administer it. Income support will be based on standard rates rather than the array of weekly additions and the system of single payments. But those rates must clearly reflect the general needs of particular groups.

Income support will seek to achieve that. It will consist of a personal allowance. In addition, there will be a family premium plus addition, as now, for each dependent child. Premiums will be added to the allowance for pensioners — with a higher premium for the over-80s — and disabled and lone parents. An extra family premium will be paid for each disabled child in a family.

We have recognised throughout that, however well designed a general scheme may be, there is no way of anticipating special or emergency needs. People will still face losses because of sudden or unexpected crises. A domestic crisis may mean large, unforeseen spending. There will still be people who find difficulty in budgeting.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, who chaired the inquiry on supplementary benefit, will say more on this matter and on income support when he replies; but it is to meet these needs that we are proposing the social fund, with which part III deals. The aim of the fund is that we should be able to respond to individual

[Mr. Fowler]

needs and circumstances. It seems to us that it is not possible to achieve that aim within the context of a detailed regulatory structure — like that for income support — which is linked to a formal adjudication system. Instead, local social fund officers will have the flexibility that a regulatory structure will deny.

These officers will be operating within the framework set out in clauses 32 and 33. As part of that framework, I shall issue directions and guidance to them, which will be published. I shall set up careful monitoring arrangements to ensure that the fund is operating properly. There will be a review procedure where a decision is challenged. This will be designed to ensure that the case has been handled properly and in accordance with my guidance.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I submit that the social fund officers will have a difficult task. I appreciate that it is right that they should be able to judge individual cases and have considerable flexibility. What worries me — I hope my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will comment on this — is that inevitably one could get two similar cases in different parts of the country judged by two different social fund officers coming up with different conclusions. In the light of that, will he consider whether there should be a fall back position which would enable applicants, under certain conditions, to apply for an independent tribunal?

Mr. Fowler: I understand the concern and feeling on the issue. We will listen to the arguments during the debate. I am seeking to have a review process which is essentially local and which deals with the cases locally, personally and urgently, rather than going to the elaboration of the adjudication process that we have at the moment. I am open to argument on that. It may be that other hon. Members will wish to put forward alternative suggestions on how it could be done, and the Government will listen to the arguments.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I am conscious that I am liable to go on for a long time if I give way to everyone but I shall give way to the two hon. Members.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Secretary of State says that the aim of the social fund is to meet individual needs, how can he guarantee that that objective will be met with the cash limit to the fund?

Mr. Fowler: I am concerned that, whatever the budgeting arrangements, there should be no question of turning down applications because, for example, a local office has run out of money in mid-year. We will maintain contingency arrangements to meet unexpected demands which put great pressure on the allocation of individual offices. I can give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On the right to independent appeal on the social fund, I am sure that the House notes that the Secretary of State is willing to take suggestions from hon. Members. He must already know about the document published this month entitled the

"Special Report by the Council on Tribunals."

The council is chaired by Lord Gibson-Watt and includes, as an ex officio member, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Does the Secretary of State not consider it a damning statement when the report says, on the lack of an independent appeal:

"The Council on Tribunals believe this proposal to be misconceived",

and stresses:

"It would abolish a right of independent appeal which has existed for over 50 years."?

Why does the Secretary of State have to listen to further comments when he has something as authoritative as that?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must understand that I have not only read that but I have talked with the council and with Lord Gibson-Watt. We are concerned to find a means whereby such a decision can be reviewed without the elaborate adjudication system that currently exists. The reason for that is that the sort of decisions we are talking about are local, personal and urgent decisions. As I have made clear, I would much prefer that to be reviewed in a different way. In other words, I am not seeking to say that there is not a case for a review; clearly there is. I am saying that the debate should be about the kind of review that there should be.

The payments for maternity and funeral expenses for people on low incomes, for which clause 32 provides, will be grants. There will be no question of recovery from the applicant, although funeral expenses may be a charge on the estate of the dead person, as they are now. It is also our intention that payments given under the general heading of community care — for example, to make it possible to keep in the community or bring into the community someone who might otherwise be in long-term care — should also be in the form of grants. Other payments would normally be recoverable loans, but they would be recoverable by deduction from weekly benefit subject to sensible rules. I once again stress the aim of making the administration of the social fund as flexible and responsive as we can.

The family credit scheme, which is to replace family income supplement, is set out in clauses 19 to 21. The House will accept that family income supplement was always intended to be short term and small in scale. I do not believe that it has been satisfactory or that there is a case for leaving family income supplement as it is. I believe that family credit is a much more effective way of helping low-income working families. We would expect twice as many such families to benefit from it as do now from family income supplement, and we expect to spend some £200 million more a year on it.

Entitlement to family credit will be based on net income. The maximum credit will consist of an adult credit plus a child credit for each child. Clause 27 will provide for payments of family credit by the employer through the wage packet. There is an important point: in 60 per cent. of cases we expect payment to be simply an offset to tax and national insurance contributions. In other words, the visible tax burden will be reduced or eliminated. Payment through the wage packet marks a genuine step towards greater co-operation between the tax and social security systems, which many hon. Members on both sides of the House would want to see. Where both parents are working more than the 24 hours a week needed to qualify for the credit they will be able to choose in whose wage packet it should be paid. Let me stress that the payment of child benefit will be unaffected and will continue to go directly to the mother.

The illustrative figures which we published with the White Paper show what family credit will mean to working families on low income. We expect nearly 400,000 working families to be better off as a direct result of the change.

On housing benefit, our major aims are greater coherence with the other income-related benefits, and a simpler system. The number of tapers — the rate at which benefit is withdrawn as incomes rise — will be reduced from six to two, one each for help with rent and rates. By treating employed and unemployed people alike, we shall get rid of the two separate systems which at present exist in housing benefit and also eliminate housing benefit supplement.

The clauses set out the framework for regulations which will determine the shape of the housing benefit scheme. Clause 28 provides for regulations which will enable local authorities to modify the housing benefit schemes for war pensioners in particular. Clause 30, which is based on current legislation, sets out the framework for funding housing benefit through subsidies. It includes, in subsection (4), a power which will enable me to help authorities with the one-off costs which they may incur in implementing the new arrangements.

Clause 20(5) repeats the existing power to prescribe a maximum payment for housing benefit. That power—as is the position now — could allow the Government to require every householder to contribute towards their domestic rates. The Government made clear in the White Paper our commitment to the principle that every householder should bear some of the cost of providing local services; but the House has now heard the proposals announced today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to undertake a much wider reform of local government finance. This includes the proposition that all adult residents — not just householders — should contribute to the cost of local services.

The proposed social security structure will have to be developed in the light of the discussions on the Green Paper. One option would be to extend the present rebate arrangements to the proposed new community charge. That could be done only after introducing new primary legislation. As stated in the Green Paper, the Government will need to consider that and other options as the debate on the local government proposals develops. It is clearly right that the current provisions should remain flexible while the House considers those linked issues.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I am grateful to the Secretary of State because he has given way a good deal. Age Concern Scotland brought to our attention the figure for the sum that the old would have to contribute towards their rates. Is he aware how unfair that could be to people in Scotland, where the average rating is double that in Wales?

Mr. Fowler: It was exactly for such general reasons that I said that it was right to consider the different options for rates and the rebate system, whatever it may be.

That is also one of the reasons why the detailed figures that we have provided to illustrate the effect of the reforms of income-related benefits can do no more than that. They are illustrations of the possible effects on one set of assumptions. It would be foolish to set benefit levels so far in advance of the start of the scheme. They will be settled in the autumn of 1987, along with the uprating of benefits generally, which will take place at the same time as the new arrangements are introduced.

We have, however, made it clear that we intend to spend substantially more on family credit than is now spent on family income supplement. The income support rates are overall ahead of the present rates of supplementary benefit and weekly additions. We have also made it clear throughout that we intend a reduction in the scale of the housing benefit scheme.

Part IV covers benefits under the Social Security Act 1975. The main provision, in clause 34, is to replace the existing widow's allowance with the tax-free lump sum widow's payment of £1,000. The payments for maternity and funeral expenses under the social fund will mean realistic help when it is needed for the groups who need it most. This is a more effective form of provision than the present inadequate and virtually universal maternity and death grants, which are abolished by clauses 35 and 37. The maternity grant has been the same for 17 years, and the death grant at its present level of £30 for 19 years — only £10 more than when it was introduced in 1949.

At present, my Department administers some 30 different benefits with their own often complex and different rules. There may be good reasons for some differences, but in too many cases the differences arise simply because the benefit system has grown piecemeal. In themselves, the differences can be a serious source of confusion for claimants and staff alike. Throughout the social security review, it has been our conviction that more can be done to provide common rules for common, general purposes. Part V tackles that problem directly.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I am sorry but I shall not give way again.

Part V brings into line many of the different rules that at present exist. In particular, it applies common rules to the time for claiming and paying benefits, and to the recovery of over-payments. The Bill also brings together the rules of adjudication so that they are broadly the same for all benefits.

One aspect of the simplification is streamlining the legislation. Clearly, the new schemes will be easier to understand if people can find the relevant legislation and powers in one place.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister give way on that administrative point? How many sets of statutory instruments did the Secretary of State's Department issue last year? Will he confirm that, under this measure, more statutory instruments will be issued each year, and that scrutinising them will place a considerable burden on the House?

Mr. Fowler: I understand the hon. Gentleman's interest, but his intervention confirms me in my view that I should not have given way. His statement is inaccurate, and deals with precisely the point that I am coming to.

Mr. Bennett: How many?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman should not get so excited. If he will wait a moment, I shall reply to him.

Our object has been to describe the main structure of the income-related schemes in the Bill. That is both clearer and more detailed than, for example, the present housing

[Mr. Fowler]

benefit legislation, which contains the broadest of regulation-making powers. Historically, income-related schemes, because of their nature, have relied more heavily on regulations than the contributory benefits. That is not a matter of historical dispute. They are quite properly more subject to change to meet changing needs. Our aim has been to strike a balance between a clear indication in main legislation of the basic purpose and structure of these schemes taken together, and retaining the necessary flexibility in their administration.

The regulations, like those for housing benefit now, will be subject to the negative procedure, as will those for income support and family credit, but we recognise that both Houses will want to scrutinise and debate the detailed proposals for the introduction of the three income-related benefits. The Bill provides for the regulations to be subject to the affirmative procedure when they are introduced.

Another aspect of the simplification is a reduction in the number of regulations. In the clauses covering income support, we are reducing some 20 regulation-making powers for the present supplementary benefit scheme to about 15. Part V carries that simplification further forward. Clause 41 alone, for example, will replace 61 regulation-making powers exercised in 15 sets of regulations with 20 powers to be exercised in one set. Clause 52 will bring the uprating of benefits, which at present is covered by an order and 12 sets of regulations, under one order and one set of regulations.

Those changes will make social security legislation more compact, clear and manageable. They will also make the system as a whole easier to computerise. The scale of social security makes it essential that we have a modern system providing the modern service which the public are entitled to expect. The reforms in the Bill will create a structure which lends itself to that. Hand in hand with those reforms goes one of the most ambitious computer strategies ever undertaken in this country. That strategy is the key to modernising the management of social security.

The reforms set out in the Bill are fundamental. They follow the most comprehensive review of social security since the last war and the most detailed ever consultations with the public. They propose a new framework for social security which will serve the public better in the future.

For years hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken eloquently of the need for reform, but a Government must do more than simply recognise the problems in social security. They must put forward solutions, and set out a programme for action based on clear principles and with clear objectives.

In the Bill we have a programme which will confer new rights in pensions. We will set the pensions of the future on a sound basis, and we will give to millions of people new opportunities in planning for their future. We have a programme which cuts through the unnecessary complexities of much of social security, and concentrates on what should be its central aim—directing help to those who need it most. We have a programme which will tackle the most notorious aspects of the unemployment and poverty traps, and which will give more support to disabled people as well as to those low-income families who too often face difficulties today. That is a programme for reform which deserves the support of the public.

The House cannot turn its back on the problems that undeniably exist. Our responsibility is to act. In order to take the action that is needed, I ask the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

6.9 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The Secretary of State for Social Services concluded his speech by saying again today that the Bill is the culmination of the biggest review of the welfare state since Beveridge. Such a grandiloquent claim deserves to be tested. There are six fundamental criteria by which any genuine reform of social security—and the Opposition agree that reform is necessary—should be judged.

First, any real major reform of social security should bring about a greater measure of social justice and fairness in society.

Secondly, it should be rooted in an independent assessment of need with benefit levels pitched at an adequate level to meet those needs and thereby enable people freely to participate in the life of their communities.

Thirdly, the review should be based on the aim of preventing poverty arising in the first place, through the collective pooling of risks and resources, not merely based on the relief of poverty.

Fourthly, the review should be designed to give independence to individuals and families. It should not trap them into dependence. People should, by their own efforts, be able to re-establish themselves—as I am sure they would wish—as contributors to society.

Fifthly, any genuine reform of social security would reduce means-testing which is bureaucratic and expensive for the state, inhibits full take-up of entitlements and is highly stigmatising and demeaning for the individual.

Sixthly, since the tax benefits interface represents different facets of a single integrated system, social security reform should be inseparable from reform of the tax system and the whole operation of the fiscal welfare state.

I submit that the Bill fails on every one of those counts as it is not concerned with greater social justice. Cutting benefits by over £750 million and redistributing a smaller cake among the same poor groups is the opposite of increasing fairness. There has been no assessment of need whatsoever. Instead there is simply a black hole in the middle of the Government's scheme. There is no minimum or bottom line, no principles or statements of what income for British citizens is minimally adequate to meet needs.

There is nothing new in the Bill that will help to prevent poverty. The Bill is based on the narrowest possible role of social security in relieving poverty and it will not help people to get back on to their own two feet. Indeed, the social fund's repayable loans and the requirement on even the poorest in our society to pay 20 per cent. of their rates bill will undoubtedly drive people deeper into poverty and debt.

So far from reducing means-testing, the Bill will certainly increase dependence on means-testing by abolishing the death grant and the maternity grant and by reducing widows' benefits and additional pensions. There is no linkage in the Bill with tax reform. Contrary to what the Secretary of State said towards the end of his speech, the number of workers in the poverty trap will actually increase under the Bill by about 125,000.

It is not simply the whole strategy of the Bill that is at fault. There are two other fundamental criticisms to be made of the Government's handling of the exercise. The Government systematically ignore and directly repudiate known public opinion on virtually every proposal in the Bill. The contrast with Beveridge could scarcely be more stark. In 1943 Beveridge observed:

"The main result of studying the volume of evidence is to show how much agreement there was, even before my report was made, upon all its main principles."

By comparison, the Fowler Green Paper attracted near unanimous hostility. Yet despite that, hardly any of the original proposals were significantly changed, either in the White Paper or in the Bill. The Secretary of State talked about consultation, but I suggest that the idea of a public consultation exercise has been exposed as a fraud. In the one area where the Government have significantly been forced to change their tune over the abolition of SERPS they have substituted alternative proposals for which, as far as I know, there is not a shred of public sanction or support.

Mr. Freeman: Rubbish.

Mr. Meacher: I suggest that the matter should be put out to public consultation and we will then know. That has not happened.

Mr. Fowler: Before the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) goes off about public consultation, would he like to remind the House what happened under the Labour Government? The hon. Gentleman may even have been a Minister at the DHSS at the time. When the Labour Government examined supplementary benefit, did they not send a group of officals around the country? Is that how the hon. Gentleman proposes that public consultation should be carried out? What does the hon. Gentleman mean?

Mr. Meacher: At least the public officials took account of public opinion and at least they produced changes — a framework of entitlements which the Government inherited in 1979-80 which were an enormous improvement on what existed before and from which the Government are now departing. That is different from holding a framework of public consultation and then systematically ignoring everything that the public said.

The other fundamental criticism of the construction of the Bill that has already been mentioned and upon which I shall elaborate as it is important is the extraordinary arrogation of power into the hands of the Secretary of State as proposed in the Bill.

The Bill has no substance. Rather it is a licence for government by regulation. Under the Bill the Secretary of State is granting to himself unprecedented power to change benefit levels in future without using legislation. He will be able to cut and sabotage the benefit system without consultation, with minimum parliamentary scrutiny and, indeed, without notice. Clause 33(10) of the Bill shows the flavour of the open-endedness and the all-embracing nature of the Secretary of State's self-ascribed power. It states that—

"An officer shall determine any question under this section in accordance with any general directions issued by the Secretary of State, and in determining any such question shall take account of any general guidance issued by him."

If the detailed plans by which he intends to use his regulatory and direction-giving powers are not published now or in the course of the Bill, the Bill degenerates to the status of little more than a constitutional facade. The Opposition expect the full regulations to be made available before the Bill reaches the end of its Committee stage.

Moreover, the existing checks on the arbitrary use of power by the Secretary of State are being weakened. The Bill strengthens the Secretary of State's powers to avoid referring proposals for prior scrutiny by his own advisory committee, the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Committee and the Occupational Pensions Board. Appeals to the commissioners on grounds of fact regarding unemployment, maternity and sickness benefit are to be abolished. Appeals on single payments are to be replaced by internal reviews by civil servants administered under the social fund arrangements and the Secretary of State, not the adjudicating officer, will in future have the power to decide claimants' rights to benefit. That last provision goes a long way towards eliminating the right of appeal.

In effect, the measure is another Bill in that centralising and authoritarian mould that has so much been the distinctive hallmark of the Government over the last few years. I want to make it absolutely clear that the Opposition unequivocally reject the revised proposals on SERPS which reduce its value by nearly half—by no less than £12 billion — by the next century. The Secretary of State sought to justify that huge cut by claiming that it is unreasonable to impose such an unsupportable burden—in his view—on our children. It is the Secretary of State's proposals which will be so unfair to our children. Under his proposals our generation will still get the full SERPS pension, unaffected by the Bill, and our children retiring next century will not. They will suffer from all the penalty clauses in the Bill.

I put the question back to the Secretary of State. Does he think it fair that our children should be forced to support us at the full pension rate of SERPS while we at the same time legislate under the Bill to prevent them having the same advantage? My reading of human nature is that most people are perfectly willing to contribute generously to others as long as they know that they in their turn will get the same advantage. But I also believe that people deeply resent being forced to contribute to others if at the same time they are then denied the same advantages themselves, particularly if those who will be denying them those advantages are those of whom they have been the benefactors. How can the Secretary of State possibly justify that?

Mr. Fowler: Very easily, if I might say so. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, the Bill does not change SERPS for those who are nearest retirement. It is important that that is underlined and that the public understands that no one who retires this century will be affected by these proposals because clearly those who are nearest to retirement will find it most difficult to build up a pension. It gives those who are retiring in the early part of the next century the opportunity to build up a pension of their own. The hon. Gentleman has only to go to the technical annex to see the estimates of those pensions. He will see that the own pension that we are providing for the public is an extremely good deal for the public.

Mr. Meacher: I shall come to that point because I have evidence to show the exact reverse.

The Secretary of State talks about people wanting their own pension. What they want is a good pension. It makes

[Mr. Meacher]

no difference to them whether it is provided in the state or the private sector. What matters to them is its value. That is the crucial point.

The Secretary of State has not answered the point that I was making, that we are imposing on our children, about whom he is allegedly so concerned, the burden of supporting those of us who remain within the SERPS scheme at the full level of benefits now, but they will not get that same benefit from their children thereafter. They will be substantially disadvantaged. It is our children who will be the main losers under the Bill.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Meacher: I want to move on. I have a great deal to say.

We reject the Government's revised SERPS proposals because they will drastically curtail pensioners' living standards next century and because such detrimental action is anyway unnecessary. I say advisedly that it is unnecessary because — I think that this puts it in a nutshell as best I can—in the past 30 years the number of pensioners in Britain has risen by 150 per cent. and their share of total disposable income has doubled from 7 per cent. in 1951 to 15 per cent. in 1985. SERPS sought to increase pensioners' share of disposable income by just 5 per cent. over 40 years—by any standards, a modest goal compared with what has already been achieved since the war. Therefore, I can say with great certitude—we can support this statement—that there is no question but that SERPS is perfectly fundable without any unreasonable strain on the economy. The Government Actuary has produced no projection which suggests otherwise.

The Secretary of State has sought to make great play today with his claim that by 2035 the burden of pensions on the working population will be too great. But independent experts have suggested that the critical factor is the overall dependency ratio, that is, taking account of the number of children as well as the number of elderly people relative to the working population. That is a fact that the Secretary of State did not take into account. Calculations by Professor Bernard Benjamin of the City university's actuarial science unit show that

"even on extreme assumptions . . . the overall dependency ratio will not be much larger than it was in 1951 when, unlike now, manpower was in short supply."

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that the Government, however respected the professor is, should base their plans on predictions of the number of children that will be born in 30 years' time?

Mr. Meacher: That is certainly one answer, but this is an exercise that the Government Actuary, as well as the Secretary of State and anyone who seriously thinks about this, has to take into account. We are talking not just about in 30 years' time but over the next 30 years. Certainly the overall dependency ratio is critical. It is not just the number of workers relative to the number of people in retirement that is important; it is also the other part of the dependent population—children. Estimates have to be made and can be predicted demographically within a margin of error. This is what I am saying and that, I think, is right. Therefore, I repeat that the case for any cuts in SERPS, let alone the cut of 50 per cent. in the Bill, has not been made and is unwarranted.

The changes in the Bill, if carried through, could have a devastating effect. The technical annex of the Green Paper which the Government have issued shows that by the time a man retires, having contributed to modified SERPS throughout his working career from age 16, he will get a pension which will be little more than the present value of the basic pension alone as a percentage of earnings. I repeat that because it is an important assessment. He will get little more than the present value of the basic pension alone as a percentage of earnings. Indeed, the measure of the pension cut in the Bill is that for those remaining in the state scheme the gap between pension and earnings will be made even wider than it is now—precisely what SERPS was intended to remove or reduce.

The truth is that the Fowler proposals are deliberately designed to make the SERPS scheme so unattractive that it can no longer compete with private pension schemes. That is precisely the message of the tables in the technical annex. In almost every case personal pensions and occupational money purchase schemes yield a better pension than SERPS as modified under the Bill.

What is so deceitful about the technical annex is that it omits comparisons with the unmodified SERPS—the scheme as it is now. I put down a question to obtain those figures and they were finally given in *Hansard* on 17 January at column *746*. They showed that for most people the present SERPS scheme offers pensions distinctly better than those obtainable in the private sector. That is true even though the technical annex gives illustrative figures for private pensions based on optimistic rates of return over prices of 3 per cent., 3·5 per cent., and 4 per cent. If a more realistic 2 per cent. rate of return is assumed, the figures look worse still for private pensions.

It is for that reason, because the comparisons with the present SERPS scheme are so bad for the private sector, that the Government are now trying to tilt the balance back by offering a substantial bribe — I repeat "bribe" — to those transferring to private schemes between 1988 and 1993. They are offering a contribution rebate of 2 per cent. of earnings, to be paid for, unjustifiably, by the rest of the working population.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is simply mistaking the position. Is not the significant point about the table not only the comparison—if the hon. Gentleman takes the rebate plus the 2 per cent. incentive—but that the return on, say, 3·5 per cent., or even less than that, on 3 per cent., for someone aged 60 now who is a low earner, about whom the hon. Gentleman talked, from an occupational or personal pension is not only better compared with modified SERPS but also better compared with full SERPS—the kind of SERPS scheme that he advocates?

Mr. Meacher: In most instances that is not the case —the only possible exception is the male high earner. That is a distinct category but for most people that is not the case. The right hon. Gentleman has fiddled the figures by assuming a rate of return that is historically unjustified. If we take a more realistic figure and exclude this substantial rise for which the rest of us will have to pay —as we have paid for the discount on council house sales—there is a different picture.

There is no pension scheme that provides a better pension level for the vast majority of those in it than

SERPS, especially for women, for long-term unemployed, the sick and disabled and those who are unable to complete a full-time working life. Members of private schemes will no be immune from Fowler's cuts. There is a crucial policy change which is not openly stated in the White Paper or the Bill — the abandonment of the 1979 commitment given by this Government to increase the basic pension in real terms as standards of living rise. The White Paper and the technical annex both assume that the basic pension will be frozen in real terms. Thus if real earnings rise by 1½ per cent. annually the basic pension will be no less than halved as a percentage of earnings by the time a 16-year-old reaches retirement. That loss will hit all pensioners whether their second-tier pension comes from SERPS or from a private scheme. The losers will be counted not in millions but in tens of millions.

The present proposals for the social fund are utterly unacceptable.

Mr. Freeman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: On the social fund? I do want to move on. I know the hon. Gentleman has considerable interests and when he makes his speech I shall listen attentively. The Secretary of State spoke for 55 minutes and I do not want to do a disservice to the House by taking as long as he did.

As for the social fund, compared with the present funding of single payments, the budget is being cut back sharply. The Government have not told us by how much and it would be helpful if the Secretary of State would say what the total budget for the social fund will be. I will gladly give way if he will do so. Last year, it was £260 million on single payments. What will the budget be for the social fund? It is a important omission from the Bill and if the Secretary of State will tell us I will gladly give way.

Mr. Fowler: I have already made it clear to the Select Committee on Social Services. I find it extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should refuse to give way to my hon. Friend but invites me to answer. I have made it clear to the Select Committee, whose Chairman is here, that the decision will be taken later and will be taken in the light of circumstances. There is no mystery about it.

Mr. Meacher: That is the usual waffle that we have come to expect from the right hon. Gentleman when he is caught in a difficult corner. Leaked documents — they may or may not be correct — have suggested that the figure would be £100 million which represents a 60 per cent. cut. It would be helpful if the Secretary of State would say whether that is true.

If there are substantial cuts many people in real need will get nothing—even if they do get something it will be in the form of a loan. To repay that loan a claimant will be driven, for the first time by any Government, below the supplementary benefit poverty line. That must drive families deeper into debt. There will be recourse to charities but their incomes are declining. The present social services will be pushed into the role of a secondary poor relief agency, which is not what it should be doing. The social fund, which is discretionary and cash-limited, will move support back into the era of the Poor Law. It is akin to sealing the valve on a pressure cooker while keeping the heat on. I make a prediction that sooner or later, under these proposals, there will be an inevitable explosion.

There will be no access—unless it is written into the Bill later—to independent appeal by claimants against the decisions of the local Department of Health and Social Security officers. For that reason the normally staid quango the Council on Tribunals is absolutely outraged. In a special report issued a few days ago the council describes the proposals as

"the most substantial abolition of appeal rights since the council was set up in 1958."

What the council objects to is not just the loss of the right of appeal but more basically that the officials who administer the fund will not be accountable to anyone.

The Secretary of State says that, after all, he is in favour of some kind of review. If he has discussed this with the Council on Tribunals, why is it not in the Bill? Why do we have to wait for these matters when it has already been fully discussed?

Mr. Andrew Bowden: The hon. Gentleman knows my views about tribunals. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is important that the local officers, the social fund officers—who we all accept will have a difficult task—should have significant flexibility and should be able to use their judgment and experience in studying individual cases? One of the difficulties which I find and which I suspect is shared by many hon. Members is that when cases go to the DHSS and we make special appeals on behalf of constituents, the manager often does not have the necessary flexibility to deal with cases. I hope and believe the social fund officers will have that flexibility.

Mr. Meacher: I respect the hon. Gentleman's views. The situation has arisen precisely because this concept was tried up until 1980. There was discretion but there was great difficulty in standardising it for the reasons the hon. Gentleman has given in earlier interventions. There then followed S manuals with thousands of loose-leaf pages which changed continually. Untrained clerks found it extremely difficult to operate the system fairly and uniformly throughout Britain. We therefore switched to the system which was brought in by the Government in 1980 — a framework of rights. Now we are to switch back. All the disadvantages which persuaded the Government to make the change in 1980 will reappear. This time the difference is that there will not be the amount of money available to show the discretion and flexibility which we all agree is necessary.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No; I must get on.

Our main objection to the income support proposals is that they divide the poor into the deserving and the undeserving with the unemployed marked out as the undeserving. They are the only major group for whom there is to be no premium. A Policy Studies Institute survey published this month shows that poverty is much more heavily concentrated on unemployed families with children than on any other group within the population. The survey shows that about half of the couples on supplementary benefit run out of money most weeks before their next giro arrives. More than half have experienced acute anxiety about money problems. More than half, both parents and children, were missing items from a basic wardrobe and more than half were in debt. Yet it is on this group that some of the heaviest losses are being concentrated.

[Mr. Meacher]

Indeed, I read in the papers that the Secretary of State is even pursuing this group to the point that he is close to an agreement with the building societies to stop their mortgage interest payments being met when they are forced to claim supplementary benefit. That is gratuitously callous and can only lead to eviction and homelessness. Other key groups in poverty will lose badly under the new income support proposals.

The technical annex had the gall to suggest that lone parents will gain from the change to the tune of £1·70 a week. That is illustrative of just how tricky a document it is. One must assume that the Government have deceptively taken lone parents with no heating or other additions, no subsidiary housing costs, no single payments and in receipt of short term benefits to arrive at this conclusion. If all of those points were taken into account, there would not be a gain, but a whopping loss of about £13 a week.

The worst hit will be the disabled who even this Government might have been expected to regard as deserving. A severely disabled person might at present receive a domestic assistance allowance and a diet and heating allowance adding up to something over £56 a week. The Bill would replace that with a premium at a level for a single person of £12·25 or, for a married couple, of £17·45 a week. The loss of £40 to £50 a week for a severely disabled person can be described as little other than catastrophic. It will force a considerable number of disabled people out of their own homes against their will and into institutions. Moreover, the state will incur substantial extra cost in providing residential care costing some £200 to £300 a week. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), the country's first Minister with responsibility for the disabled, will express his great anxiety about these measures.

The Bill is not about the reform of welfare; it is primarily about cuts in welfare—nearly £1 billion of them, affecting nearly 4 million people, most of them pensioners. Before the Secretary of State disagrees, let me say that there is one tell-tale piece of evidence which reveals the Bill's true nature. Every major welfare Act of the past half century has had at its heart the commitment to promote the welfare of those in need. That was the central message which was stated explicitly in terms in the Unemployment Act 1934, the Old Age and Widows' Pensions Act 1940, and was evident in the establishment of the National Assistance Board in 1948 and of the Supplementary Benefits Commission of 1966, and the passing of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 and the Government's Social Security Act 1980. It is of the greatest significance, now that discretion is being brought back via the social fund, that for the first time in 50 years any such commitment is completely absent from the Bill. I suggest that the omission is more than symbolic. It is an indisputable sign that the Bill's real meaning is the repudiation of a welfare society in favour of a return to the Victorian traditions of the Poor Law.

The Bill represents a hallmark of the type of society that the Government really believe in. The Government may claim to believe in owner-occupation for all, but swingeing cuts in housing benefit for poorer owner-occupiers belies that. The Government claim to believe in community care, but the pointed lack of any premium for carers and the huge cuts in domiciliary financial support belie that. The Government claim to believe in law and order, yet they produce a social fund which will be a cauldron containing a lethal mix of destitution, despair and, possibly, violence. The Government claim to believe in helping the poorest, yet unemployed families with children and the severely disabled—some of the very poorest people—will be badly penalised by the Bill. The Government claim to believe in incentives, yet the number of families in the poverty trap with a more penal marginal tax rate than company directors will increase by 250,000 under this Bill. The Government claim to believe in the family, yet by insisting on paying family credit to the man through the pay packet they reveal that they are far more concerned to reduce wages than to tackle family poverty.

This is an unpleasant and damaging Bill, inspired by some of the ugliest Thatcherite instincts. In view of the crumbling erosion and eclipse of Thatcherism which we are now witnessing, there is no future for the Bill. It never had any political mandate and it commands no popular support. If passed, it will be an electoral millstone. Like the Government, it must and will go.

6.44 pm

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): It seems clear from the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that the Bill will generate a great deal of controversy. It certainly includes a great deal of detail on social security and therefore the Committee stage will be extremely important. I had the impression, listening to the two opening speeches, that this Bill is an ideal example of one on which a timetable at the outset would be advantageous.

I wish to speak not about the details of the Bill, important though they are, but about the broad context of the Bill. In the debate on the Loyal Address, speaking about domestic policies, I referred to the social objective of policy—improving standards of care and service—and the economic objectives of policy—providing that care and service as cost effectively as possible. I referred to the balance that must be struck between those two objectives.

In the particular field of social security, looking into the future and using the technology that is now available to us, I see those two objectives being brought remarkably close together because it will be possible to organise a much better system and to administer it much more efficiently. Unfortunately, the Bill takes no significant steps in that direction. To be fair to my right hon. Friend, he did not produce the Bill with the intention of making major steps in that direction. I should like to press him to go much further.

The Bill is essentially a continuation of the constant piecemeal amendment of the methodology that we have had for 40 years. The complexity of the present arrangements has been demonstrated clearly by the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Oldham, West. When the present system was introduced 40 years ago, it was based on clear principles and established facts, beginning with well researched estimates of family means and family budgets. Those estimates had been much discussed for many years. No such estimates exist in contemporary society, however, and no such estimates exist as a background to the Bill.

The rates of benefit today are the result of decades of ad hoc adjustment and quite a long way removed from any well-researched foundation in fact.

The Bill is yet another range of adjustments, some beneficial and others not. We know that there are gainers and losers. My right hon. Friend claimed that it represents some fundamental change. I find it very difficult to see how that point of view can be maintained. That is why there will be so much controversy about it. A genuinely fundamental reappraisal is essential in view of the huge social and economic changes and of the huge new opportunities that are now available. My criticisms of my right hon. Friend's Green Paper, his White Paper, and of the Bill are that they provide evidence of the need for a new framework, a new philosophy and new principles to govern our provision of social security in the circumstances of today.

We know that we are not dealing adequately with poverty. We shall not be able to deal with it adequately until we agree to define it in an up-to-date way. The first requirement of an effective social security system is that it should alleviate poverty and hardship and try to prevent them. That can be done only if benefits are based on objective, up-to-date calculations of the needs and the costs of families of widely varying compositions. No such calculations exist today. I urge my right hon. Friend to set that work in hand. That is an essential preliminary to the creation of a modern, effective social security system.

There are other requirements, but I will mention only a few. One requirement is a strong and positive incentive to work. An end to the poverty trap is a clear need, because that trap acts as a major disincentive. People must be encouraged to earn, which means that they must be able to enjoy the benefits of their labours. We must discourage state dependence, encourage self-reliance, and make it worth while to work.

We must promote family life and sound social values. The extent to which we subsidise single mothers and marriage break-ups is a cause of the increasing number of lone parents, which any sound policy and strategy must seek to discourage. I do not speak against their needs, but we require a Bill that encourages families.

Yet another requirement is that the system must be simple to understand and simple to administer. The present system is neither of those things, because circumstances are much changed. The Bill does not bring about any significant improvement. That is especially shown in part V, and clause 41 in particular, which envisages a collection of rules, which I expect will be indeterminate, uncertain to some extent and capable of different interpretations in different places and in different circumstances. Selectivity is nice in theory, but it has difficulties in practice.

I wish to make three recommendations to the House as to how we should proceed in future. First, the Government should not rest upon the Bill. They should move forward and institute a review that we can all accept as a major long-term, fundamental review that encompasses all forms of state benefit and all aspects of direct personal taxation. The continued separation of those elements is a main cause of the present complexity and incoherence. There must be a planned relationship between benefits and personal taxation. I should like those elements to be integrated, but if it is proved that that is going too far, there must at least be a planned relationship. I believe that integration is possible and will prove to be the correct policy.

All benefits and personal taxes should be the responsibility of one Department. I am aware that there is considerable resistance to that proposal, which is perhaps human, because Departments have their own interests. However, that resistance must be dispelled.

The process of taking money from those thought capable of affording it by means of taxes and of giving benefits to those who are judged to be in need are two sides of the same coin. Today, those processes are still considered separately. It is high time that they were brought together. I do not know whether the Green Paper on personal taxation that is to be introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Budget day will go in that direction, but I hope that it will.

The review would be appropriate for a Royal Commission, which is out of fashion these days for no good reason except that it might produce a report that did not say what the Government wanted. I do not mind how it is done or what the body is, but we must choose the vehicle that will provide us with the best answer.

My second recommendation is that the whole approach to the modernisation and recasting of the social security system should be broadly based across the political spectrum. Obviously there will be political argument and controversy, as there should be. However, the objective is to secure maximum public consent. Political differences cannot be eliminated altogether, and I do not suggest that anyone should try to do so, but to allow a major issue to become a party political football would be a negation of statesmanship. Many of our education problems derive from the abandonment of the broad agreement on education that used to exist between the parties. It is sad for our children that that is not true today.

In social security we deal with the lives and needs of individuals and families. It is our duty to make not only the best provision, but to provide a simple, understandable and stable system which is not subject to constant change as a result of any war between political parties. The British people deserve better than that.

My final recommendation is that the so-called basic income approach should be taken seriously. That is the most hopeful way forward. A basic income approach or any other approach is not a panacea. There is no panacea. I shall not detain the House by describing the basic income system, with which many hon. Members are familiar. However, the system is simple to understand and to administer. It deals with the poverty and unemployment traps. It alleviates and even prevents poverty. It encourages positive social values and provides an incentive to earn. The system's problem is its cost. If, under careful examination, it is discovered to be too expensive, even a partial basic income scheme would be a huge improvement in modern circumstances.

I ask for a more far-seeing and far-reaching approach to our social security system. It is time that we stopped tinkering with it. Today's statement on rates shows a fundamental approach to that problem. I wish to see a similar approach in this area. I suspect that some speeches in tonight's debate will contain ample evidence of the need for a totally new approach to this vast and vital topic.

I should like the review or Royal Commission to conduct its work in public. It will take time for people to grasp the issues involved. It is important that they grasp and understand the issues, because millions of people are directly affected. We wish to take those people with us. It was largely all the discussion and the time and trouble

[Mr. Francis Pym]

taken in the 1930s and 1940s that led to the extraordinary measure of agreement throughout the country when the welfare state was finally introduced. That is a good principle and a good pattern to follow.

The process of complete review is long. It lasts for more than one Parliament. I urge my right hon. Friend, in addition to the Bill and all the work he is doing, to make a start on that gigantic process now.

6.59 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): The House will have been interested to hear the thoughtful speech of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), and I am sure that his plea for more time to consider the proposals and to return with better ones will be echoed in the hearts of many people inside and outside the House. Many of the representations that I have received from individuals and an enormous range of voluntary organisations have been highly critical of many of the proposals in the Bill. They also criticised the Green Paper and the previous White Paper.

As the Secretary of State and the Minister will know, the Select Committee on Social Services has been heavily engaged in examining the proposals for the reform of social security. First, it considered the proposals in the Green Paper, then those in the White Paper and, more recently, the Bill. We were given very little time to carry out that enormous and complicated programme, and only today have we published the minutes of evidence of our session last Wednesday with the Secretary of State and the Minister.

In our report on the Green Paper, we urged the Secretary of State to prepare his new proposals for reform with great care, giving plenty of time for consultation. The original proposal was that the changes would be implemented in April 1987. Except for maternity and funeral expenses, the period has been extended to April 1988. We are glad that we shall have a little more time for consultation on the operational details, but I wonder why the Government are rushing ahead with the Bill. It seems to be undue haste since more time has been given for consultation.

The Bill affects many areas of policy and will be affected by other changes. The proposals to reform the rating system may have a major impact on housing benefit; payment of family credit through the wage packet will be affected by the long-awaited proposals for the reform of personal taxation; the proposed worrying changes in students' entitlement to benefit must be related to the student grant, which is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science; and other proposals seem to conflict with Government policy on home ownership and housing improvement. The Government do not seem to have taken those interactions fully into account, but since they have more time to consider the matter, they can do so.

The first part of the Bill deals with pensions. Despite the Select Committee's firm recommendation that legislation on pensions should be delayed pending further consultations, the Government are pressing ahead. We have had only 44 days to examine the completely new proposals put forward in the White Paper for a modified SERPS. Those changes will have effects well into the next century, so they must be properly thought out and proper time must be given for this.

It is disappointing that the Bill contains no proposal for a flexible age for retirement. I remind the House that, four years ago, the Select Committee produced a report on the age of retirement which proposed that we should work towards flexible retirement based on a notional pension age of 63 for both sexes. At the time, the Government accepted our recommendation. Why does not the Bill contain some provision for it? I hope that this matter will be raised in Committee. If the Government shilly-shally for too long, the European Commission might have something to say about it. I hope that they will take the point on board, because I know that the Secretary of State has received much critical comment on the matter.

The Bill also deals with income-related benefits. In our report on the Green Paper, we welcomed the broad structure proposed by the Government, provided that it gave people adequate weekly incomes as of right. But we pointed to some areas that needed further thought. The Government have modified some of their proposals in the light of recommendations from the Select Committee and from outside organisations. We are pleased that all couples will now receive the over-25 rate of income support and that families with more than one disabled child will receive an extra family premium for each disabled child.

The Government have expressed their determination to do more to help families with children. We welcome the proposal for a family premium for families on income support. Unemployed families with children are the poorest in our so-called prosperous society, and the Prime Minister should give some attention to that section of our community. However, assuming, as the Bill does, a family premium of £5·75, the Government's figures suggest that families on income support will, on average, gain only £1·40 a week. That takes no account of what they will lose after the abolition of single payments. If the Government want the family premium to go a long way to helping poor families with children, they must put it at a much higher level than £5·75. I hope that they will be more generous.

The Government hope to help low-income families by replacing family income supplement with family credit. The fact that it is based on net income and so will avoid the worst of the poverty trap has been welcomed. But more controversial is the fact that it will be paid through the wage packet—so usually to the father rather than to the mother — not to the parent who has primary responsibility for the children. I hope that we can persuade the Secretary of State to reconsider that proposal.

The Government have expressed the admirable intention of doing more for the disabled. The Select Committee welcomed the idea of a disability premium for disabled people on income support. However, we voiced our concern about severely disabled people, who at present may receive £20 or £30 a week in additional requirement payments. It cannot be right that they should have to go to the social fund for their everyday needs. I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider our proposal for a two-tier disability premium.

The Select Committee was also worried that disabled people who do not receive severe disability or long-term incapacity benefits will be ineligible for the disability premium. It may not be a large group, but it is important

that those people do not lose out. I hope that the Secretary of State will change the rule, because it will adversely affect the disabled.

It is disappointing that the income support proposals do not take more account of the needs of pregnant women. In several reports, the Select Committee has shown its anxiety about the widening gap between the perinatal mortality rates for classes I and V. Mothers on income support will get less to cover their maternity needs than at present: they will receive about £75 from the social fund instead of the £25 universal maternity grant and, on average, about £60 in single payments. I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider the amount of help that can be given with maternity expenses.

In its report on the Green Paper, the Select Committee gave a cautious welcome to the idea of a social fund, while stressing that it needed much more consideration. That criticism still applies. Claimants can now apply for grants to meet special needs, but under the social fund they will be replaced largely by loans. That has serious implications for poor families. For many years, in my constituency, poor families have been helped to get the basic necessities of life by the understanding and speedy action of the DHSS officers in Wolverhampton. I pay a warm tribute to them for their unfailing help and for doing their best for many distressed, anxious and bewildered people, coping with what to them appeared to be insuperable problems. Those officers must be allowed discretion to give grants, not loans, where they believe it appropriate. I hope the Secretary of State will take that point on board as well. To enforce repayment of these loans is a retrograde step, and I hope the Secretary of State will think again about that, because to try to get more money out of poor people to repay loans for things they urgently needed to retain their quality of life seems inhumane.

It is said that the Government's proposals for the reform of housing benefit will produce a better and simpler system and will save something like £450 million. The proposals have been drawn up without a proper comprehensive review of housing costs, and the rent and rates rebate system has been considered in isolation and without looking at taxation, rent levels or housing policies generally. That also seems to be a retrograde step.

This is the second time in five years that major changes in housing benefit have been introduced without proper analysis of the needs involved. Many of the Government's proposals will involve employers in the administration of social security allowances for their employees. Employers will pay out family credit and statutory maternity allowance and will be concerned with employers' contributions for personal pensions. That involvement is highly objectionable to many people including, it seems, the members of the CBI who sent a sharp note to the Secretary of State. How will the Secretary of State take all these objections on board?

Some of the proposals contained in the Bill are good and some of them are extremely bad. A great deal remains unclear. Most of the important changes are not spelt out in the Bill, but will have to be brought in at a later stage, presumably by regulations and by subordinate legislation. So much is unknown and uncertain in the Bill, which relies on what has gone before in Green and White Papers, that in many respects the House is being asked to sign a blank cheque. That cannot be accepted and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to express their anxiety.

7.11 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): We on the Government Benches must welcome the two contributions from the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) has given a balanced speech based on the work of the Select Committee. The hon. Lady put forward a carefully constructed catalogue of criticisms. Nevertheless, she said that some parts of the Bill are good, and that is a welcome admission from the hon. Lady. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) would have been better advised to take the more balanced approach of the hon. Lady. As usual, he rather over-egged the pudding and on the basis of his performance one feels that as long as the Welsh windbag and the Lancashire loony loom large upon the Opposition Front Bench, England need not tremble because not enough people will be foolish enough to cast their votes for such a concoction of Opposition spokesmen.

In a balanced debate, there has to be an admission to the good things in this Bill. There has to be a major improvement in the net income assessment as a common criterion for many of the benefits. I welcome the alleviation of the poverty and unemployment trap with the abolition of marginal rates of taxation of 100 per cent. and more. One must also welcome the considerable additional help for those who are seriousluy sick, and a fair income support system that will be more readily understood and a direct help to those most obviously in need.

The Bill proposes a more equitable and more easily understood housing benefits system. Family credit will have a better chance of helping many low-income families and will allow greater scope for trying to increase and improve the take-up of that benefit. Many considerable advantages will flow from this Bill and one must welcome also the genuine consultation exercise. My right hon. Friend has taken on board many of the points made to him. It is a tribute to him that he has made such a major change on SERPS between the Green Paper and the Bill. He has taken on board a number of the points made in the Select Committee report, in particular the point about a higher rate of benefit for under-25-year-olds with children on income support, and the separate rate and rent tapers in the housing benefits scheme.

Having given that general welcome to the Bill, I should like to mention two aspects about which I have an axe to grind. Obviously, under any form of supplementary benefit it is difficult for people to make ends meet. Although, in terms of total national income, our social security system is exceedingly generous, single pensioners often have difficulty in making ends meet. There has to be a considerable differential between single and married pensioners, but very often single pensioners have much the same overheads for housing and heating and general maintenance as a two-person household. Of course their housing costs are taken fully into account when they are entitled to supplementary benefit, but there are other inelastic overheads which cause single pensioners to have a rather harder time.

My right hon. Friend will say that the single person's pension is 60 per cent. of the married couple's pension, and that that general principle operates throughout the system. He will also point to the premium arrangements in the Bill which suggest that a little more will be given to the single pensioner household with premium rating. It

[Mr. Roy Galley]

may now be opportune to look more carefully at the income coming into a single household and into a two-person household to make sure that we have got it right for single people.

The Green Paper proposed a presence test for those in receipt of income support. It said there should be a nationality and/or residence qualification for the receipt of benefit. That proposal has been omitted from the White Paper and the Bill and I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider that omission. In some respects this is a complex area and one needs to deal with the differing circumstances of settlement and of visits. For people settled here, either permanently or for extended periods, we have reciprocal arrangements with a series of countries and there are special arrangements within the EEC. The special EEC arrangements apply to the employed, the self-employed and national insurance pensioners.

Specific benefits, primarily contributory benefits and some disablement benefits, are covered by the agreements. There are no legal requirements to give the main non-contributory benefits, primarily supplementary benefits, to EEC nationals in Great Britain. There is also a series of reciprocal agreements with non-EEC countries, which vary in detail from one agreement to another. In the main, they apply to contributory benefits and seek to protect contribution records and entitlements as people move from work in one country to work in another. Non-contributory and income-related benefits are not usually within the scope of these reciprocal agreements, so that in principle a presence test would not conflict with the reciprocal agreement.

With the exception of people covered by reciprocal agreements, it would not normally be possible for people coming here to settle to obtain contributory benefits, unless such people were the dependants of people who had an adequate national insurance contributions record. The main benefits where a presence test could be applied will be non-contributory benefits, primarily income suport. One may be able to extend that to housing benefit, family credit and one or two other benefits.

In principle, supplementary benefit is available, as income suppport will be in future, to anyone in Great Britain who satisfies normal conditions for eligibility. It is wrong that someone should be allowed to settle here and that the long-suffering British taxpayer should have to pick up the tab for benefit immediately on his arrival. There are arrangements for the sponsorship of entrants to the country where a person or persons can give undertakings to maintain the sponsee. Such arrangements are by no means universal. One way to apply a presence test might be to make such arrangements compulsory and universal if the entrant is not able to maintain himself.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many dependants come to this country to stay legally with relatives who give an undertaking to maintain them while they are living here but who later find, because of low pay or because they have to live on benefit themselves, that they are unable to maintain their dependants? Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should condone penury and poverty because of the application of immigration laws to social security legislation?

Mr. Galley: What I am saying is that it seems unreasonable that many people should, on arrival on our shores, be able to claim immediately supplementary benefit and that the British taxpayer should have to pick up the tab. Alternative arrangements are possible. Sponsorship would be one way of coping with the difficulty. Many countries will take no one for settlement without a work permit. So we have a much more generous system than other countries.

Mr. Corbyn *rose——*

Mr. Galley: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed with my argument, I may be able to answer some of the points which he wishes to raise.

In general, visitors to this country or overseas students cannot obtain benefit, but that rule has not been applied to all EEC nationals. A limited number of supplementary benefit payments have been made to EEC nationals, although the number has been reduced in recent years. Stricter rules are in operation to stop abuse and only to allow the payment of benefit to those seeking work.

Visitors should not be able to obtain benefit paid for by the taxpayer when there is no appropriate reciprocal arrangement. If people are genuine visitors, they should be self-supporting. If they are seeking work, they should be sent back home because we do not have enough jobs for all our people who want work. There is no apparent legal reason to give a non-contributory benefit to a casual visitor from the EEC or elsewhere. There may be cases where exceptions should be made—for example, with political refugees—but usually it will be possible to deal with exceptions under the regulations covering urgent cases.

People have been rightly resentful when scandals have arisen—as, for example, with holidaymakers from the EEC who have claimed benefit during a holiday in this country, and the recent case of the wealthy Nigerian family who were maintained for a time at the ratepayers' expense. The Bill provides an opportunity to clarify the law and to make a blanket legal requirement that someone should be resident here for at least 12 months before being able to claim benefit, unless he is covered by appropriate reciprocal agreements.

It may be argued that that would put us in bad odour with our European partners, but, as I have demonstrated, we have no legal duty on non-contributory benefits. It may be argued that it would be administratively expensive, but surely it could not be more expensive than the labyrinthine regulations which exist already. It may be argued that such a rule would leave this country open to accusations of racism. That could not be sustained, because the rules would apply whatever the nationality of the person concerned. They would apply to all visitors; they would apply to that half of settlers who come from the old Commonwealth and foreign countries as well as to that half who come from the new Commonwealth.

I urge my right hon. Friend to insert in the Bill a provision for a presence test, at least for income support and preferably for a wider range of benefits. That would simplify the system and would be fairer to the British taxpayer.

7.24 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which seeks to reform pension policy without first securing an all party consensus on the proposals; which, whilst reducing the long-term cost implications of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme, fails to reflect adequately the pension requirements of the low paid and to increase the state retirement pension; which cuts housing benefit whilst at the same time requiring claimants to meet 20 per cent. of their rates bills; which introduces the concept of a cash limited social fund involving local discretion and no right of appeal; and which fails to make sufficient progress towards the integration of the tax and benefit systems."

I wish to explain why the Liberals and the Social Democrats are asking the House to decline to give a Second Reading to the Bill. The reasons are stated ad longam on the Order Paper. That enables me to make a shorter speech.

Two principal items in our reasoned amendment were referred to effectively by the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) when he talked about the need for consensus and for a fundamental review, following the logic of his argument, of the integration between the tax and benefit systems. Obviously the right hon. Gentleman has been called away urgently to the Dining Room, but I shall use my best offices to make sure that the Committee of Selection nominates him to the Standing Committee which will deal with the Bill. There is obviously a great deal of competition to become a member of the Standing Committee. I look forward to the right hon. Gentleman being able to expand on both those points more eloquently and with more experience than I could in Committee.

The reasoned amendment is not exhaustive, otherwise a much longer Order Paper would have been needed to accommodate it. The revision and modification of the state earnings-related pensions scheme are being done to the prejudice of the lower paid and some other disadvantaged groups. The state retirement pension is not at an adequate subsistence level, as it should be; steps should be taken to put that right. If we had been in a position to influence matters, we would have given that high priority.

In the amendment we have referred to cuts in housing benefit, to the requirement to meet 20 per cent. of the rates bill of people on supplementary benefit, and to the social fund being cash limited, discretionary and not subject to appeal. All those important items have been referred to in the debate.

In the context of the background of the Government —the House is entitled to draw conclusions from this—I am intrigued that in 1982, before the election, quite spirited public debates took place about Conservative views on the development of what was then called family policy. Views were expressed in the Cabinet policy review committee and the family policy unit at No. 10 about how the Conservatives were dealing with the public expenditure problems. Only a few short months later we had an election, but the Conservative manifesto did not face up to some of the important questions that were being asked. Some of the issues were ducked.

As soon as the election was over reviews were instituted by the Secretary of State. We supported the reviews as far as they went, although we were anxious because they were to be nil cost reviews. As a result of the reviews this Bill has been brought forward which will insinuate all the reforms neatly within one parliamentary Session, if the Secretary of State is lucky. He has come here beating his chest like Tarzan—it is a pity about the spectacles—and talking about the consultation process. A lot of paper was moved around, but many people felt that it was one-way traffic with very little being given by the Government. Although the Government may well have been listening, there has been no exchange of views. The conclusion that the House may draw from the way the reform is being done is that the Secretary of State is afraid of an election.

The main changes are to be implemented in April 1988. Why does not the Secretary of State get the Bill on the statute book and leave it? Why does he not fight the election on the basis of the Bill and implement it afterwards? Nobody could then say to him that there had been some evasion of these very difficult issues — I agree that they are difficult issues—at the hustings. If he did that, he would get my support and I would consider what he has to say with greater care.

I listened very carefully to what the Secretary of State said about the rationalisation of the regulations. It was news to me, and I listened with interest. If it happens, I will welcome it, but the Minister must understand that the Standing Committee will labour under tremendous difficulties because of the lack of detailed regulations. The only way in which the Committee can work sensibly is for the Department to do everything in its power to supply detailed notes on clauses which, as we all know, are of great assistance to the members of the Standing Committee. If he does not do that, the whole thing could become a charade.

The Secretary of State's aim, stated in his foreword to the White Paper, is to make the system simpler. I do not believe that it is possible to do so, and to achieve better targeting, at no cost. It is a contradiction in terms. An attempt to improve the targeting implies an effort to take individual circumstances into greater account. The Government cannot make the system simpler unless they put more resources into it. We all know—and there may well have been valid reasons for it — that the Government have, if anything, taken resources out of the system in the past six years. So the possibility of simplicity is a chimera. It is impossible to achieve it against a background of no cost. The Secretary of State would receive warmer support from me for much of what he is doing if he were able to lubricate—to put it no higher than that—the wheels of his reform with a little extra money.

I would add that if the Secretary of State is looking for simplicity he should not be going about de-indexing and reducing child benefit, because if he wants a simple, effective and cheap way of delivering benefit there is no better way than that.

I turn to a very important point which will be considered again in Committee. The Policy Studies Institute has been looking at the effect of the reforms, with single payments being withdrawn in favour of the income premium, and is very worried about it. At present, on average, families with children gain about £3 a week from single payments. One-parent families get a little less, and pensioners and families without children much less. As I understand the system, table 17B of the technical annex suggests that in future families with children will, on average, gain only £1·40 a week. If we add to this the negative figure of £3 which they receive at present and which will be withdrawn, we end up with a net loss of £1·60 a week.

The Government are trying to target families with children—they say that they have the greatest need—but

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

because of the way in which the single payments interface with some of the proposals for income support they will achieve precisely the opposite in some circumstances.

There is evidence that there will be massive regional variations in how this will affect people. A report of the Northern Ireland Assembly shows that, of every 1,000 live cases in Northern Ireland, 720 involved single payments. The average payment was £113 per case. That differs from London, where the figure is only 240 to 250 single payments per live 1,000 cases, and where the average payment is £80. In Scotland, in which I have an interest, 702 live cases out of every 1,000 rely on single payments, and the average payment is £110.

It is very difficult to deal in averages. The statistical annex is a minefield of trouble when we talk about averages, if we do not take care. I hope that if this sort of regional imbalance shows up, the Government will take steps to deal with people in regions like Northern Ireland —and this Bill is getting precious little attention from hon. Members there; they are apparently interested only in their civil war, as far as I can see. I want the Government's assurance this evening that they will seek to deal with them.

The system is supposed to be more financially secure in future. I agree with that aim. At the time, in 1975, as the Secretary of State knows, we took the view that we were storing up financial troubles for ourselves in the future. But the Government have adopted a position where they now appear to break the consensus. They seem to be saying that the welfare state is now predicated only on economic growth and development. To some extent, that is true, but the obverse of that argument is that, for social cohesion to persist and for the economy to have the advantage and benefit of that social cohesion, some resources will have to be put in. Yet the general tone and tenor of the Government and the way in which they have acted in the past does not augur well for that.

We will look at the pensions proposals very carefully. The modification of SERPS is not my preferred solution, but I give the Secretary of State my assurance that in the course of debates in other places we will deal with it as constructively as possible. On the social fund, as referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), the Committee on Tribunals has the most authoritative argument that I have seen against the present refusal of the Government to have some sort of in-built, independent appeal system. As I read the document, it appears to me that the present proposal goes as far as saying that ministerial accountability will be denied. That is to say, if I have a constituent whose case is reviewed locally and is given a duff decision, I cannot complain to the Minister. If that really is the case, we are in trouble. I should like the Minister to clear this up when he replies to the debate.

Turning to the 20 per cent. rates contribution, I deliberately sat through the statement on the Green Paper this afternoon and I listened very carefully to what was said, because the Secretary of State, dealing with questions when the Green Paper was produced, implied very strongly that everything would sort itself out in the wash and that we should not worry about it too much because the changes in train for local government financing would deal with that point. I heard nothing this afternoon to make me any more sanguine that people on supplementary benefit will not be lambasted by this.

The clause on this subject should not be in the Bill. Arguments about local accountability are fine. Local accountability is important, and we should deal with it, but not in this Bill, not through social security. There are other ways which can be pursued in other places. It is iniquitous to include it in the Bill

The most important thing is consensus. It is certainly crucial in the pensions industry. There has been much argument about whether there should be two separate Bills and about the way in which some of the changes have been brought forward without proper discussion in the industry, particularly the new 2 per cent. bribe that was foisted on us. However, I give the Treasury Bench an assurance that in the course of discussions I will seek to be as constructive as possible, because if we cannot achieve agreement on the system we shall not get agreement on benefits. One party may well think that more resources should be devoted to this; another party may feel that fewer should be given. I will bend over backwards to help achieve consensus because it is in everyone's interest to do so.

7.38 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I regret that I cannot give a welcome to the Bill. Of course, there are many good things in it. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State are good Conservatives, good Christian Democrats, on whom, as the House knows, we can all rely for their humanity and competence in everything that they do. But it seems to me that the ship of Cabinet solidarity has beached them, in this Bill, back at Speenhamland, and I am very reluctant to follow them there. They seem to me to have got stuck. I predict that it will not be long before Parliament has to come back to the whole subject, even if this Bill goes through significantly amended and improved.

I realise that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not like what I have to say, but at least I hope they will agree that I have the merit of consistency. I intend to abstain on Second Reading of the Bill and, unless it is drastically amended in the course of its further progress, I shall have no choice but to vote against it on Third Reading.

I object to the underlying principle on which the Bill is constructed. It seems to be quite inconsistent with the Government's own major aims, which we on the Government Benches all support. It also has practical effects which I believe will be particularly adverse to the types of people of whom we have large numbers living in Kensington. These are people who probably would never consider voting for me, so what they may think about the Government perhaps is not of direct relevance, but I am their Member of Parliament, and I must speak up for them.

I hope that I may be chosen to serve on the Standing Committee, although I have substantial criticisms to make of the Bill.

Mr. Frank Field: So have we.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: The value of the work of the House is diminished if hon. Members who do not always act as they are directed by the Departments and do not speak on behalf of particular outside interests are regularly excluded, as I have been in recent years, from the work of its major Committees.

The Bill has been advertised as a major reform, and so we have to go back to the basic principles of the redistribution of income. What is the basis of entitlement? We have been over this ground often. Entitlement can be based on need, on a record of contributions or on citizenship. The Conservative party in 1974 and again in its manifesto for the election of 1979 chose citizenship. It chose the scheme which used to be known as the tax credit scheme and what I now call the BIG idea—the basic income guarantee. It supported the idea of one nation in benefit, one nation in taxation. There are many critics of the tax credit or basic income guarantee scheme. They say that it cannot be brought in until the computerisation programme of the Inland Revenue and the DHSS has been completed. Of course, that programme of computerisation could be enormously simplified and accelerated if we got clear our thinking on the subject of the redistribution of income before we put in the computers, instead of afterwards. Therefore, I do not accept that excuse.

There is also no doubt whatever that a basic income guarantee scheme could be introduced on a strictly revenue-neutral basis. It is not true that it has to be postponed to the Greek kalends because it is too expensive and the country cannot afford it. There is no reason why a basic income guarantee could not be introduced in the first instance on a purely revenue-neutral basis. What happened to it in due course could be a matter for the balance of opinion in Britain between taxpayers and beneficiaries as to what would be the right measure of redistribution of income as time goes by.

In the Bill my right hon. Friends pay lip service to the idea of contributions as the basis of entitlement, but in fact the Bill is relying on evidence of need as the principal basis of claim. I find that quite unacceptable. It seems to me to constitute a U-turn by the Conservative party which might be described as the revolt of the strong against the weak.

Selectivity, I know, seems the best way to reduce the marginal rate of taxation while still coping adequately with the relief of hardship; but it has well-known disadvantages. To what extent have my right hon. and hon. Friends been able to overcome them in the Bill?

First, it is divisive because it tends to separate those in need from those in work. It is disincentive, because as a person works to better himself, he runs into very high effective rates of deduction from earnings. It makes thrift unprofitable because saving renders a person ineligible for benefit. As it depends largely on personal casework, it relies on an element of discretion, that is to say, the means test, which may lead to inequality of treatment and real injustice, possibly hardship in certain cases. Also, of course, particularly in the face of Government propaganda for people to stand on their own two feet, it is humiliating for those who have to admit that they have fallen short of self-reliance.

Have my right hon. Friends, has the Department, coped adequately with these well-known difficulties? They have produced palliatives, some of which are ingenious, but I do not think that the Bill meets the underlying problems inherent in the principle which they have allowed to creep in.

As to the immediate problems of the welfare state, I have drawn attention very often — hon. Members on both sides of the House have done so—to the fact that for the moment we have some 8 million people who are reliant on supplementary benefit. Is the figure higher than that now? That is two nations with a vengeance.

We have to do something about this situation. We cannot wait until 1988 or afterwards. We have a huge and increasing black economy. We have a steady loss of sense of community. We have a breakdown of social discipline. We know all these things in the type of inner city constituency which I represent. We have a rising generation lacking in motivation except towards crime.

I do not think that the Bill will alter this underlying situation at all. We also have the administrative problems which are leading to virtual breakdown, in spite of the dedication of people working in the DHSS offices, of the existing system. It is a matter of urgency to tackle this.

Some time ago in a parliamentary answer I learnt that the DHSS has to make more than 90 million manual entries every week in the administration of supplementary benefit and national insurance. It has hived off housing benefits to local authorities, but that reform has still not proved itself to be an administrative success. Now they are bringing employers into the system in the Bill. From the answers that my right hon. and hon. Friends gave in the Social Services Committee on 22 January, which I think should be brought to the attention of all Members who are interested in the subject, it is clear that the administrative problems of this reform are still unsolved. In the Bill there is much too much reliance on subsequent orders which is another way of increasing the powers of the Executive and diminishing the power of the House. I do not welcome that. We ought to have been given the solutions to the problems, not merely an indication that they will be solved somehow outside our field of view.

Today we had a very important statement on the reform of the rates, which I welcome most warmly. However, it seems to me that it will have the effect of bringing millions of small contributors into the rating system. I am sure that will prove impossible unless we have a simultaneous move to the integration of taxation and benefit in some kind of basic income guarantee system.

I wish to say a few words about family stability. The House must be concerned about that. It is not a party issue. I think that returning the payments for children to the wage earners rather than to the mother is a blunder in the Bill. I have seen the defence of this idea which my right hon. and hon. Friends have produced. I cannot accept it. For one thing, there are 7 million reasons why it is a bad idea politically. Apart from that, it is a bad idea intrinsically, and we should stick to the principle that the child benefit belongs to the child but is drawn by whichever parent is directly responsible for the maintenance and care of the child, or by the responsible authority, as the case may be. I do not think it is progressive to put the money back into the pay packet.

We still have the problem that single people will gain at the expense of married couples: two single people living together will do better than if they decide to go through a form of union. I also think that the Government are wrong to retreat from their commitment to maintain child benefit and to continue to make it payable to the mother. As this is something on which much has been said before, I will not elaborate on it.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The White Paper is explicit, as was the Green Paper, that child benefit, as defined, will continue to be paid to the mother.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: The Government's policy, plainly, is to phase out child benefit and to rely on

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

benefits related to need, not to universal benefits. My hon. Friend tries to assure me that that is not so, but I am not confident that I can rely on his assurance. *[Interruption.]* I am not saying that my hon. Friend is not saying what he believes in good faith. He is not the type of Minister with whom anyone would quarrel on the grounds that he did not speak in good faith.

Last year, when the Government decided not to continue with the uprating of child benefit in line with rises in the real value of the tax allowance from which child benefit took over, that was the first break. Nothing that my right hon. Friends and hon. Friends have said since leads me to assume that from now on child benefit will continue to move upward in accordance with changes in GDP, as I should prefer, or of families' real cost of living.

On the subject of incentives, from a hasty analysis of the Bill it seems that the low-paid in many cases will be worse off than they are now. I realise that if we rely on selectivity we must try to produce clear water between what people receive if they are not working and what they receive when they go out to work, even with low wages. The Government are seeking to raise the tax thresholds, which is understandable, but, simultaneously, they must rely on the reduction in the real levels of benefit to produce that clear water. With that policy, there is a danger of social instability and even explosions, of which we have had too many in recent months. We do not want to create further circumstances in which people will feel alienated from the rest of society.

What the Bill proposes with regard to housing benefit means cutting it much too fast a benefit which I admit has also grown much too fast. One could say much more about the way the increase in housing benefit has led to rent increases; but cutting housing benefit too fast will not bring down rents simultaneously. It will merely cause severe hardship to thousands of people in inner London. I represent many of those people. I believe that the reform will still not be acceptable even if it is postponed until 1988. That is relevant to inner city areas such as north Kensington, but I dare say that it is also relevant to many other areas elsewhere with high rents.

Mrs. Hermione Parker has done some analytical work on the Bill's effects which hon. Members should study. Cuts in housing benefit will be felt, in particular, in the areas of highest rents. The Bill represents a redistribution of income from householders to non-householders and away from inner cities in favour of areas where rents and rates are lower. How can the hon. Member for Kensington support such a measure?

I should like to say a few words about the state earnings-related pension scheme and the reform of occupational pensions. The Bill contains some helpful moves in directions which I have advocated for a long time, and I welcome them. However, I made my maiden speech in 1968 on the importance of the transferability of existing pension rights in occupational pension schemes. I might have been depressed had I known that 20 years later we should have made virtually no progress on the transferability of existing accrued rights.

I have pointed out to my right hon. Friends that that movement could have been stimulated by tax changes without any breaches in the basic undertakings under which occupational pension schemes have been set up; but they have preferred not to follow that advice. I am sorry to say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to have truckled to the life offices. I regret that.

With regard to future benefits in the private sector, the move towards the liberalisation of the provision of occupational pension schemes is excellent and one of the Bill's best features, but it should be based on a core of money purchase entitlement. I am always suspicious when I see the introduction of money transfer systems under which some people gain more than they should on the basis of their contribution record, because somewhere we shall find a corresponding element which is not getting what it has paid for.

The basic core scheme should be related directly to contributions—contributions which are enough. What do we find? Employers' contributions in the private sector will be a statutory 2 per cent. only. Many employers will pay much more and indeed already do. Many employees also make their own contributions to the schemes. In the public sector, however, the value of the Government's contribution is about 17·5 per cent. in addition to incomes. That produces a satisfactory rate of pension, but where will we get if the employers' rate of contribution in the private sector is only 2 per cent.? The employers' contribution should be at least 10 per cent. It already is, because at present the employers' national insurance contribution is 10·45 per cent. That money should not just flow into the Exchequer as part of general revenue: it should be seen as the employers' contribution, in addition to wages, to their employees' retirement benefits. Without adequate contributions, the benefits cannot be sufficient to meet social needs.

In all the circumstances, I think that it would be better if my right hon. and hon. Friends were to withdraw the Bill and give the subject a great deal more study. However, if the Secretary of State is not disposed to do that, I hope that he will be willing to make major changes to diminish the worst of its damaging effects.

7.56 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The House has listened to a brave and cogently argued speech from the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). I shall begin by agreeing with a few basic and obvious truths. I might as well get my accord with the Secretary of State out of the way as quickly as possible. Yes, the case for reform of social security benefits is overwhelming; yes, few people in Britain can be happy with the present system; and, yes, the present system is too complex to be understood by the majority of people. Overlapping benefits also baffle most hon. Members.

However, no one should be in any doubt that the Government's proposals have anything to do with trying to rectify or remedy those complexities. They are about saving money, in line with the Government's general policy, and doing so at the expense of the poor.

The Bill is an expression of the views of the most Right-wing elements within the Tory party. The main thrust of the Government's proposals is the antithesis of Beveridge's proposals and the major tenets of post-war social security legislation. It is right that Beveridge's assumptions were challenged, revised and adapted in legislation by successive Governments in line with the shift of the social patterns of the 1960s and 1970s. We should be doing the same in the 1980s. Life at the time of Beveridge was different from life today. Divorce was rare,

married women in employment were rare, and illegitimate births were not commonplace. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1986 the Government should be looking at changes in social behaviour and patterns and adapting legislation accordingly.

The role of women in society has changed, there are more one-parent families and increased unemployment, but the Bill is almost antediluvian. It is not in line with those changes. The Bill's assumptions must be challenged. The prime function of social security legislation should not be the relief of poverty. At best, one could say that the Government may be trying to do that, but Opposition Members would argue that the proposals increase poverty. More should be done to prevent poverty and to provide an adequate level of income sufficient for a recipient to live a confident, self-respecting way of life.

Many aspects of the Bill spell bad news for millions of people. I shall focus on some of the concerns of my constituents. Recently, my local authority, Tameside council, carried out an extensive survey on how the many provisions of the Bill would affect the plight of many of my constituents. We have heard about the plight of old-age pensioners, single parents, and others. Hon. Members might not yet have referred to the plight of students, but I hope they will before the end of the debate.

The Tameside survey revealed the little short of catastrophic effect on many of the people living in my area. In view of the Government's overt support for home owners, is it not ironic that they are targeted for a special cut? They will lose £1·85 per week, which is paid as an addition to cover insurance and repairs. In Tameside about 5,800 owner-occupiers will be affected. Between 1984 and December 1985, 150 evictions among the same group took place because of mortgage foreclosure—300 per cent. up on the figures for the past three years. For a party that purports to be the party of the family, the Conservative party has an odd way of showing it.

Recently, the value of child benefit was cut by 5 per cent., which was a reduction of 35p a week per child, or £18·20 a year. My constituency has about 50,000 children, and the loss to the children and to Tameside's local economy will be about £900,000 a year.

The family credit scheme is hardly an adequate substitute. The Secretary of State has mentioned that two out of every five families who need extra support will not get it.

The problem in providing free school meals for low-income families is that, unless the family receive these meals because of their low income, only those who claim credit will receive any financial compensation. Only 22 per cent. of the parents in my constituency who claim free school meals—those not on supplementary benefit—receive family income supplement. Families with parents who are sick, disabled, widowed or divorced will lose out, as their income will be above the income support level. We know that Tameside and other councils are providing meals for these children. From 1988, my council and others will be forbidden to help.

The Secretary of State has said that proper help will be available from the social fund to help low-income families, but this help will have to be from a fixed budget, and at the discretion of the Department of Health and Social Security, with no right of appeal.

The Secretary of State did go a little way towards meeting our case today, and I hope to persuade him to set up a proper appeals machinery. The Tameside welfare rights unit is extremely successful in appealing on behalf of my constituents against decisions of the DHSS. According to its last annual report, it had a 76 per cent. success rate on behalf of people living in Tameside.

What will happen to these people in the future? Without an appeal system, who will give the unit the £230 for removal costs that it got for one of its claimants, the £104·30 for clothing that it got for another, or the £538 owed by the DHSS to a claimant to have electricity reconnected? What about the sums in excess of £100 for furniture? Without the appeals system, the unit argues that these people will be left empty-handed.

If extra support is needed for families who are not in work, will the levels of the new income support scheme be sufficient to cover all the needs of women who have recently given birth, and their babies? This category is one of the groups to whom Tameside welfare rights unit frequently give advice. Sums secured from the DHSS average £150 per claimant. Will those people be given this help in future? Maternity grant of £75 is less than half what is needed. In a take-up campaign in my area to assist people to purchase bedding, 2,378 people received an average of £50 each—812 people in Hyde, one part of my constituency, alone.

The Secretary of State has argued that he intends to increase help for families with more than one disabled child, and that special attention is being given to disabled people. I would ask him how one of my constituents will feel who has ill health. She has been treated for malnutrition, is not actually disabled, but needs extra heating and a special diet. The costs add up to £17·55 per week.

The family of a child with severe digestive problems receive £17·69 per week. They are not unusual in that the disability from which their daughter suffers means that they need extra heating, special diet and help with laundry because of incontinence and replacement clothes.

I could go on, but I should like to draw to the attention of the Minister some of the proposals in relation to housing benefit, because the situation there is no better. A constituent of mine, who lives in Welbeck road in Hyde, is 52 years of age and receiving supplementary benefit. She was signing on as unemployed and received £29·50 a week supplementary benefit. She has two working daughters, 19 and 18, who earn £32 and £30 a week respectively. The effects of the existing housing benefit cuts since November 1985 mean that these two daughters are now assumed to contribute £10·40 per week each towards housing costs. They are respectively £5 a week and £4 a week worse off than they would have been if they had given up their jobs and claimed benefit. That is what the Secretary of State says he is trying to prevent.

The Bill will make no difference to the poverty trap of my constituent and her two daughters. Indeed, it will make the situation worse. Her benefit will increase from £29·50 to £30·60, out of which she will have to pay water rates, and 20 per cent. of her domestic rates. I wrote to the Secretary of State on 27 November last year to outline the absurdities of the housing benefit scheme which this case reflects. An answer was received on 16 January this year to say that inquiries are taking longer than expected.

I believe this is not an isolated case. We must have an explanation, and fast, and I hope that the Minister, when he winds up this debate, will give us an assurance that these absurdities will be ironed out in the near future. I know that some of these constituency cases can be tedious,

[Mr. Tom Pendry]

but I make no apologies for bringing specific cases to the attention of the House, because we on this side of the House live in the real world, not in the fantasy world of the Secretary of State. Therefore, this is not something which I regret.

Clearly, the Bill targets when the next general election will take place—the autumn of 1987. No Government with any sense will go to the country after the effects of the Bill have been felt by the millions of people who are going to be made worse off as a result.

The Opposition must step up our campaign and ensure that every person affected by the Bill knows what will happen as soon as the Conservatives return to power—if they do. That is the size of our challenge. I am sure that my colleagues agree that we shall take up that challenge. We have to put across the message that we are going back to the days of the Poor Law and the soup kitchen, when malnutrition was rife and pawnshops were commonplace. It is a disgrace to a country which gave birth to the welfare state that we have to say those things. The best that can be said of the Bill is that it will see the death of this rotten and uncaring Government.

8.10 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to express in broad outline my support for the Government's objectives in the Bill. The comments from both sides of the House show that we are all measuring and judging the Bill by three criteria—our sense of caring, our assessment of needs, and the inevitable yardstick of affordability.

We are spending £41 billion on this aspect of Government expenditure. Although that figure is always in the newspapers, we should continue to repeat it. It struck me as odd that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred, effectively, to a sum of that magnitude as being likened to the cost of a Victorian poor law. The figure of £41 billion may trip off the tongue in this place, but it is in no way Victorian poor law provision.

If we are honest with ourselves, we know what we mean by "needs". All hon. Members are confronted in their constituencies not necessarily by needs but by expectations. All too often, one gets the uncomfortable feeling that people's expectations are in danger of destroying the very base from which those expectations can be delivered. The fairy story of the goose that laid the golden eggs has a moral which the House should not set aside too easily.

I do not think that a single hon. Member does not care. We are often confronted in our constituencies not so much by needs but by the philosophy, "I am entitled;" "I want;" "I must have." We want a system that allows all people —especially those who, for whatever reason, are not able to sustain themselves—to live with some dignity. We must take needs and affordability on board in making our judgment.

I welcome particularly the dual role that the Bill sets out — the role of the state, and the encouragement of personal pension provision. The Opposition have said that the Government have not changed a thing. I should have thought that the change in approach to SERPS was a major change made in the light of consultation. I am sorry that no member of the Social Democratic and Liberal mésalliance is present, because I do not know whether the article that appeared in May last year in a national newspaper is correct. That article seems to say that the views of at least the leader of the Social Democrats are now very much in line with the revised proposals of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) argued that sex discrimination in our pension system should be abolished and that people should retire at 65. I am not sure whether the ladies would be happy with that. He also said that he would like to give people the option of retiring between 60 and 65. That seems to be in line with Government policy.

I am grateful for the portable personal pension scheme. I am on my third pension scheme—two of the pension schemes in which I was involved are frozen because I changed jobs. As this profession is precarious, I suppose that I have to take account of the possibility that I shall have to start a fourth pension scheme. Millions of people rely on company or personal pensions. Under the Bill, millions more people will have that dependence on such pensions. We should say loudly and clearly and as often as possible, "Heaven help those company pension funds and those personal pensions if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Oldham, West get their hands on people's pension funds for use in their lunatic Socialist schemes."

I do not think that even Ministers would think it amiss if I said that we still have a long way to go in simplifying housing benefit, but we are moving towards simplification. At least we have now taken on board that net income will be the basis of the income test and not gross income. That is a step in the right direction. I should like to express my thanks to Ministers for listening to representations——

Mr. Pendry: Is the hon. Gentleman special?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Of course I am special. I am more persuasive than the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry).

Under clause 28, district councils will be able to exempt war pensions from the exclusion that appears to be proposed in the Green Paper.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: In some case, there was genuine concern in my city that we would be taking £8 from war pensions. I am delighted that that has been put right.

Mrs. Beckett: I was seeking to save the hon. Gentleman from potential embarrassment. I do not know how closely he has looked at the Government's concessions. I understand that local councils can do what the hon. Gentleman suggests only within the overall housing benefit budget. Presumably this means that local councils will have to make changes or savings somewhere else. I have not had a chance to go into this matter as thoroughly as I should have liked, but I suggest, knowing the Government and their record, that the hon. Gentleman should look carefully at this concession before saying too much about how the Government have given it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: If the hon. Lady is correct and the concession is not as great as I have said, she may be assured that Conservative Members will press our senior colleagues strongly on that matter. War widows are the last group from whom we would want to take one penny.

Under the housing benefit heading, the Association of District Councils has made a number of comments. Out of the hoary old mechanism for funding more of this and more of that comes the mortgage interest tax relief, estimated at £3.5 million in 1984-85. While it might be of academic interest to compare mortgage interest tax relief with what we spend on housing benefit, I do not think we are comparing like with like. They seek to achieve different things. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) may laugh, but they set out to achieve totally different objectives. I see no logic in saying that, because one has housing benefit, one should have mortgage interest relief, or vice versa.

If mortgage interest tax relief produces a property owning democracy, nobody in the House, except perhaps those on the lunatic fringe, would seek to dispute that home ownership has brought about, and is bringing about, much social stability that would otherwise not exist.

I will not go into great detail on the social fund. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde listed a number of single payment situations in his constituency. We have all been confronted with them. Some of the decisions of the Department of Health and Social Security offices are puzzling under the existing regulations and no doubt will be just as puzzling under the new.

Without being too precise on the figures, because I would not wish to embarrass the constituent whose experiences I am drawing on, I could not help but feel that there was something wrong with the existing system when I was confronted by somebody complaining that the DHSS proposed to award him only £X for the need that he expressed when he believed that he needed £2X. I, as would most of my colleagues, said that I would write to the DHSS and ask it to re-examine the case and produce a report. I have total admiration for the work of our local DHSS offices. The office wrote back and confirmed that my constitutent had not only been offered £X but that in the previous two years he had received £5X. That £5X was fast approaching £2,000.

That is the sort of anomaly which occurs under the present system. Therefore, I can understand that the Government, in seeking to have at least some control over what we spend, are taking on board the anomalies in the present system.

I am grateful for one phrase from the Minister which relates to the statement made this afternoon on the revisions of rates. I can understand why the Secretary of State for the Environment could not give the sort of answers that were sought because his was not the responsible Department. If the result of the examination of the cost of living and the indices on which uprating is considered is that elderly people, in particular, will have their 20 per cent. rebate of rates, or whatever it is, built into their old-age pensions, they have nothing to fear from the Bill.

I know that I speak for many of my hon. Friends when I say that, much as we want a review of social security and support the Bill, we are equally certain that in no way do we want the financial security of our senior citizens to diminish by one penny.

8.24 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): For the first time since 1979 it has been a pleasure to sit on the Opposition Benches over the past couple of weeks. We have witnessed an outbreak of warfare which is not usually seen on the Government Benches. Sadly, however, there has now been an outbreak of that most deadly virus beloved by the Whips called loyalty. That loyalty leads to what is called a closing of ranks.

I thought it would be helpful to the Minister when he sums up if I put some of the objections to the Bill which ordinary loyal Conservatives would have put if that outbreak of loyalty had not occurred.

As a Conservative Member I would have to begin by declaring self-interest. The self-interest would be that as each day passes the dreadful day of judgment, as the Prayer Book calls it, is approaching. In other words, the election gets ever nearer. *[Interruption.]* I wish the Opposition Front Bench would allow some of their hon. Friends to get on with their speeches. As that dreadful day of judgment approaches the electorate's mind is concentrated wonderfully on whether it will win under the scheme. I thought it would help the Government to concentrate their mind when they vote tonight if we look at the losses that will be experienced in marginal Conservative seats if the Bill goes through.

Looking at the Government's own figures, a little over 500 very elderly pensioner households will lose. Likewise, some 3,000 other pensioner households will lose if the Bill goes through unamended. In addition to the loss suffered by pensioners, about 1,500 other non-pensioner households in those constituencies will lose. In addition to that, if that list was not long enough, almost 500 working families who earn their poverty will be made worse off by the measure. If I could not rise to greater heights than that of self-interest I would be concerned that about 5,500 households in my marginal seat would be made worse by the move.

There are other objections to the Bill if one is of the Conservative persuasion. The second objection that Tory Members should be putting tonight is that the Bill makes a mockery of practically everything that the Government say about incentives. Every major statement from the Government Benches is a plea to build a society which encourages and rewards those who try to stand on their own two feet. What does the Bill do? Looking at the appendix we find a significant increase in the number of families who will face marginal tax rates in excess of 70 per cent. Although the Secretary of State is right in saying that technically the Bill solves the poverty trap problem and that most families would not be faced with a 100 per cent. tax rate, that solution is brought about by significantly increasing, in fact doubling, the number of those who face a marginal tax rate of more than 70 per cent. Given that we have had Tory Budgets which have said that that is a marginal tax rate that those at the top of the tree should not have to face, is it one that is tolerable for those at the bottom?

Thirdly, the Bill makes a mockery of Government statements that their policy is about targeting help on those in most need. It is significant that, despite the length of the Secretary of State's opening remarks, which almost ran to an hour, he did not say whether there will be more or fewer poor people as a result of the Bill. The existing resource, besides making a substantial saving for the Exchequer, will be shuffled around among the poor. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) drew on the Policy Studies Institute study, which highlighted how desperately placed unemployed

[Mr. Frank Field]

families were. If one had to opt for one group which was suffering the worst poverty, one would single out the unemployed. Yet they will lose most under the proposals.

The proposals also seek to deal with incentives to work for young workers. The premiums are being structured so that those under the age of 25 are penalised. Yet the households in greatest need are those with young families, and most young families have young parents. Indeed, among working class households family formation begins at a very early age. Those households in greatest need will lose under the measure, while other households composed of older non-pensioners will gain, although their needs will be less. That is hardly sensible targeting. If the Government were interested in targeting, they would put a greater premium on children. However, they dare not do that for the reasons that the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) outlined. Given the Government's stand on slowly phasing out child benefit, they would land themselves in severe problems regarding incentives to work with income support payments to children way above child benefit levels. I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has returned to the Chamber. I salute the noble way in which he presents the views and needs of his constituents.

The fourth reason why a loyal Tory Member should be worried is that the cornerstone of family policy until 1979, when the Conservatives won the election, was to build on child benefits. Yet they are now slowly phasing out that benefit. The Government's claim that they are shifting the tax burden from families with children to those without children, that is, reversing a trend that has gone on under both parties for 30 years, now has a hollow ring.

The fifth reason for voting against the Government relates to the provisions of family credit. Any sensible Tory Member knows that the Government's influence is limited and that they cannot pretend that they can arbitrate in marriages where there are severe difficulties. However, as it is possible to weight the outcome of the argument in those struggles in some families, we all know that too many of our female constituents get a rough deal from their husbands. In the past, therefore, Tory Governments have ensured that resources go to the woman rather than the man. As the hon. Member for Kensington said, we all understand why the Government are switching the additional support from FIS to family credit and from women to men. However, we do not accept that argument, and it will certainly not be accepted in our constituencies.

The sixth reason is that the measure concentrates even more power in the Minister's hands instead of decentralising it. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) highlighted the extent to which this is an enabling Bill, giving the Minister extraordinarily wide powers to introduce regulations. That might be a sensible approach if the Government's track record on statutory instruments was good. However, on the board and lodging regulations, for example, a constituent of mine, Simon Cotton, has been taking the Government to practically every court in the country and beating them. That suggests that no sensible group of people would assign the power in this Bill to the Government.

A further reason why Conservative Members should be unhappy with the measure is the loss of appeal on single needs payments. Some hon. Members have already referred to the

"Special Report by the Council on Tribunals,"

in which the council states that it does not accept the Government's argument. It comes to the following conclusion:

"The people most affected by this proposal are among the most vulnerable in our society. Very good reasons are needed before the abolition of the right to an independent appeal in such circumstances, an appeal which has existed for over 50 years. It would probably be the most substantial abolition of a right of appeal to an independent tribunal since the Council on Tribunals were set up by Parliament in 1958."

So much for a party that not only used to pay lip service to people's rights but ensured that those rights were enshrined in our courts and tribunal system.

If those were not powerful enough reasons why the measure should not command Conservative support, a further reason is that the measure further erodes the tax base. People will be bribed through the tax system to opt out and buy private pension provisions. A party which believes it is important to cut the rate of tax must know that every tax benefit concession makes it more difficult to deliver tax cuts because those tax cuts are being handed out in the form of tax privileges.

Those are the reasons why Conservative Members should vote against the measure. About 5,500 households in every marginal Conservative seat will be worse off, which means about 8,000 voters will lose money. The Bill makes nonsense of the Government's talk about incentives. The targeting of help on those in greatest need is irrational. It shows the poverty of the Government's commitment to build up the child benefit system, and so to shift the tax burden from those with children. It substantially alters power within the family, especially in families where there are difficulties between husband and wife, from the wife to the husband. It unnecessarily concentrates power in Whitehall and the Minister, instead of devolving it. It wipes away an appeal which has existed for about 50 years. Finally, it will make it even more difficult for the Government to deliver their promised tax cuts. Any one of those reasons is a good reason why Conservative Members should join us in the Lobby. All eight reasons should ensure that the Government are in severe difficulties.

8.38 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Few would deny the need for reforms in the social security system, and many would say that those changes should be radical. During the past 50 years there have been many changes. For example, pensioners have nearly doubled in number.

My first anxiety about the Bill is that, unless it is changed drastically and receives wide support, the changes will inevitably prevail for only a limited period. If we have learnt any lesson from social security legislation in the past 40 years, it must be that, when there has been no consensus or broad base of all-party agreement, a change of Government brings a change in legislation. That cannot be good for anybody. It cannot be good for the Secretary of State and his colleagues who wish to put the legislation on the statute book, for the industry or for the pensioners of tomorrow.

Much though I would like to, I will not spend any time on part I of the Bill because of the limitations of time. However, there are still so many gaps in part I that the Government must provide a great deal more information in Committee that they have in the Bill and in the Secretary

of State's speech. It is unlikely that I will be appointed to the Committee, but I will read the proceedings with great interest.

I should like to remind the House of the group that is most affected by changes in the social security system. Let us examine the basic facts of social security benefits as a percentage of income. For couples without children, that is 5 per cent.; for couples with children, it is 8 per cent.; for single people, it is 9 per cent.; and for one-parent families, it is 45 per cent. However, at the top of the table are pensioners, with 60 per cent. of their income comprising social security benefits.

I am deeply concerned about the effect that these proposals will have upon pensioners, particularly in relation to housing benefits and rates. In many areas, that is not as clear as the Green Paper and the White Paper implied.

There is broad agreement in the House that the rating system is unfair. It would therfore be utterly wrong to change a situation in which many pensioners get the equivalent of a 100 per cent. rate rebate until the rating system has been reformed. To take action before that would make it even worse for those pensioners who face rate bills and others who at the moment receive 100 per cent. rate rebates. I will not discuss water rates, but it is scandalous that there is not a rate rebate system for water rates as well.

Although I have not heard every speech tonight, I do not believe that any hon. Member has touched on the problems faced by owner-occupiers on relatively low incomes, with the state pension and a non-inflation-proof firm's pension. There is a significant number of such people. Since 1970, that non-inflation-proof firm's pension has been reduced in value in real terms by 80 per cent. For many in that section of the community, particularly when their non-inflation-proof firm's pension is small, housing benefit was some small compensation for the destruction of the value of their firm's pension and/or their savings.

The destruction of the value of that pension was in no way the responsibility of those people. They had retired. All hon. Members know who was mainly responsible for that; all political parties have some responsibility, but I submit that the Opposition have the greatest responsibility. Whoever brought that about and whatever the reasons for it, it is quite wrong that such people should now have their benefits withdrawn because when they first retired they could live on their income. They did not live like kings, but they had a reasonable income, for which they had worked and saved for so many years.

I warn the Government that they should not penalise that group unreasonably. These people worked hard and long for their retirement and were determined not to have to rely on state supplementary benefit or upon their families but wanted to stand on their own feet when they retired. They saw their real income undermined and destroyed. The Conservative party has time and time again said that that group should receive special help, consideration and assistance. It would be an unforgivable kick in the teeth for those people if a large part of all of their housing benefit was removed.

The carers for pensioners are another group which I should like to consider in the broadest sense. Those who care for the elderly and the disabled save the country and the Exchequer countless hundreds of millions of pounds a year. They need more understanding and help. They should not have to wait until the end of the decade or rely on the careful in-depth inquiry in relation to the disabled and the operation of carers for pensioners. They need help now.

I am sure that all hon. Members are aware of cases like one I know. A lady in my constituency has given up her life to look after her mother. That lady has a full-time job and is a very capable person. She gets up extra early in the morning to ensure that she leaves her mother comfortable. She goes to work happily, she does not have too far to travel, and in her lunch hour returns to see if her mother needs anything urgently, to get her something to eat and do the essentials. She then returns to her place of work in the afternoon.

That lady's lunch is a sandwich on the bus coming from work to home in her lunch hour or on her return to work after seeing her mother. That person is absolutely dedicated, feels socially isolated and has made immense sacrifices year after year in carrying out those responsibilities to her mother.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowden: I should like to give way, but time does not permit.

I ask the Government to look at that group to see what additional help can be given to them. The basic needs of carers are greater than the needs of fit people of a similar age, and they should be given due consideration.

Like the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), I am concerned about sections of the Bill. However, although it might be against my better judgement, I will support the Government tonight. I must tell the Government Front Bench that they have a long way to go fully to convince me that the Bill will produce, as the Secretary of State said at Blackpool in 1985:

"A system that is modern, clear and fair, one which answers real need wherever the need is to be found."

8.49 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The misgivings of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) are shared by Members from both sides of the House and I hope that the Government take note of them. Before addressing myself to the content of the Bill, I want to refer to its enabling nature. We have heard the Secretary of State refer to the number of regulations in other legislation that will be replaced by this Bill. He was quick to his feet on that point. He was obviously aware that he was vulnerable and had his defence already worked out.

There are far too many regulations here. I counted 24 references to facilitating regulations to be made in the Bill, giving rise to some 85 separate provisions. In addition, a number of orders and directions give enormous power to the Secretary of State. There is a real danger that regulations coming before the House will not receive adequate attention. The House must also bear in mind that it can accept or reject statutory instruments but not amend them. I hope that thought will be given to that when such legislation is forthcoming in the future.

I also hope that detailed notes on clauses will be given to the Committee so that we can understand them properly and that the Secretary of State will say how he will use the regulations in each context.

I think that we all agree that there is a need for legislation to revise, simplify and streamline social

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

security, but it should seek to make social security easier for the people and they should get it as an entitlement. The Bill does not do that. It aims at reducing the overall resources and it does not apply itself to the question from the viewpoint of welfare rights.

We in Wales are particularly worried because some of the groups who are shown to be losing in the context of the Bill are pensioners, those who are in work on low incomes without children and unemployed people, and we have a large proportion of those in Wales, perhaps larger than in the population as a whole. As a result, the Bill's impact will be that much worse in Wales.

Tonight I shall oppose the Bill because I have grave misgivings about most of it, but there are one or two points that I welcome and that I want to put on the record. For example, I welcome the first step towards providing portable personal pensions. That is long overdue; although one can argue about the way in which it is done and the details of it, at least we are moving in the right direction.

However, there is a real loss for many people as a result of other provisions, particularly the loss that pensioners will experience. In the 60-to-79 age group 57 per cent. of pensioners will face a net loss of benefit as a result of the Bill. In the 80-year-old and older group 43 per cent. will be worse off and only 33 per cent. better off. That should not be the objective or the effect of such a Bill and we should not pass a Bill that has such an effect.

The area that gives me greatest misgiving is the abolition of single payments and the social fund that is coming in its place. The changes in that area cause concern to many people. A survey of the effects in my county estimates that two thirds of those in receipt of supplementary benefit, unemployment benefit and supplementary pension will, on average, be some £7 a week worse off. Different hon. Members quote different figures, but this matter should be looked at in depth, office by office, in the DHSS to assess exactly what effect the change will have.

There is a real danger of payments being discretionary, and therefore varying from area to area. They will vary at the whim of the manager. That will put the managers of DHSS officials in a difficult position. They may be influenced by personal attitudes and it is not clear to the potential beneficiaries what is available and what they should be going for, where there is no question of entitlement. All those are matters about which we should be unhappy, particularly since there is no appeal procedure. Before 1980 the chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission described that situation as inequitable and arbitrary. Now, without an arbitrary procedure, the system is even more so.

If we are to rely on loans, there is a danger that we shall be causing even greater problems for many people. In Scotland, where payments under section 12 of the Act are more wide-ranging than under section 1 in England and Wales—I am thinking of children now—they have been moving away from loans to outright payments. This is for four reasons—first, there are administrative problems relating to loans; secondly, the therapeutic effect of loans applies only to a very few cases; thirdly, it is unrealistic to expect people on low incomes to repay loans; fourthly, it is not always helpful to replace one debt with another. We should take that Scottish experience very much to heart before we consider going down that road.

We must also be certain that local offices are not cash-limited in a way that will prevent people having their real needs properly met. I am particularly concerned about funeral and maternity expenses and the danger that people will feel that they have to plead poverty in order to obtain assistance. We should always bear in mind the dignity of those people who have to resort to those sources for assistance.

The sick, disabled and elderly in my constituency need considerable help towards their heating costs. The way in which the Bill changes those provisions will have a serious effect. The social fund payments will not reach many of these people. The changes will lead to real suffering and, I suspect, a greter level of debt and probably more disconnections among those client groups.

The position is bad enough in Wales. Many of the old industrial areas have a damp climate and the housing is totally inadequate. In other areas, the situation is worse. For example, in Scotland there is great concern about the cold climate allowance. I pay tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) in that context. The present state of affairs is bad enough for those parts of the United Kingdom which have a cold climate, but it is particularly so in Scotland. Scotland is effectively discriminated against, but under the new system it will be even worse off.

The only possible source of extra heating allowance would be a cash-limited social fund, but it appears that even that may not even be intended for use in regard to the heating allowance. I hope that the Minister will be able to deal with that issue and clarify the position tonight. Thousands of people, mostly old, are dying from cold-related illnesses in Scotland every winter and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere. The position is unacceptable and the review does nothing to improve matters.

The hon. Member for Kemptown referred to those who care for elderly people and the disabled. The Government are aware of the general concern about the position of carers in our society from a number of reports and representations that have been made. The Bill does not consider their need in any special way. There is a danger of putting off consideration until the Government have looked at the overall survey of disablement needs. But the carers need consideration, not in the context of disabled people but in the context of their own needs and entitlements. That consideration should relate to income forgone. Whereas many can work with difficulty, many more give up jobs and make enormous sacrifices in order to look after somebody who is dear to them, and in doing so they save enormous funds for the state.

An enormous work load could be placed on social workers as a result of these changes. There could be additional work in explaining to people what their rights are, how to get their entitlements and how to sort out the system. I fear that this work load will be severe not only on the social workers but on the employees of the social security offices. It will be a tremendous burden and the work will be time-consuming. Social workers' time that could be spent on case work will be spent sorting out problems arising from these changes.

There is also the question of the availability of finance for the local social services departments to enable them to make up the losses that will come from this legislation —for example, the changes in section 1 payments for children.

The Bill will affect disabled people and those who are moderately disabled will lose out. The position of carers — many of whom are women — is unsatisfactory. Women are also affected by the change in maternity allowances and the payment of family credits to the husband's pay packet. There is also the unsatisfactory position of widows.

The effect of the Bill on children and young people is unacceptable. A moment ago we heard about school meals, and I touched upon family credit payments. Students are also feeling the squeeze more and more. I ask the Government to analyse section 1 payments to see what the exact effects of the change may be for children.

Most of all, the Bill affects people who depend on the state. We should be seeking a Bill of clarity, entitlement, simplicity, efficiency, speed and—most of all—fairness. This Bill is discretionary, unclear and unimaginative. At best, the Bill is a lost opportunity, at worst it is a severe blow to many people who cannot help themselves.

9 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I welcome the Bill in general but, inevitably, given its size and complexity, I will concentrate my remarks on pensions. I welcome the part of the Bill dealing with pensions because it will achieve two necessary actions — it will bring some reality and some additional benefits into occupational pensions. The first thing it will achieve is what might be called the right to exit.

The House is aware that with the growth of occupational pension schemes, both in industry and in public service, there has also been a growth in the number of people who wanted to get out of those schemes but until now were unable to do so. I am sure I am not alone in speaking to teachers who, over the years, have grown more and more unhappy with the rigidities and apparent unfairness of their pension scheme. Until now they have had no alternative. Members of the disciplined services have—until the advent of the Bill—been under a lifelong threat that if a disciplinary hearing went the wrong way so too did their life's savings. Indeed, I have heard, within the corridors of this House, one or two Members who look forward to the right to opt out into an approved personal pension scheme because they have not accepted the generally promulgated myth that our pension scheme is the best of all worlds.

It is not only in the public services that the right to opt for an appropriate personal pension scheme is important. There have also been inappropriate old-fashioned pension schemes in the private sector. It was frequently a condition of employment in a company that an employee should, after a time, belong to the pension scheme. This happened in my own constituency in a substantial company where there are large numbers of employees who have witnessed the company discriminating unfairly in the funding of its own pension scheme as between one group of employees and another. Such people have been powerless to do anything until now. The new freedom that is promoted by the appropriate personal pension scheme is welcome.

I welcome the general provisions of the Bill concerning pensions because it has taken on board what no previous Government have taken on board—that SERPS was too big, was getting bigger and had to be cut down.

The word consensus has been mentioned several times today and it appears in the Liberal amendment. It implies agreement among all parties that taxpayers' money should be spent in a certain way. I might be naturally suspicious, but when I hear that word in this context, I immediately ask myself, "Who is being ripped off?" The people being ripped off in this case are future taxpayers and pensioners, part of whose livelihoods is being blithely promised away by people who will not be around when the bill arrives. I suggest that the word consensus should be replaced with the word conspiracy.

I mildly regret my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision not to abolish SERPS. The arguments in the Green Paper were valid. He would have made a cleaner break with the past and put the funding of future state pensions much more beyond doubt if he had gone the whole hog. I am, nevertheless, delighted to accept the decision in the Bill. I warn him, however, that, if I am lucky enough to be selected as a member of the Standing Committee, there will be at least one hon. Member who will want to ensure that he has gone far enough to limit the cost of SERPS so that it can be afforded by future taxpayers and pensioners.

The Government Actuary's report shows that the costs of SERPS should be bearable. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the honesty of his proposals regarding SERPS. He should not hesitate to consider the figures closely and he should be prepared to revise them if it is shown that the costs could still be too great.

Right hon. and hon. Members have said that the Bill consists largely of indications of draft regulations. As the Bill will be completed by the regulations, I suggest that it is difficult to read the Bill without having some idea of what will be in those regulations. I commend to my right hon. Friend the example set by the Occupational Pensions Board concerning emergency memorandum No. 48 of October 1977. The regulation was published within days of Royal Assent but only six months before the relevant legislation was due to come into force. We are considering legislation that will not be complete until the regulations have been published. Will my right hon. Friend consider at least publishing draft regulations even before Royal Assent so that we know what we are talking about?

There are lacunae in the Bill, especially regarding personal pensions. If they are not filled by the draft regulations, they could give a wholly false idea of what my right hon. Friend is trying to achieve. The Bill does not say, for example, that a member of an appropriate personal pension scheme will have a right to a death-in-service benefit. There is no indication in the Bill, although there is in the White Paper, that a member of an appropriate personal pension scheme will have a right to commutation. Nor is there any indication that he will have a right, as does the holder of a retirement annuity, to opt for a scheme that gives a five-year guarantee of payment of pension. There is no indication in the Bill of what investment powers trustees will have, or of who will be entitled to be trustees.

I encourage my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to extend his thinking a little further on one or two aspects of the Bill. There has been some criticism this evening of the 2 per cent. rebate that has been offered for new contracting-out schemes. I applaud the principle. It benefits the public to give as much encouragement as possible to contracting-out schemes.

However, when it comes to pensions, thinking is often slow. Given that the full story will not be known until all the regulations are passed, insurance companies and other pension providers will have to look through all the new regulations and documentation. By the time many pension

[Mr. Michael Stern]

providers are in a position to offer the appropriate scheme, much of the five-year period that has been suggested for the additional incentive will have been lost. As that period passes, the incentive will grow less, week by week. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be encouraged at least to take power to extend the five-year period to ensure that the incentive has the maximum effect.

Other points in the Bill will no doubt be commented on in detail, but there is one point on which my right hon. Friend could act now. It has been generally recognised that the annuity market, which the Bill requires to be opened up, must be much larger than the current market. By 1990, when the first annuities will need to be purchased or provided, the annuity market will have changed significantly. I hope that my right hon. Friend will introduce proposals to aid the expansion of the market into the new opportunities that the Bill promotes. At the very least I hope that my right hon. Friend will confirm as early as possible that his Department will co-operate with the studies that are taking place to ensure that the annuity market can be extended to the width that is required for the Bill to work.

I have spoken over my time limit on one part of the Bill, so I shall not comment on the attitude of the Opposition. Despite the criticism, the Bill could be, and I believe will be, a starting point for major reforms of pensions and other areas to increase personal freedom and create opportunities for ordinary people to improve their position. It will meet current needs better and it will enable more effective and faster response to the changes that are taking place in society to be made.

9.13 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I have listened to practically every word of the debate, and it appears to me that almost all the speeches contained a critical note about the Bill. I underline the suggestion that the Government should take it back and reconsider it. Perhaps they should make a fundamental examination of our social security system in a proper way.

Despite the Government's continual claims, the review completely fails to address the dramatic and fundamental change in the position of women. Several hon. Members have mentioned the problems that women will face arising from the passage of the Bill.

Since Beveridge, there has been a dramatic and fundamental change in the position of women in society in general and in the family. The Bill is extremely difficult to read, and we shall have to grapple with a complicated and detailed package. It ignores the consistent pressure from women, women's organisations and the Equal Opportunities Commission for the radical and simultaneous reform of social security, pensions and taxation. We cannot consider one part without considering the others at the same time if we are intent upon eradicating discrimination.

The Bill will introduce practices and measures that will actively extend and reinforce inequality and disadvantage for women. The review has contemptuously ignored the developing EC law on equal treatment in social security, which is bound to lead to yet another spate of lengthy and costly legal battles and ignominious defeats for the Government in the European Court. The Government have deliberately obstructed all EOC and EC-supported improvements for women. For example, they placed obstructions in the way of equal pay for work of equal value, which has made it difficult for women to claim; they refused to extend the invalid care allowance to married and cohabiting women; and they refused to adopt even the most minimal provision for parental leave and leave for family reasons.

The Bill hits women at two levels. First, it makes it more difficult for many women to get the support that they need to provide themselves and their children with a decent standard of living. Secondly, in some areas, it reinforces the dependency of women upon their partners —a concept which more and more women reject and which the Labour party will work to ensure is reversed.

I wish to point out some of the ways in which I and many women's organisations believe that women will be disadvantaged under the Bill. Much has been said tonight about pensions, which form a complicated part of the Bill. SERPS pays women a full pension five years earlier than men. Women who transfer to a personal pension or to a purchased occupational pension scheme will lose that advantage under the Bill. The pension payable at 60 could be one third lower than that payable at 65.

The Green Paper, which was produced so many months ago, said in paragraph 1.54:

"The provision of annuities by insurance companies is normally on the basis of differential rates for men and women. But the Government do not believe that it would be acceptable to have women placed at a substantial disadvantage in terms of the pension they would receive for contributions paid at the same rate and up to the same age. The resulting funds must produce the same pensions. To achieve this will require insurance companies to provide annuities for this purpose on a common basis for both sexes . . . the Government recognise that it will be a major departure for the insurance companies and will wish to discuss the implications with them."

So far, so good.

However, the White Paper stated:

"This was welcomed by the consumer bodies and the Equal Opportunities Commission, but received with reservations by insurance companies . . . The Government will therefore consult with insurers on the basis that annuities from the proceeds of contracted-out personal and occupational pensions should give all men and women at the same age the same annuity for the same amount of money."

It remains quite uncertain whether the insurance companies can be persuaded to offer annuities to women on the same terms as men.

The second point about SERPS is the abolition of the best 20 years formula. That will arouse indignation and dismay among women who welcomed that part of SERPS because it gave them the opportunity to work, to take breaks at home, and to take the best 20 years and have a pension.

My third brief point on SERPS is about survivors. A survivor, usually a widow, will no longer be able to inherit the whole of her spouse's pension but only half of it. The Government argue that the present rules are too generous, but they were introduced as a deliberate measure to improve the situation of widows. The need for such a measure will be all the greater if the opportunities for women, especially married women, to earn a decent personal pension are dramatically reduced by the Government's other proposals.

I hope that the questions I have raised about pensions will be answered honestly by the Minister, because many hundreds of thousands of women are looking anxiously at what the Government propose to provide for them in this Bill, and they will see the Bill and the provisions about

SERPS as being detrimental to their future. I have a number of other points, but I do not propose to go into all of them because I do not have time. They are about matters that specifically disadvantage women.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) talked about the maternity grant. Some 72,000 women expect to receive maternity grants in 1985-86. In 1983 some 170,000 payments were made. Approximately 500,000 mothers who would have qualified for maternity grant will lose the £25 under the new proposals. Those who do not qualify for supplementary benefit, income support, family income support or family credit will lose the £25. Another 170,000 families on supplementary benefit will also lose an average of £13. There are massive gains and massive losses, but there are also tremendous differentials.

The Select Committee on Social Services, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, has always recommended that the maternity grant should be based on entitlement. As I understand it, under this Bill the maternity grant will be paid from the social fund and will be discretionary. The Government have made much of the fact that the grant is £25 at the moment and will be increased to £75. That was mentioned at Question Time this afternoon. A grant of £75 is far too low, and will put us in fifth place in the seven EEC countries that pay such a grant. Luxembourg pays £630 and France pays £557. *Parents* magazine estimates that it costs £702 simply for baby clothes and equipment. The magazine also says that, according to its calculations, the average loss of the woman's salary is between £5,000 and £6,000.

The maternity grant should be paid as of right, should not be a discretionary payment from the social fund, and should be increased to at least £125. Even that is not sufficient to buy the baby items set out in the DHSS list. The DHSS calculated their cost at £160. That list is used by Department officials when deciding claims for single parents.

The payment of £75 will be less than some mothers receive at present. Those on supplementary benefit can get £85 in single payments, so the poorest and most vulnerable mother who currently can get £85, not through the maternity grant but through single payment benefits, will lose that and will get instead £75 if she goes to the social fund.

Many points could be raised, but no doubt we can deal with them in Committee. I am concerned that no provision is being made for mothers under 16 years. They do not qualify for supplementary benefit or for family income supplement and they will have no right to maternity grant. They also lose the right to free milk and vitamins. It is strange that the Conservative party, which professes to care about young people and families, should ignore so totally the needs and problems of mothers under 16.

The loss of free milk and vitamins, which will be abolished for those on income support, is a sore point. That benefit will be lost by 250,000 women and children. Babies born to poor families run twice as much risk of stillbirth or early death as those born to the professional classes. More than anyone else, the children in poor families need free milk and vitamins.

I could talk about many other things such as widows' allowances and pensions. I shall not do so but simply point out that the Bill is an absolute disaster for the overwhelming majority of vulnerable women. We shall fight the Bill very hard on their behalf because they have no opportunity to come to the House and tell us of their experiences. We shall have to put those experiences before the Government and hope that they will listen carefully and will reconsider the Bill.

9.27 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I wish to express appreciation at being given time to speak, limited though it may be. I shall honour my promise to be brief because I did not expect to get in. I shall make briefly as many points as I can but obviously we can discuss the Bill more fully in Committee.

Despite the Government's claims, the Bill will not give more help to families. According to the White Paper, the key objective of the reform is to direct

"more resources to areas of greatest need, notably low income families with children."

When we consider the illustrative figures in the White Paper, at first it seems that families will get an extra £5·90 per week on transfer from supplementary benefit to income support. But families will no longer get help though the other payments that are made at the moment. For instance, the average family in Sheffield gets a water rates payment of £1·20, a general rates payment of £1·50, a heating allowance of £2·20 and other payments of £3·20. That means that the average family in Sheffield will be £1·85 a week worse off.

I wanted to give the House many examples but I shall deal with just one which highlights what the Bill will do to people in need who trust politicians of all persuasions to pass legislation which helps rather than hinders them.

My Sheffield claimant is a female in her late fifties. She has been unemployed and dependent on state benefits for over 10 years. She lives on a large inner city estate which needs improvement and repair. Her income is at present £47 a week. This includes a number of "additional requirements" payments. She is a diabetic so gets an allowance of £3·70 a week. She has a higher heating addition of £5·40 a week. She suffers from bronchitis and has had half a lung removed because of cancer. She also needs extra heating because the house is hard to heat. Being in such poor health, she has contracted a skin complaint for which she needs at least one bath a day, two to be absolutely right. Unfortunately, the basic benefit allows for one bath per week.

It is pretty obvious from the Bill that this lady is likely to have her income reduced from £47 a week to £33 a week. That does not take into account the electricity bills which people like her will have to pay. These are genuine people: they are not fictitious; we are not producing them out of thin air. They are people to whom I have spoken and who have allowed me to use them as examples without giving their name. This lady's benefit will be reduced to £33 a week, without taking into account the cost of electricity at £150 per quarter.

The importance of benefits to the people of this country, and certainly to those in Sheffield, is unbelievable. The areas that I represent are inner city areas, where we have massive unemployment, problems of permanent unemployment for black school leavers and problems of bad housing. All these people will suffer more because of this Bill.

Although I have seven or eight pages of notes with me, I will, on instructions from my colleagues, come to a conclusion. I make this point—that if I cannot keep the

[Mr. Bill Michie]

House I will keep the Committee. I shall lay stress time and again on all the clauses of the Bill and the anomalies and the injustice caused to ordinary people.

9.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The Secretary of State said, initially at least, with pride—although he may be less proud about it these days—that the reviews and the Bill which comes from them were the most significant social security proposals since Beveridge. That at least Opposition Members echo. I will go further than the Secretary of State and say that the Bill represents the most significant statement of belief to emerge from the Conservative party in a generation, a statement which perhaps shows that the Conservative party or—in view of the remarks of some of the Secretary of State's hon. Friends tonight, I should be kind and say the Conservative Government—no longer believes in the welfare state.

The welfare state is founded on two basic tenets. It is meant to be for everyone. All contribute what they can when they can, so that when they are in need they can claim as of right. The Secretary of State is threatening the first fundamental tenet by his targeting, by defining the poor ever more harshly, tightly and rigidly, seeking to move further and further away from the idea that we all have a stake in the welfare state. In the social fund, as I shall show in a few moments, we see a major breach of the right to benefit that is the second basic tenet of the system.

On Second Reading we look not just at the broad sweep of the Bill's proposals but a little at its background. The background is quite simple and straightforward: the Government's desperate need to cut public expenditure, which has driven them now to measures that they would not perhaps have contemplated when they were first in power but which they now dare to propose. At a time when even the Confederation of British Industry says that the Government's priority should be to cut unemployment, and not taxation, the Secretary of State proposes to make further substantial reductions and structural changes in the social security budget. But if the Government were to take steps to cut unemployment that would in itself have a major effect in reducing the costs to which the Secretary of State so often refers.

The proposals in the Bill follow after, I suppose, rather than from the proposals in the reviews, because even the reviews themselves did not go far enough for the Secretary of State. There are the proposals to make everyone pay 20 per cent. of their rates, to attack people's entitlement to interest payments on their mortgages. These are the Secretary of State's own bright ideas. On pensions, in particular, the review body did not go as far as the Secretary of State wished, although he has sought consistently and skilfully to obscure the fact. He has heavily implied—never actually said—that the pensions proposals before the House stem from new facts which emerged in the course of the review, not known when the scheme was drawn up in 1975. It is perhaps a little unfortunate for the Secretary of State that those who serve on his reviews, and the Government Actuary, who all have their personal and professional reputations to consider, so speedily dissociated themselves from the proposals he put forward, if not in their name, certainly under the cover of their participation.

The Secretary of State tells us what a wonderful deal his personal pensions are although, when he issued the consultative document, everybody said what a rotten idea they were and how much worse they were than the state earnings-related pension scheme. If his personal pensions proposals are beneficial and provide such wonderful pensions, why is it that one of the few explicit parts of the Bill is that in which the Goverment make it plain that they will deem that somebody has a certain pension entitlement for a certain level of contributions, irrespective of whether the person is actually getting the money, and that they will base the topping up payments on deeming that that money is received? The Secretary of State must expect that some people at least will get less money than they expected for him to have bothered to write that into the Bill.

The Secretary of State keeps talking about people having a pension of their own as if a pension by any name is valued by some means other than the amount that it will buy. I have this vision—I think it must be the Secretary of State's vision—of some outraged pensioners of the future coming to his successor, claiming that they cannot afford to eat and being told, "At least your pension is your own". I do not think that it will go down very well. Anybody who takes out a personal pension will get substantially less value for money because the administrative cost of such schemes is about three times that of the state scheme and substantially more than that of good occupational pensions.

There are many unanswered questions about personal pensions, not least among them the question of how such a policy will be treated in assessing capital. If somebody is unfortunate enough to become unemployed, how will it be assessed and set against the benefit and what will happen to somebody who is taking out a personal pension but loses his job and may not be able to keep up the premiums? It seems to me that there is a serious risk that such a person, if forced to surrender the policy, may lose not only the advantage of earnings of those years in work, which will be lost in the SERPS scheme that the Secretary of State promises to modify, but also the possibility of having an extra pension entitlement because of the way in which that pension entitlement is to be secured.

As to the income support scheme, many hon. Members have drawn attention to its disadvantages. I must say a little more about the way in which the Government are treating the unemployed in the income support scheme. At a time when everybody agrees, even the Government, that the unemployed in justice should get the long-term rate of supplementary benefit as it is now, it is outrageous and indefensible to put forward in the Bill proposals that bring them not even to that rate, proposals which, when one includes the effect of the abolition of single payments, the intention to make people pay 20 per cent. of their rates and the proposals on mortgages, almost certainly mean that the Government, who claim that they cannot do anything to help the unemployed find work, are to reduce their standard of living even below what it is today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) drew attention to the potentially enormous losses of the most severely disabled, in some cases up to as much a £50 a week in terms of standard of living, and for those newly disabled it will be in cash terms. In other parts of the Bill, as the Spastics Society has pointed out, it is the disabled who are likely to lose most from the abolition of reduced rate contributions. It is precisely they who are

likely to be trying to find work to enable them to have some independence and income of their own, although they are not able to sustain that work over long periods.

The proposals on family credit have been so effectively demolished by so many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), that it hardly needs me to dwell on them further.

The losses on houses benefit will be enormous. For many pensioner couples it will be something like £3 to £5 a week and for the young perhaps up to £12 a week when the combination of their benefits is calculated. The young, whether students or others, will be among the major sufferers from the Bill. One is almost driven to conclude that the Government are deliberately penalising the young when one considers the range of measures that strike at them. They and their parents must wonder in what type of dream world the Government live when they realise that 24 and 25-year-olds are expected to live at home and to be heavily dependent upon their parents. The Government seems to imagine that by forcing them into that position they are contributing to family solidarity.

The most iniquitous proposal, apart from that relating to the level of benefits for the unemployed, is the social fund. It is the worst proposal any Secretary of State has come up with for 50 years. When I listen to or read Ministers' words on that proposal, I can barely believe what they are saying, let alone imagine that they believe it.

On 22 January, the Secretary of State told the Select Committee that he was worried about the disabled, the network of additional requirements and the detailed and intrusive questioning through which people might have to go to prove that they were entitled to additional benefits. He believes that it will be better to do that through the mechanism of the social fund. How does he imagine that the social fund will work if it is not through detailed and intrusive questioning? That is what it is all about. It is hardly credible that the Secretary of State should defend his proposals upon the grounds on which they should be attacked.

The social fund will be a nightmare for the civil servants who have to try to administer it and a nightmare of desperation for claimants—all of proven need—who realise that staff in local offices will have to choose to whom they can make payments because they will not have the money to recompense them all. We are back to the days of charity and the denial of payment as of right.

It is all the more appalling that it is on the social fund that the rights of independent appeal are, in effect, completely to vanish. Many hon. Members have referred to the work of the Council on Tribunals. I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that he will reconsider the proposal. I do not know why he had to wait until tonight to say that because the council made it clear in its report that it has been pressing him to look at the proposal for weeks. We shall be pressing him on the point.

Parliament and the indpendent bodies that it has set up to scrutinise social security legislation will lose their powers under the Bill. There are at least 12 clauses—it has been claimed that there are 24 different areas—in which the Bill falls back on regulations which, as all hon. Members will be aware, come before the House for a decision but cannot be amended. They must be passed or rejected as a whole. The Government's track record on regulations is abysmal. Time and time again they have closed their ears to warnings, even about the legality of regulations, and time and time again they have been proven to be wrong.

I fear that the Government are putting everything into regulation because they do not know how they will carry out the proposals contained in the Bill. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said that he had counted the number of times in the Select Committee that the Secretary of State said that the Government had not decided what to do about that or had not made up their mind what to do about the other. A major proposal, such as statutory maternity pay, which the Government told us would be included in the legislation, is not in the Bill. The Bill was only recently published and the Government are already adding new clauses because they did not have them drafted in time.

What is more, the Government have not finished tabling the regulations from last year's social security measure which was, in its way, comparatively minor. I am told that one of the most fundamental sets of regulations on disclosure of information will not be available until Easter. With such a track record, how can this House or another place put the powers that the Secretary of State seeks into the hands of so incompetent an Administration?

The hon. Member for Kensington, in a brave speech, said that the proposals would be put to the country in the general election. Wisely, he advised the Secretary of State to withdraw the Bill.

I warn the Secretary of State that the Opposition intend to take the campaign against the Bill into every constituency. Our aim is to force the Government, as he has been advised, to withdraw a Bill which clearly is not ready to be presented to the House. If he will not do that, we give him fair warning that his party and his Government will deserve to end up where it will end up —in the wilderness, for generations.

9.44 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): This has been a constructive debate on social security. For most of the time, it has been conducted in a good natured way. I shall try to respond to the debate in a comparable way, picking up as many points as possible. I should like to touch briefly on some of the broader points raised by hon. Members.

I think that I speak for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in saying that nothing would please us more than to believe that it was possible to tackle on the basis of consensus the problems of the social security system. However, when confronted by an Opposition who appear to regard with equanimity the possibility of 27 per cent. combined national insurance contributions, and who wish apparently to have a national investment board of some kind to control and direct the activities of pension funds and to control forcibly some of those investments by repatriating some of them from abroad, significantly damaging the pension entitlements built up in those funds, I beg leave to doubt the room for consensus. If consensus is to be a description of a position in which those who will not face up to reality have a veto on tackling problems for ever, I do not think that any responsible party or Government could adopt that position.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) will understand me when, against that background, I say that the suggested approach of a Royal Commission seems to suffer from some of the same

[Mr. Tony Newton]

disadvantages. Unless it were able to produce results or was based on consensus, one would have the same problem of deferring action on difficult problems. Although there were not many matters on which I agreed with Sir Harold Wilson, I am inclined to think that there was some force in his comment about Royal Commissions taking minutes and wasting years.

Against the background of our social security problems, I think that there is a risk of our ending up after five years with a report that was out of date before it was even produced, and that no serious action could be taken until the middle of the next decade at the earliest. I do not believe that the problems are of a nature that permits that sort of delay.

Mr. Pym: That is only one possibility. There must be alternatives. To say that there is no way forward is possibly an error. We must find a way that will help create that broad sense of agreement which is a fundamental necessity from the point of view of our nation and for the recipients of the benefits we are trying to provide.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend seems to be more optimistic than I am about the prospect of producing such a process confronted by the present Opposition Front Bench or, indeed, any Opposition that we are likely to have. However, may I say something which I hope he will feel responds in a different way to one of the themes of his speech for which I and my right hon. Friend have great sympathy — the reference to the desirability of tax benefit integration, or greater co-ordination, which has come up time and again in the debate.

Looking at the British tax system, which was the subject in which I took most interest during my first five years in the House, and the British social security system, with which I have sometimes been almost too closely involved as a Minister in this Department for nearly four years, I have concluded that, because of their present complexities, both systems will require significant simplification before it will be possible to move forward. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Conservative predecessors have already taken significant steps in simplifying some aspects of the tax system. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will put forward proposals carrying that process forward when he produces his Green Paper.

The proposals in the White Paper mark a massive step forward in simplifying the social security system in a form in which it would be far more realistic than at any time in the past generation to begin to think more constructively and positively about the type of integration people want. I can make no promises about the way in which that process will be carried forward. However, I believe that the Bill provides a better basis from which to move towards those objectives.

In one respect, the Bill marks a significant step towards closer co-ordination—the family credit proposals. The proposal is to pay through the pay packet in a way that will appear to the majority of beneficiaries as a direct offset to their tax and national insurance contributions. Those hon. Members who pay lip service—I do not include my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East in this—to the idea of tax benefit integration and go on to denounce the family credit proposals because they involve payments through the pay packet appear to be trying to have their cake and eat it in the biggest possible way. Perhaps those hon. Members mean more than lip service.

Mr. Favell: Has there been any progress towards persuading the Inland Revenue, rather than the hard-pressed Department of Health and Social Security, to administer the family credit system?

Mr. Newton: Further development in either department is not something on which I would wish to speculate in advance of any further publication by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. We have had agreement on the proposal that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put forward in the White Paper. That is a helpful move in the right direction.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Although women do not want just to have their cake and eat it, they feel strongly that family allowances should be paid to the woman. Often that is the only source of income for women in many levels of the social strata. Women will be hard hit if the family allowance is frozen and payments are made to the husband. I assure my hon. Friend that women feel strongly about this.

Mr. Newton: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I do not think that she was present during my brief exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) when I made it absolutely clear, as do the White Paper and the Green Paper before it, that child benefit will continue to be paid to the mother.

Another point that is relevant, although not conclusive, concerns family income supplement. About 40 per cent. of those benefiting from family income supplement—a significant proportion of those who will benefit from family credit—are single parents. The argument about whether the money is given in the pay packet or in any other way is irrelevant to the question of who gets the money. In practice, instead of having to collect payments from two different sources in an inconvenient way, many single parents—the majority are likely to be women—will receive payment through the pay packet in an undoubtedly more convenient and sensible way.

It is odd that there is such an astonishing fuss about the proposal to pay family credit through the pay packet on the ground that mothers are disadvantaged or their interests are not properly taken into account. I made this point the other day to the Select Committee on Social Services. So far as I am aware, at no stage in the history of social security has anyone come forward with a proposal to pay supplementary benefit scale rates for children to the mother instead of to the father, who is normally the claimant. In other words, we appear to be confronted with a proposition where what has been acceptable throughout the years in relation to child scale rates payable for children is unacceptable when applied to low-paid families in work. That is logical nonsense. *[Interruption.]* If I understood the sedentary intervention of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), he said that the supplementary benefit payment goes to both parents. The fact is that one of them is the claimant and all the payments go to him or her. In most cases it will be the man. He receives the child scale rate for children as part of his total payment of benefit. I do not understand why what is appropriate for those who by definition are unemployed, and probably the poorest of all, becomes totally unacceptable concerning low-paid families in work.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West made many comments on pensions. I want to make one simple point. The Government's case is not that it is inconceivable that the present arrangements for SERPS could not be afforded on certain optimistic assumptions. Our proposition is that it is not responsible to make promises for a generation ahead when we cannot be certain that that generation will be able to fulfil them. That is not because of the burden we might be imposing on people who might not be able to sustain it, but because it is not right to make promises to pensioners about what they will be paid and risk not being able to pay it when the time comes. That is the point which the hon. Member for Oldham, West persistently refuses to face.

In the statistical contortions with which the hon. Gentleman sought to defend the responsibility of the present SERPS system he seemed to miss a point of which I hope he will take cognisance. His argument was that, on rather more optimistic assumptions in respect of, for example, real earnings growth than those contained in the Government Actuary's report, there would be no problem or that there would not be enough of a problem to worry about.

On the record of the previous Labour Government for real earnings growth, all the figures in the Government Actuary's report would be worse than those in it already. In other words, given the present Labour party policy and the previous Labour Government's record, we would have a bigger problem than the one we foresee. That is hardly surprising because the previous Labour Government were not even able to stick to the promises they made to existing pensioners, let alone those for future generations.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West was a member of the Government who fiddled the uprating changes in 1976-77 in a way that deprived pensioners of about £1 billion at current prices because they changed the basis of the uprating.

Mr. Meacher: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that what counts is the increased value of the pension over a six-year period? Over the six years of the Labour Government there was a 20 per cent. increase and over the past six years of Tory Government the increase has been about 3 or 4 per cent.

Mr. Newton: What also counts is whether the Government fulfil their commitments. The Labour Government manifestly did not fulfil the commitments they made to pensioners in 1976-77 and there is no basis on which the hon. Gentleman could pretend that they did.

I am afraid that I do not have time to answer all the points that have been made during the debate. The Opposition, throughout this review and in other discussions on social policy over the past four or five years, have persistently talked as if the welfare state had been established whole, entire and pure some 40 years ago and is to be preserved as some sort of ancient monument regardless of changes in society, changing needs and the purposes it seeks to meet. We are seeking to adapt it to meet modern needs, and that is what the Bill will help to achieve.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 24, Noes 276.

Division No. 52] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Heffer, Eric S.
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Edward
Meadowcroft, Michael
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. David Alton.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth

Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holland, Sir Philip (Gedling)
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Howell, Rt Hon D. (G'ldford)
Howell, Ralph (Norfolk, N)
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger (B'ham N'field)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lewis, Sir Kenneth (Stamf'd)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew (Berkshire)
MacKay, John (Argyll & Bute)
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. (N'bury)
McNair-Wilson, P. (New F'st)
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Mills, Iain (Meriden)
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David (Hants NW)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Hon C. (Devizes)
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard (Herts SW)
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher (Bath)
Patten, J. (Oxf W & Abgdn)
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles (Pudsey)
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Taylor, John (Solihull)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald (Calder V)
Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Thorne, Neil (Ilford S)
Thumham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill (T'side N)
Walker, Rt Hon P. (W'cester)
Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 41 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 201.

Division No. 53] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert (South Ribble)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. (Brighton K'to'n)
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thpes)
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton N)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. (W'ton S)
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. (Plym'th S'n)
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter (Angus East)
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George (Reigate)
Gardner, Sir Edward (Fylde)
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter (Portsm th N)
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. (Epsom)
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. (High Peak)
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holland, Sir Philip (Gedling)
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Howell, Rt Hon D. (G'ldford)
Howell, Ralph (Norfolk, N)
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick

Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'fermline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W.W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*

Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Social Security Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable by way of the following—
(i) income support;
(ii) family credit;
(iii) rate rebate subsidy;
(iv) rent rebate subsidy;
(v) rent allowance subsidy;

(b) payments by the Secretary of State into the social fund;

(c) any sum payable under the Act to a person whose entitlement to the sum depends on his being entitled or treated as entitled to a qualifying benefit payable out of money provided by Parliament;

(d) payments by way of adjustment;

(e) any sums falling to be paid by the Secretary of State under or by virtue of the Act by way of travelling expenses;

(f) any other expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the Act; and

(g) any expenses of the Lord Chancellor attributable to the Act; and

(h) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act;

(2) the charging on and payment out of the Consolidate Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums to be charged on and paid out of that Fund under any other Act;

(3) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund;

and in this Resolution—

(a) 'Act', when not used in relation to any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, includes an Act of the Parliament of Northern Ireland; and

(b) other expressions shall be construed in accordance with any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I hope that the House will not pass the money resolution. During the Second Reading debate, several hon. Members expressed great anxiety about the provisions of the Social Security Bill. The alliance, other Opposition Members and, it would seem, some Conservative Members, have expressed great anxiety about the Bill. We would not be happy to pass the money resolution.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) pointed out earlier, we were sceptical from the outset, as were many hon. Members, about the introduction of a Bill with the stipulation of nil revenue implications. Now that we see how the Government propose to implement that stipulation and straitjacketing, our concern is justified. The lack of figures, the lack of clarification and the unwillingness of the Government to provide suitable clarification and explanatory figures of what is envisaged makes it impossible for the Bill to be properly scrutinised. What is available and open to analysis gives rise to great anxiety. We have already said that the reform of pensions policy cannot command broad support because of the simple fact —dwelt on by the Minister at some length in his speech —that the Government are again in danger of making pensions provision a party political football.

I am sorry that the Minister and the Secretary of State did not pay more heed to the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) when he spoke with great authority about the need for consensus in these matters. Consensus is not, as the Minister and his hon.

Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) tried to make out, a dirty term. Consensus does not imply that the major problems will be avoided or removed. We do not suggest that for one moment. On the contrary, in a crucial area such as pensions, which will stretch into the next century, we need a little less party political posturing from all quarters and more agreement in the name of the common good.

The alliance have been the only parties to stress that during the debate this year. It is sad that the Government have not seen fit to enter into such a constructive discussion, which could have led to a much securer basis for legislation than the one they have now. As my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire made clear, we regret the fact that the savings which the Government will make through their proposed restructuring of the state earnings-related pension scheme will not be used, at least in part, to increase the basic pension. There can be no doubt, despite the protestations of the Minister, from our constituency surgeries that, under the Government's economic policies, pensioners have a great deal to complain about and suffer a great deal of hardship. It is sad that the Government will not give more attention to their position.

The cuts in housing benefit which the Government are marking out in their review of social security, and especially the extraordinary provision that there should be a contribution of 20 per cent. towards rates bills, are discriminatory and unjust. It is astonishing to remember that, earlier today, the Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement on rating reform and quoted as one of the three fundamental weaknesses in the present arrangements,

"the unfair burden on householders of domestic rates."

He went on at some length in the rest of the statement and in answer to questions to speak about the anomalies and the injustices. If the Government believe the rating system to be so unsatisfactory and unfair, why do they now, in what is supposed to be a far-reaching and long-term review of social security, draw into the rating net many of those least able to contribute towards those rates? That makes nonsense of the argument in favour of simplification and fairness which the Government have laboured.

The alliance cannot support the cash-limited social fund, for which approval is sought in this money resolution. The Secretary of State was extremely vague in his opening speech this afternoon when questioned on this matter. He seems anxious to ignore the evidence contained in the special report of the Council on Tribunals. It is worth reading into the record what that council said about the proposal:

"The Council on Tribunals believe this proposal to be misconceived. It would abolish a right of independent appeal which has existed for over 50 years."

If the Government are intent on having some local accountability in the decision-making process for the grants and loans made under the social fund, it is incumbent on the Secretary of State to come clean with the House as to what he has in mind. It was evident from his statement that he is willing to have a system that pays lip service to the idea of an appeal against an unfair or unjust decision, but that he will not have something which affords the claimant—who until now has operated on the basis of a right to appeal, as much as a right to claim benefit—the right to an appeal which has been enshrined in law for many years, as the report made clear, and that he is unwilling to consider an effective alternative appeal mechanism.

There must be a greater move towards integration of the tax and benefits system. The Secretary of State said that the present take-up of FIS was about 50 per cent. and hoped that the equivalent system under the new scheme would have a take-up of 60 per cent. how can he be confident that that rate of take-up will be achieved? Further integration of tax and benefits would be the most effective way to increase the level of take-up in the whole benefits system. For that reason, and to achieve simplicity and fairness, the alliance supports that integration.

For those reasons, we cannot support the money resolution. We believe that its defeat would add support to our demand for a reform of the social security system, which at present is unjust and ill-conceived and will not carry the all-party support that is essential, as hon. Members in all parts of the House pointed out in the earlier debate.

10.37 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Considering the Government majority in the last Division, it is wishful thinking on the part of alliance Members to imagine that the money resolution will not be approved. Although I did not support the measure on Second Reading, I urge hon. members to support the money resolution.

When opening the debate, the Secretary of State said that, when replying, the Minister of State would deal with the issue of income support. I appreciate that, because the House was anxious that as many hon. Members as possible should take part, the Minister did not have time to deal with that issue.

While defending the family credit scheme and the supplementary benefit arrangements, the Minister said, in a sensitive and understanding way, that child credit went to the poorest of the unemployed. I was interested to hear his remarks on that subject because I am deeply concerned about the impact that the Bill will have on the unemployed and, in particular, on the long-term unemployed.

This issue has been raised by my hon. Friends and I consistently—through well-supported early-day motions and in the evidence that we gave to my right hon. Friend's review—and I remain disappointed about the way in which the long-term unemployed will be treated. There is no doubt that those who have been without work for a long time require additional benefit. Indeed, the Government recognised that when they allocated long-term supplementary benefit to the over-60s in return for the declaration that they were no longer seeking employment. The Government and Opposition have for long agreed the principle of paying supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed; it has simply been a question of when the cash should be provided.

For the families of the unemployed, the premium system is likely to be of greater benefit than the present system. But as about 15 per cent. of families come within the ambit of the long-term unemployed, about 85 per cent. of families will be substantially worse off unless a premium is introduced that recognises that when someone has been out of work for 12 months or longer, additional support should be provided.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will examine the position as it affects those people, otherwise during the next election campaign, when I expect unemployment to

[Mr. Jim Lester]

be higher rather than lower, the public will raise that as a major issue with hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members.

If no special premium is intended or no one is seeking a special premium, one needs to look at the alternative. The alternative put forward by my right hon. Friend is the social fund. I am worried about the way the social fund is likely to operate for the long-term unemployed. One can imagine not only a variation in attitude from place to place where problems may be different, say from south Wales to the south-east of England, but a variation from one individual to another. It is difficult for any social security officer to make a judgment on the social requirement of a long-term unemployed person, particularly when the intention of the social fund is to replace grants by loans repayable out of a claimant's weekly benefit.

If that is the way in which the social fund is to operate, not only will we disadvantage the long-term unemployed by offering no premium, but we will also squeeze their weekly rate by the repayment of grants for the necessary things that a person needs for himself and his family when he has been unemployed for more than a year. In addition, the proposal to charge 20 per cent. rates adds still further to the squeeze on an already limited income. None of us who have taken any interest in this subject have any doubt that the unemployed are the poorest of all. I have a file of considerable dimensions full of letters from people who have written to me from all over the country telling me how difficult is their situation.

One of the things that one might have welcomed is the earnings rule, because it would make the money resolution less onerous if people were able to earn a certain amount while unemployed. The Bill proposes a certain relaxation of the earnings rule in that anyone who has been unemployed for two years is able to disregard £15 of what he earns. As the normal definition of long-term unemployment is to be out of work for a year, it seems odd that one has to be out of work for two years before one is allowed to earn £15 to help pay for the vital needs of oneself and one's family. I hope that my hon. Friend will look at that and bring it into line.

The combination of these things also includes the impact of SERPS on someone who suffers from unemployment, because the abolition of the 20 best years rule will hit anyone who is unemployed for a long time and for whom there is no alternative form of protection against a broken work record. No alternative protection is proposed.

I am teasing out from the Bill its overall impact on the long-term unemployed. One must highlight the plight of those people and that is why I speak on this money resolution. I hope my hon. Friend will consider in stage, and certainly on Report, the points I have made. Without that consideration, for a lot of other reasons that other hon. Members have talked about, this Bill will not be seen as a major reform, but as a way in which we have damaged and been less than fair to those less fortunate people in our society.

10.44pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I make no apology for detaining the House, because if the Government had not chosen to make a statement before the Second Reading debate, I suspect that all hon. Members who wanted to speak on the money resolution could have spoken on the second Reading. It seems odd that a Government who are so proud of their reform proposals for social security, only a few months ago felt it necessary to upstage this debate by making their announcement on the rates. I suspect that the Government are already beginning to realise that the less that is said publicly about the Bill the better.

I have three main points to make. The first is a general one, in that it seems that the only reason for the Government bringing this measure forward is that they have a totally pessimistic view of our future economy.

If the Government were investing in the needs of the country, we should not have to question whether we could afford to pay for SERPS. Clearly we should be able to pay for it. If the Government were doing anything to create jobs and get people back to work, the amount that had to be paid out in benefits would be considerably reduced and there would be sufficient money to pay decent benefits to those in need of them. It is a measure of the Government's lack of confidence in themselves that they have felt it necessary to bring the measure forward.

My main objection to the money resolution centres on the way in which the Bill further extends the Government's powers to do things by regulation and denies the House the opportunity to scrutinise most of the measures. There is hardly a page in the Bill on which there are not powers to make regulations. For example, in clause 41(1), paragraphs *(a)* to *(u)* set out over two pages the regulations which may be made.

When I intervened earlier, the Minister claimed that there would be fewer regulations because of the Bill. That may be so, but they will tend to have wider powers, so there will be longer individual sets of regulations, which means that the House will have even less time to scrutinise them in the normal one and a half hours.

The worst problem with regulations is that we do not get an opportunity to move amendments. The Department has great difficulty in presenting regulations accurately. I do not blame the officials, because they have to produce a tremendous number of them, but they get about one a week wrong. Sometimes the mistakes are found by the courts, sometimes by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and just occasionally by the officials themselves.

Some people assume that the Department gets regulations wrong just in wildly publicised cases, but I shall give just one example from today's proceedings of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments about which the Department wrote:

> "It is conceded that there is no authority to delegate the power of determination to the scheme managers and trustees, and the Department proposes therefore to make an amending regulation".

That is the pattern that we get fairly consistently from the Department.

The House should consider the way in which it scrutinises tax and social security measures. I can see no logic in the fact that we have developed two differing sets of procedures. For taxation measures we have the Budget and the Finance Bill once a year, so hon. Members have a very good opportunity on the Floor of the House and in Committee to scrutinise the legislation, to put down amendments and to force the Government to justify each clause and, if necessary, each subsection.

For social security measures, instead of having one Bill each year, with an opportunity to table amendments, we are presented with many regulations which we cannot amend. Ministers are given amazing powers. Any Minister who has been in the DHSS, not just under this Government but under the Labour Government, may have thought when he wanted to do something that he would have to get into the legislative queue. I suspect that Ministers have been amazed when told by civil servants that, if certain powers are used in a different way, they can do what they want. So Ministers have got into the habit of using powers under regulations to do things that people never expected them to do.

If the Government want to integrate the social security system and the tax system, the first thing they should do is to examine the procedures of the House and bring social security legislation into line with tax proposals, so making sure that the House has an opportunity to amend each proposal, rather than putting them into a continuing series of regulations.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Anthony Newton): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I say this with some diffidence, since my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has come in. I wonder what comment the hon. Gentleman has to make about the extent to which the Revenue operates under things that never come before Parliament at all — namely, an extensive range of extra-statutory concessions.

Mr. Bennett: I accept the argument about extra-statutory concessions, but I suggest that they go nothing like as far as the regulating powers that the Government make. It is perhaps a little worrying that the Minister has apparently now learnt from the lessons of extra-statutory regulations, because he talks in the measure of directives. Again, I am sure that the Committee will want to spend a lot of time scrutinising how the directives mentioned in the Bill are to be subjected to parliamentary approval. It may well be that Ministers would like to get away from parliamentary scrutiny, but I believe very strongly that the House ought to be pressing hard for full scrutiny of all these proposals, that Ministers should not be allowed to put more and more into regulations and prevent debate.

This money resolution affects students, particularly in the way in which the Government have, I believe, cheated students. This time last year, there were to be two reviews —the social security review and the review of student financial support. Eventually the government announced that they wanted to remove students from the social security system. Instead of announcing the results of their student grants inquiry and suggesting that they would make good the money that students would lose by cuts in social security, the Government simply abandoned the review of student financial support.

So the students have found that their income from social security is being taken away, without there being a proper review of student grants. We know that, in the short term, they will lose the right to claim housing benefit during the short vacations and for halls of residence during term time. That will be a considerable loss to many students, faced already with the possibility that their grants will rise by only 2 per cent. and with a real-term loss of grant of about 20 per cent. since 1979. In the short term therefore, students will suffer real and considerable hardship.

In addition, proposed in the Bill and left out of the money resolution is the long-term question of money for students. The Government have made it clear that they want to take students out of the social security system, a laudable proposal, in my view, provided that the Government come up with adequate finance to replace the money that students will lose. But the Government have produced no explanation of where the money will come from and, in particular, have not addressed themselves to the problem that housing costs vary widely across the country.

I suggest that Government ought immediately to reinstitute their inquiry into student financial support. Only when they bring those proposals forward will they be justified in starting to take student finance out of social security. Until they do so, there will be great bitterness among students. It is quite clear that very many students already suffer considerable worry and anxiety during term time about their financial position. We have the absurd situation of students taking jobs in the local community, to the detriment of their studies, and forcing others to claim benefits. Many students are in conflict with their parents over finance, yet if their proposals go through, the Government expect students to be supported by their parents. I hope that the Minister will give a clear directive to social services departments for those students who have been in care, to make certain that the local authority puts up extra money.

Until the Government can bring forward adequate alternatives for students, they should take these proposals away and keep students within the social security system. Until the Government can face up to giving the House adequate powers of scrutiny over social security regulations, again they should take the Bill away. Lastly, the Bill should be taken away because I am sure that a decent Government could run this country effectively enough to give us all decent pensions and decent benefits.

10.54 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I oppose this money resolution because it constitutes yet another nail in the coffin of the national insurance fund. The national insurance fund is not actually mentioned any where in it; but it ought to be at the core of it.

I said on Second Reading that the Government are still paying lip service to the contributory principle, but their adherence to it is not based on logic or on any recognisable financial maxim, and it does not carry them even as far as the money resolution on this major Bill. That is a significant error, and it is the reason why the House should reject the resolution.

Of course, the national insurance fund at the outset was not financially sound. While it was based on flat-rate individual contributions, it had also to rely on a subsidy from the Consolidated Fund; and even then it could not meet its outgoings. But we found the solution to that problem some 10 years or more ago when we put contributions to national insurance on an earnings-related basis. That provided the solution, but it has not been followed up.

The national insurance fund could and should be the source of finance for all the benefits listed in the resolution, including the social fund, drawing its resources from a tax at a flat rate not on every worker but on every pound of income. Such a tax would be in fact a personal contribution, resting directly on personal capacity to pay.

If social benefits were financed in that way, it would constitute a growing-up of the whole conception of

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

national insurance based on the contributory principle as a separate self-balancing system independent of the Consolidated Fund. We would not be treating the Consolidated Fund as we do now, and are doing in this resolution, as a glorious bran tub out of which benefits can be pulled simply by the application of political pressure. We would instead be able to bring the interests of contributors and the requirements of beneficiaries to a state of equilibrium based on the principle of,

"From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need."

There is nothing wrong in that slogan as the basis of a closed self-balancing contributory system soundly financed.

The Government in this Bill and in this resolution are missing an opportunity because they have not given sufficient study to the principles underlying the redistribution of income in a democratic society.

I hope that the House will reject the resolution.

10.57 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I, too, strongly oppose the money resolution which, indeed, of necessity is vague and, in the case of the Bill, well might it be so. The one feature throughout the debate on the Government plan for social security has been their inability accurately to predict how much it will cost or, more properly, how much it will cost claimants throughout the country for the social security legislation to be introduced. The most accurate prediction I have heard is that £700 million will be taken out of the pockets of the poorest people. For the Secretary of State to claim, as he has on numerous occasions, although not so much today, that the country cannot afford a decent social security system any more than it can afford a decent pensions system is arrant nonsense.

What we need is a determination to eliminate poverty. That is what the debate ought to be about, not a systematic attack on the welfare state, which is what the Bill and the money resolution represent.

The Policy Studies Institute produced an analysis of the Government's plan entitled "Selective Social Security" in which it quoted from a DHSS-sponsored survey in 1982 on the indicators of hardship by type of family. Taking first couples with children, the money of 56 per cent. of claimants ran out most weeks. Seventy per cent. of them had periods of real anxiety, 63 per cent. lacked a complete standard set of clothing and, when interviewed, 56 per cent. were in debt. Perhaps the Minister will say whether any of his proposals do anything to alleviate such problems and anxieties. I suspect that probably they do not.

The real intention behind the resolution and the Bill is to save public money at the expense of the poorest people, not to eliminate poverty as it should be. Politically, one may say that the Government are incredibly stupid or shortsighted, or that they simply do not care about the poorest people living in inner city areas.

In my constituency there are a number of social security offices. The two largest are based at Archway tower covering the Finsbury Park and Highgate areas. Jointly there are 38,000 claimants in those two offices. Most of them will suffer from the Government's proposals. Many more people will be forced to pay 20 per cent. of the rates which are high in London due to Government cuts in rate support grant and rate capping. The number of people affected in many of our inner city areas is about one third to one half of the population of those areas. That is the magnitude of the Government's attack on social security.

There are a number of matters to which I wish to refer which I believe come within the ambit of the money resolution. The first relates to income support. The childless long-term unemployed are excluded from income support. The loss of additional requirements means additional hardships for them with regard to heating and special diets.

There is a serious discrimination against the functionally disabled. I do not think that the Secretary of State addressed himself to that issue during his introduction of the Bill or in any of his numerous publications in support of the proposal. I am worried about the further deterioration which arises from the family credit scheme. A notional sum is included to replace free school meals. As a result, those currently eligible, whilst in receipt of family income supplement, will no longer benefit from free school meals. A survey of charges shows that they vary from £1·75 to £4·75 per week. At current rates, a £3 per week notional allowance would result in the loss of notional income of £1·75 per week per child in areas covered by those authorities with the highest meal charges. It would mean a loss for families in 61 of the 102 authorities surveyed. Moreover, it has been estimated that children in more than 100,000 families would lose the benefit of free or subsidised meals.

The effect of the legislation goes in many directions. It is not just that the children will go without school meals; the, school meals workers whose jobs depend on the number of children requiring school meals will lose their jobs. That is one reason why the National Union of Public Employees, the union that sponsors me in the House, is joining many other organisations in opposing this legislation.

The 20 per cent. of rates that will be charged to those in receipt of housing benefit is another problem. We are aware that the rates system is unfair. It is made much more unfair by the Government's rate-capping policy. Today's document does not hold out any hope for the people who live in areas that need the most public expenditure. They will have an added burden. I hope that we can consider these matters in the detail that they deserve in Committee.

I wish finally to mention the social fund and the way in which it will operate. The Secretary of State was unclear as to how the social fund will operate. He said that it will not be means-tested and that local offices will have discretion. If there is to be discretion over a means-tested and cash-limited fund, how on earth will it operate if it is to mean anything? The Secretary of State should be clear about the fund. It is designed to create an intimidatory atmosphere in which claimants will not claim because they will be hauled before the local manager who will decide whether they are fit to claim benefit.

I do not know about other Members, but my blood ran cold when the Secretary of State said that he would pursue those people who could not pay for funerals as a charge against the estate. We are means testing the dead when they are in the ground. It is a most disgraceful proposal.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, according to the Government's figures, in London there is about £100 million of benefit unclaimed every year? Would it not be better for the Government to

spend time and effort trying to raise the level of awareness of those who are entitled to claim rather than to attack those who are claiming?

Mr. Corbyn: Indeed, the GLC and other councils have done a great deal of work in getting people to claim in full the benefits to which they are entitled. Instead of receiving praise from the Government for telling people of their rights, they are told that they cannot do that and are threatened with legal action for trying to do it.

The Bill is, in many ways, a step backwards from all the legislation passed since 1945. It is being strongly opposed by pensioners' organisations, claimants' groups, trade unions and tenants' associations. Thousands of people who are directly affected are well aware of what is going on and will join in opposing the Bill. That opposition will continue and will grow.

In opposing the Bill, I do not defend the existing system, because I do not defend a system that makes it complicated for people to claim their benefits, where there are enormous queues, and there are problems of lost files, under-staffing and under-payment of staff in offices. I look forward to a social security system that is designed to eliminate poverty, not to return us to the era of the poor law and the means test, which is what the Bill is about.

The alliance parties call for an all-party consensus on this matter. There can be no all-party consensus because the Conservative party and now the alliance are determined to push the legislation through to make life worse for the poorest people, ignoring the problems of poverty, instead of promoting a campaign to eliminate it. Self-satisfied Members could walk for 20 minutes and see people sleeping rough in Waterloo station, and other stations. That is the degree of poverty and deprivation in London.

The Bill does nothing to eliminate poverty. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are stirring rather nervously now. They should go to Waterloo station and see the poor people who are sleeping there. They should see the degradation that has been forced on them by the Government's policies.

We shall fight this Bill all the way in Committee, and the next Labour Government will remove it in its entirety.

11.6 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Allowing for an interesting difference in style, the first and last contributions to this debate were in a sense almost identical. The hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) both agreed that they did not like the present social security system or the Bill, and both agreed that they did not have the foggiest notion what to do instead.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye started by saying that he was going to vote against the Money Resolution because he wanted more clarification of figures and details. He then perpetrated some of the worse waffle about pensions policies that I have heard for a considerable time. That takes some nerve. I should like to ask either of the alliance representatives — the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) what they mean by the reference in the reasoned amendment to increasing the state retirement pension in the context of SERPS.

I have yet to be persuaded that any alliance Member, including the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), realises that the SERPS proposals do not immediately release a vast total of resources, because we are not tampering with people's immediate pension expectations. Hon. Members persistently talked about how modification of SERPS somehow unlocked a huge pot of gold that permitted an immediate increase in the basic retirement pension. Sooner or later, they will have to face up to precisely how they will pay for some of their commitments.

I refer hon. Members to paragraph 3.57 of the White Paper, and to the serious and important comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) about the earnings rule. Paragraph 3.40 makes it clear that the change in the earnings rule will be monitored and reconsidered in the light of experience of its operation. That reconsideration will embrace the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe made about reducing the qualifying period for one year.

I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) down the track of talking about students, in that whatever else I say is in order on this money resolution, I find it difficult to believe that students are, because there is no provision in the Bill relevant to any of the points on which the hon. Gentleman touched. However, we think that he failed to give sufficient weight to the housing benefit disregard which is contained in the package and to the grant increase following from some social security proposals that we have made.

The most important point to come up in the debate was that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, echoed in different language by a number of hon. Members, about the long-term unemployed. The evidence that simply being on benefit in the long term by itself creates additional needs is inconclusive. The need for long-term unemployed families with children is clear. That need is shown in all our surveys and is reflected in the family premium proposed in the income support scheme. That premium will produce average increases of £1·70 a week for lone parents and £1·40 a week for couples with children.

I ask all those hon. Members who have referred to single payments in this context to reflect on the extent to which large numbers of families do not gain any benefit from the single payments system. That must be borne in mind. On the latest information we have, about two thirds of families with children, including lone parents, receiving benefit at the time of the survey had not received a single payment in the previous 12 months. A system of single payments which is as random and uncertain in its effect as that, and from which large numbers of families evidently receive no benefit, is not a sensible substitute for a clear, proper set of weekly benefit rates and our proposals for an improvement in those regular weekly benefit rates for families with children. That is a much more sensible way of ensuring that people can get the help we want them to have. We shall continue to proceed down that track.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable by way of the following—

(i) income support;

(ii) family credit;

[Mr. Tony Newton]

(iii) rate rebate subsidy;
(iv) rent rebate subsidy;
(v) rent allowance subsidy;

(b) payments by the Secretary of State into the social fund;

(c) any sum payable under the Act to a person whose entitlement to the sum depends on his being entitled or treated as entitled to a qualifying benefit payable out of money provided by Parliament;

(d) payments by way of adjustment;

(e) any sums falling to be paid by the Secretary of State under or by virtue of the Act by way of travelling expenses;

(f) any other expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the Act; and

(g) any expenses of the Lord Chancellor attributable to the Act; and

(h) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act;

(2) the charging on and payment out of the Consolidate Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums to be charged on and paid out of that Fund under any other Act;

(3) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund;

and in this Resolution—

(a) 'Act', when not used in relation to any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, includes an Act of the Parliament of Northern Ireland; and

(b) other expressions shall be construed in accordance with any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill.

London Regional Transport

11.11 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

At various times, those of us who follow these matters have heard much extravagant language used about the prospects for public transport in London. Enormous progress is being made by the professional management of London Regional Transport. This is a truth which the GLC has a record of seeking to obscure by inflammatory scare stories. I quote but a few:

"Fares will increase by at least 25 per cent."

"The end of the line for at least 33 stations and 34 bus routes."

"Pensioners will lose their free passes."

To add insult to injury, this grossly misleading and expensive propaganda has been paid for at the expense of the ratepayer. The GLC has to date provided grants exceeding £1 million to its mouthpiece "Capital". I hope that our debate can be conducted in a more level-headed atmosphere.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new-found responsibilities. Has he had a chance yet to ascertain by how much fares have increased since London Regional Transport took over London Transport?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall be delighted to deal with that point if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop the point I am seeking to make. I intend to come to his point.

The objectives for London Regional Transport of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State were to secure a period of stability for LRT's management following the troubled years under the GLC. That stability is essential to permit LRT and the professionals who man it to root out inefficiencies in the organisation and provide a better service to the travelling public.

We asked LRT to reduce the unit costs of its business by at least 2·5 per cent. in real terms each year and to reduce its need for revenue support from the £190 million planned by the GLC to £95 million for 1987-88. To improve accountability, LRT was required to establish its underground and bus undertakings as separate limited companies and that was achieved in April 1985. We also gave the chairman the objective of establishing LRT's ancillary businesses as separately accountable units of management and of reducing costs by competitive tendering for services where that was a sensible course. We also made it clear that, while we wanted to ease the financial burden on London ratepayers and on the taxpayer by reducing the grant paid to LRT, that reduced total would support the programme of investment which was vitally needed to improve the quality of service to the customer and save costs in the longer term.

Services were to be matched to demand and fares to be kept broadly in line with prices generally and those charged on British Rail's commuter services in London. LRT was asked to pursue opportunities for better co-ordination of services with British Rail and to improve conditions for disabled travellers.

I greatly welcome, and I believe that the House welcomes, the excellent response which Dr. Bright and his board have made to this challenge. They pointed the way forward in their statement of strategy published in June 1985. Their aim is to secure better services and an improved passenger environment at no real additional cost to passengers by reducing costs in all areas. I commend their strategy statement to the House. Hon. Members have also seen LRT's annual business plan for 1986-87 which places on record its performance over this financial year. I hope that the House found that and the plans for next year as encouraging as I do.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister tell us how what he has just said accords with the view of the London regional passenger committee which, when commenting on bus services in the capital, said that demand has gone up while the frequency of service has gone down? The Minister will know that the costs have not gone down; they have gone up.

Mr. Mitchell: I will come to that point in a moment. However, matching the supply and demand in some areas means changing services, in some areas increasing them and in others reducing them but an efficient business is one which matches supply and demand as closely as possible. It would not run services for which there is not an adequate demand.

The business plan shows that next year LRT will need only £79 million in grant to support its revenues. That means that not only will it have bettered our target for subsidy by £16 million but also that it will do so a year early and after taking on responsibility from next April for funding dial-a-ride services for the disabled. That is an astonishingly good performance by LRT. Since it has been achieved—as I am about to describe—without massive increases in fares or cuts in services it represents an absolute vindication of our policies.

Cost-cutting is the key to LRT's success. Progress in securing greater efficiency in provision of services for the public has been excellent.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): My hon. Friend mentioned dial-a-ride. Will he give a much needed reassurance to my constituents in the London borough of Sutton that the arrangements which have been made will not disadvantage them in terms of local government finance?

Mr. Mitchell: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he is seeking.

The reduction in real unit costs of 2·5 per cent. per annum which we set on the basis of the then current business plans was, at the time, a tough target. In fact, unit costs will fall by 6·4 per cent. on the buses and by 3·7 per cent. on the underground this year in comparison with 1984-85; and are planned to fall by another 4·4 per cent. overall next year. That demonstrates the strength and imagination of LRT's managerial approach. It has secured more efficient operating and engineering practices and it is pursuing economy and efficiency in the provision of its ancillary services through contracting out and other means.

What about the level of services? I am happy to say that LRT plans to maintain at least the overall level of bus services, and to respond to the rising patronage that it is attracting on the underground by increasing services by 3 per cent. next year. I am sure that the hon. Member for

[Mr. Mitchell]

Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will join me in congratulating LRT particularly on increasing tube provision by 3 per cent. next year.

Mr. Tony Banks: Surely the Minister knows that since LRT has been responsible for London transport there has been a 3 million mile cut in bus routage. That is not an expansion.

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, it is important to match supply and demand. If there are services for which there is insufficient demand, it is right to reduce them, and if there are other services for which there is increased demand, it is right to increase the provision of services. That is exactly what LRT has been doing, which is why I can refer to increased provision for London tubes.

Last year Opposition Members made the most outrageous claims about loss of services for pensioners and cuts that would take place. I bitterly resent the way in which elderly people were needlessly frightened and used, in the worst sense of the word, by Opposition Members for their political purposes.

Investment will be increased. This year LRT expects to spend about £230 million on capital expenditure, towards which a grant of £193 million will be paid. Next year it plans to increase investment by £31 million, and our grant will also increase, by £23 million.

On the underground, the customer will see further modernisation of stations. Recently, I saw the proposals for Bank station, which are encouraging, and involve expenditure of £5 million. That will provide substantial improvements to a heavily used station. Passengers will also see work start on the new automatic ticketing system which will be in place by 1988. That will bring major benefits to passengers in terms of convenience and savings in cost.

The bus passenger will see the introduction of new vehicles better adapted for use by the disabled and designed to speed up services to passengers generally. I hope that that will be welcomed by hon. Members, as it will be by anybody who is unbiased and certainly by passengers. Further work is in progress to provide modern garages and efficient operational and engineering services, and to replace the present power generation for the underground by cheaper power from the national grid. So much for the sinister tales of London's public transport in decay.

With my full encouragement, LRT has been pursuing its statutory duty of seeking tenders for bus services which it considers appropriate for contracting out. London Buses Ltd., LRT's operating subsidiary, tenders for routes specified by LRT in competition with other operators. The first 12 routes were announced last April. The mileage operated increased overall by 2·5 per cent. and an annual saving of £750,000 million is expected on a subsidy bill of £4 million for these routes. The second tranche of 12 routes announced in December will see frequencies increased on three routes and maintained on the rest. Yet annual savings of £1 million are expected over those 12 routes. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will be on his feet in a moment to welcome that.

Of the twenty-four routes so far put to tender, nine were retained by London Buses Ltd., nine were gained by subsidiaries of the National Bus Company and the remaining six went to private operators. In this way the private sector is being given a fair chance, under competitive conditions, to enter the London bus market.

Like any other business, LRT has to adjust its prices in the light of inflation. But it has not been allowed the easy route to reduction in subsidy by real increases in fares. The 9 per cent. increase in January 1985 covered nearly two years and restored the fares to much the same value as after the previous change in May 1983. The January 1986 increase maintains them broadly at that level and leaves them lower than they were in real terms in 1981. Current fares represent excellent value for an improving quality of service. LRT has kept the increase in the cost of travelcards at less than the average, so building on their evident success.

As fares now stand, travellers are paying a realistic price for a good service. Passengers agree. Patronage is booming. Underground travel has grown by 8 per cent. since last year. The long-run decline in bus patronage is being arrested. Hon. Members may care to glance at the figures in paragraphs 1 and 2 in LRT's annual business plan where they will see the underlying stability in LRT's policy on fares.

That is the background to the levy order for 1986-87 which we are considering. The House will know that section 12 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 empowers my right hon. Friend to make grants to support LRT's capital and revenue spending. Section 13 of that Act permits him to recover by a levy on London ratepayers up to two thirds of his spending on grants. This financial year we are paying £323 million in grant, and are recovering £212 million in the levy. That works out at 65·63 per cent. of the total grant, and it means a rate poundage of 10·8p in the pound. The remainder of the grant is funded by the taxpayer.

LRT's excellent performance means that for 1986-87 the grant need be no more than £295 million. That is the estimated grant mentioned in the draft order. We have decided to keep the proportions funded respectively by ratepayers and taxpayers the same as last year. It seems right that both should share the benefits of better management—professional management, I may add—in the proportion in which they have contributed. That consideration requires us to raise only £193·6 million from London ratepayers and we are able to reduce the rate poundage by just over a penny, to 9·79p in the pound. That is excellent news for the domestic and business ratepayer.

In sum, I have shown that the Government are delivering in full measure the promise of the policies which we put forward for LRT and I have no hesitation in commending the draft order to the House tonight.

11.27 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell) on his promotion to Minister of State, Department of Transport. I do that with all the sincerity that I can genuinely muster. I hope that he will enjoy it while he can because after the next election I hope to be taking the position from him; or perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will do that. We shall have to see.

The order gives power to the Secretary of State to precept the London boroughs in order to sustain the capital and revenue support for LRT. I hope that I shall not be using "extravagant language". I do not believe that the

GLC, in its campaign for the retention of London Transport, used extravagant language either. What we shall be doing this evening is using the correct and factual statistics that are to hand.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): We were told in Standing Committee that 20 or 30 underground stations would be closed within a short time. If that was not extravagant language, I wonder what is.

Mr. Stott: I shall deal with some of these issues later. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East was a member of that Standing Committee and made several statements in it which, sadly, have proven correct.

The 1984 Act gives the Secretary of State responsibility for judging what level of collective revenue and capital support should be given to LRT. This is one of the first occasions that the House has had to assess the role and financing of LRT since that Act came into operation. When the Bill was debated in the House, many of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East, told the Secretary of State that removing control from the GLC and putting it with a Government quango would result in a worse service. I am sorry to have to say that many of their predictions have come true, even in the short time since the legislation was enacted.

One of the main reasons for the deterioration in services is directly related to revenue support. In addition to the requirements laid down in the 1984 Act, the Secretary of State has to set LRT a series of objectives. One is that revenue support is to be reduced by £95 million by 1987-88. That compares with £190 million of revenue grants provided by the GLC during 1984-85. LRT has made it clear that it is determined to attain most of that £95 million reduction in the first year. That aim is a major determining factor of the strategy that it has adopted, and the strategy is one of cuts in services and cuts in jobs.

Broadly speaking, the savings are made by reductions in bus services on the assumption that bus use will decline by 2·5 per cent. during the next year. LRT staff are already admitting that there is little evidence of such decline. The latest figures show continuing growth. For example, bus passenger miles in the first quarter of 1985 were 9 per cent. higher than in the corresponding period of 1984. LRT is embarrassed by the number of passengers who want to travel by bus. Savings from reductions in services cannot be made without serious reductions in fares and revenue receipts.

Mr. Forman: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that, if there has been an expansion of the number of passengers while, at the same time, the number of people employed has been reduced, that indicates a more efficient service which benefits the taxpayer and the ratepayer?

Mr. Stott: I shall deal with that intervention later.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): When the hon. Gentleman deals with that matter, would he care to explain the fact that, between 1970 and 1982, under the GLC, passenger demand fell by 25 per cent.? Surely that is no great success story.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is because it was under Tory control most of that time, you see, ha, ha!

Mr. Stott: If the very efficient *Hansard* reporters caught that sedentary interruption from my hon. Friend, I need not answer the question.

It is important to consider these matters in the context of what they mean for those who pay to support the services. In the financial year 1984-85, when the GLC still had control of London Transport, London ratepayers contributed £280 million towards the running of London Transport. In the financial year 1985-86, they must pay an extra 35 per cent. as the bill increases to £281 million. They also have to pay increased fares and watch some of the capital's services decline.

The Government have deliberately chosen to bring about those increases. The Secretary of State for Transport has given himself the power to levy a rate on Londoners for LRT up to the maximum of two thirds of the total subsidy. In 1985, in the first year of operation, the Secretary of State had to decide what that levy should be. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the order shows the maximum.

Mr. David Mitchell: Will the hon. Gentleman at least have the courtesy to admit that, although there have been reductions in some services in some areas, there have been increases in others? That is a sign of an efficient matching of the market to the supply and provision of transport.

Mr. Stott: I do not accept the scenario that the hon. Gentleman has painted, and I shall deal with that matter later.

Another factor that has increased the burden on ratepayers is the outstanding debt for capital grants to London Transport that the Government left to the GLC. When the London Regional Transport Act was passed, in real terms London Transport was nationalised, but the Government refused to take over the council's outstanding debts in respect of London Transport, and London ratepayers have had to meet the costs in the GLC's 1985-86 rate precept.

In the past year, London's bus services have suffered from a major programme of curtailment of routes. Reduction in frequency and the conversion to one-person operation has meant a serious loss of jobs. The Minister mentioned the separate London Bus Company, which has been created to run London's buses. It is clear that it has little real autonomy from LRT. During the past year we have seen a series of cuts in bus mileages. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) drew the Minister's attention to the serious reductions in bus mileage during the period of LRT's existence.

Under the London Regional Transport Act 1984, subsidy to London Regional Transport is decided on by the Secretary of State, following consultation with the Treasury and, as he is doing now, he must seek Parliament's approval. Up to two thirds of the total is raised from the ratepayers of Greater London. The exact amount is specified in the order.

For 1986-87 the Secretary of State has set a total subsidy to LRT of £295 million of which 65·63 per cent. is to be levied from the ratepayers, amounting to a sum of £193·6 million, which represents a rate of about 9p in the pound. The total grant for 1986-87 is slightly lower than it was for 1985-86—£323 million—as is the ratepayers' contribution. Since 1984-85, the last year under GLC control, the total cost has not reduced, despite the Secretary of State's comments inside and outside the House. The total cost of London Transport during 1984-85 was £249 million—16 per cent. less than the subsidy in 1986-87.

[Mr. Stott]

Let us consider the breakdown of the figures and the GLC budget for 1984-85. Revenue support stood at £190 million and debt charges were £59 million, making a total of £249 million. The LRT budget for 1985-86 is £323 million; in 1986-87, it decreases slightly to £295 million. Despite the fact that the costs at LRT have not declined since the GLC lost control, the quality of public transport has declined.

I have to declare an interest, because I use London Transport every day——

Mr. Forman: So do I.

Mr. Stott: I know that the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) is the only Conservative Member who does not drive a car, and I accept with alacrity that the hon. Gentleman has as much right as I have to relay to the House our opinions about London Transport.

The quality of the service, in my view and that of my hon. Friends, has declined; there has been a 16 per cent. increase in fares, compared with 10 per cent. inflation during the same period, and a 2 per cent. cut in bus services, or an equivalent of 3 million bus miles. If one lives on one of those routes, the cuts will have a great effect, whether one lives on the outer rim of the city or in one of the inner areas. It is all very well to take buses off the road, but that does not help nurses to get to work early in the morning or late in the evening. We should provide a service for the people of the capital city.

Although fares have increased faster than inflation, LRT has declared that it does not intend to take the entire subsidy for 1986-87. It will hand back £16 million to the Government, leaving the revenue support at £79 million instead of £95 million. That reduction in revenue support represents bad value for money, because, according to London Transport's own estimates, every pound of subsidy forgone leads to £1·34 of missing benefits. That represents a total loss of about £21·4 million of benefits. According to the London Regional Transport Act, the £16 million does not go back to the ratepayers of London; it goes straight back to the Treasury. Therefore, the real share of the subsidy increase to the ratepayers of London is 69·4 per cent.

If LRT had not decided to forgo the £16 million, fares could have been held down, services could have been increased, or there could have been a combination of both.

A survey conducted for the GLC by the Harris Research Centre among a representative cross-section of Londoners asks the respondents to select their preferred way of using that £16 million surplus. They were given four possible options, and their transport, employment and financial needs were taken into consideration. Those options were: first, to hold down bus and underground fares; secondly, to increase bus and underground fares; thirdly, to reduce rates in London; and, fourthly, to reduce taxation throughout the country. The result of the survey was that 42 per cent. were in favour of the first option to hold down fares; 26 per cent. favoured increasing fares; 17 per cent. favoured reducing rates; and 15 per cent. favoured reducing taxes. More than two thirds of Londoners wanted the money that LRT was returning to the Treasury to be used to hold down fares, a popular process that they have enjoyed while the GLC has had control of London's transport.

Mr. Parris: I gather than one option on the opinion poll to which the hon. Gentleman referred was that the savings should be made available to taxpayers nationally. Did the people questioned in the poll include a sample of those taxpayers nationally, or were they all Londoners?

Mr. Stott: The poll was conducted among a representative cross-section of Londoners. While the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) was asking that question, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) reminded me that unintentionally I may have misled the House when dealing with the second option in the poll. It was to increase services and the figure was 26 per cent. I may have been somewhat confused in the wording of the option.

The Minister referred to the expansion of the London underground. It is to the advantage of everybody in one of the greatest capital cities in the world that the underground system is improved, for many millions of people are readily accepting the usefulness of the underground service.

The Minister said that automatic ticketing would not come in until 1988. Earlier in the evening I could have taken him to Wesminster tube station, where he would not have found anybody selling tickets. People could ride on the trains, but they could not buy tickets. There is a shortage of staff, not only at Westminster but at tube stations throughout the capital city. Nor do the machines work.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Millions of pounds in revenue is being thrown away, and the Minister knows it.

Mr. Stott: The Government propose to spend £2·5 million on trunk roads in London. I do not oppose the building of roads where there is a practical reason for building them. But the return on that type of expenditure, unless the Government are making some extremely optimistic assumptions, will be negative.

Mr. Hanley: May I correct the hon. Gentleman on that point?

Mr. Stott: No. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

The option of the Labour party and of the controlling Labour group on the GLC would be to use the financial resources to provide an integral, decent public transport system in our capital city. The GLC was attempting to provide just that, and the Fares Fair scheme was a bold, Socialist initiative by the GLC which proved popular throughout London.

The people of London have been denied the bus service that that positive, bold initiative would have provided, because the Government, out of sheer spite, are getting rid of the GLC and are taking the running of London's transport away from elected London councillors and giving it to a Government quango.

Public opinion on transport will be put to the test when we take our campaign on to the streets of Fulham. The people there will have an opportunity to pass judgment on what the Government have done, not only to the GLC but in destroying a public transport service of which every Londoner could be proud.

11.49 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I join in congratulating the Minister of State on his appointment. I am sure that he will be in his office for some time to come and will enjoy every minute of it.

I assure the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) that my constituents remember the activities of the GLC. They recall vividly the increase in subsidies in real terms, from £6·5 million to £369·8 million. The people of London paid for those subsidies through their rates, and I remember the anger and anxiety of my pensioners and others who had to foot the bill to pay for that expenditure. I remember too, that from 1970 to 1982 fares rose in real terms by 85 per cent. There was gross overmanning, gross inefficiency and gross political manipulation of the transport undertaking in the capital.

We must congratulate the chairman and the board of London Regional Transport on a great success story. By any standards, the success of the new management in improving the efficiency of the service is something about which we can all be proud. I know that the people of London are proud of it. It is particularly gratifying to know that capital investment has been increased to £200 million from the GLCs £155 million investment programme. It is good to know that in its second year the business plan envisages that service levels will be maintained on buses and improved on the underground. Investment will increase by a further £30 million and revenue subsidies reduced again from £130 million to £79 million.

Mr. Parris: The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said that there were no staff to sell tickets at Westminster underground station. I have just been over to check, and staff are selling tickets there.

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Like most hon. Members on the Government side, he is a regular user of the transport system, and we know how good it is and how it has improved.

Mr. Snape: Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me, as someone who regularly uses Westminster tube station late at night, that on many nights of the week there is no one to sell tickets at the ticket office? Regularly after 8 o'clock in the evening, most of the machines there are switched off. Because of staff shortages, it is quite possible to travel for nothing. That is the wonderful management that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. and right hon. Friends, like the Minister, who rarely travels by public transport, are talking about.

Mr. Wheeler: At the end of the journey, the fare is collected.

Mr. Snape: No, it is not. There is no one there either.

Mr. Wheeler: Yes, it is.

Of the plans produced by the LRT, I particularly welcome the investment of £135 million in a new automatic ticketing system which will reduce costs and fraud. Any hon. Member who has seen the modern underground system in the Crown colony of Hong Kong will know how successful automatic ticketing can be, especially in transporting people more speedily.

I welcome the substantial investment and the investment of £16 million in new buses. That will produce employment for people elsewhere in the United Kingdom as well as producing new equipment and new standards of comfort that will be of immense benefit to people in London as a whole. LRT has also managed to hold down fares. Although by last summer fares had been eroded by at least 20 per cent. in real terms since May 1981, the overall increases that took place with effect from 6 January this year were around 9 per cent. that is a commendable achievement.

I welcome the order and I particularly commend the professional management of LRT. I hope that my hon. Friend will convey to that management the congratulations of the House and its best wishes for continued success.

11.54 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I too welcome the Minister to his new role. A belief was expressed by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) that his tenure of office in this Government was bound to be long. I do not think that has been recent experience, but we hope the Minister is able to enjoy getting his teeth stuck into the more senior position which he has just inherited.

Mr. Hanley: He did not inherit it; he earned it.

Mr. Hughes: Well, into which he stepped through his service previously as Under-Secretary.

We judge the performance of London Regional Transport principally by three tests. The first is what the Secretary of State told those of us who were in the House for the Second and Third Readings of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 and what he told us in Committee. I should like to remind the House of some of the phrases that he used during the passage of the Bill. On Second Reading, he said:

"The Bill provides the opportunities. The securing of better value for money will be one of the first and most important tasks of the new chairman of LRT and his board. I shall look to the board to achieve this."

Later in the same speech he said:

"In the longer term the level of fares will reflect the degree of success LRT has in cutting costs and improving efficiency. I see no reason why fares and charges should continue to outstrip the increase in prices generally, given the scope that there is in LRT for substantial cost savings." — [*Official Report*, 13 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 860, 864.]

On Third Reading he said:

"It is crucial that we get a better deal for travellers,"—

not for ratepayers—

"and that is the prime objective of the exercise . . . I am also confident not only that travellers will see a steadily improving system in London but that that will be accompanied by a reduction in their rate bill."—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 109.]

That, as it were, was the prologue of the coming into force of LRT.

There are two other criteria by which I suggest to the Minister that we should properly judge LRT's achievement. I shall not paint a picture that is all one-sided. We have to use fair and objective criteria. One is the opinion of people who take an objective view and a professional interest in what goes on. My earlier intervention was from the same source, which I hope the Minister accepts is valid and honourable, the committee that was set up to look after the interests of passengers in London, the London regional passenger committee. I might point out that after much pressure from the Opposition in Committee the London regional passenger committee was improved so that it would have at least some accountability to consumers.

There will be agreement about some matters. The passenger committee has said that on the underground the

[Mr. Hughes]

demand has gone up, services have improved and modernisation has also taken place. I commend that. Some stations are considerably more pleasant than they were a few years ago. But the same has not applied on the bus services. The committee says—and this is an objective test—that there has been a reduction in bus services so far despite increased demand. We know why demand has increased. I hope the Minister will accept that it is principally because of the increased number of passes and special concessions that people have been using the services more frequently. There is nothing wrong with passes; they are a good thing and they have encouraged demand. That is the result a couple of years on.

Perhaps the board did not foresee that demand would increase, but services have deteriorated both in bus mileage and in frequency and therefore in efficiency, reliability and acceptability. The figures have been confirmed by other interventions. Passenger miles, on the other hand, in the second quarter of 1984 were 579 million; in the second quarter of 1985 they were 584 million, with an annual total of 2,620 million in the first year and 2,670 million in the second year. But the services have gone down. The number of million bus miles travelled in London has been reduced.

I can then put the third criterion to the Minister for judging success, the criterion of a London Member of Parliament who has had many occasions to go to meetings, to deal with letters and to look at requests from constituents who cannot have the same level of service and the same convenience of travel now, in parts of my constituency and around, as they had one or two years ago. I want to give the Minister an example of the sort of thing that London Regional Transport certainly cannot be proud of.

There was a bus service round the Surrey docks, the P5. Surrey docks is a very isolated peninsula, away from the main travel routes. That service was, at the end of last year, reduced in the second of the LRT route revisions. there was no consultation process of the right length. The matter is now going to court because the consultation process promised did not take place. The result has been that, although immediately after the service was changed there was an effort to sustain the same level and reliability, it has dropped off considerably. People who have no other public transport at all, who have no easy access to the tube because the tube stations are quite a long way away, say regularly and in large numbers, at meetings to hundreds, rather than tens, of people, that they believe the service to be worse.

I do not say that that applies to all services. The Minister, of course, says that a good management should ensure that the service responds to demand. But there have been substantial—and this is the best interpretation—errors of judgment in assessing that demand, and substantial attempts to cut services before the need for them to exist has been assessed.

When the Minister next talks to LRT about its plans for the coming year—and obviously I have consultations both with my area manager in Selkent and the chairman and officers of the board of LRT—I ask him to undertake to talk to it about the things which are clear evidence of the valid discontent in areas of the capital about the way in which the cost-cutting exercise has resulted in a service-cutting exercise, when the demand has been in the other direction. That is a serious complaint which reveals a lack of responsiveness to the consumer.

We know why it is possible for LRT not to be responsive: it is a Government body. It has no direct accountability. The people who run it do not have to stand for election. As was quite rightly pointed out in the sedentary intervention made in response to the question from the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the reality of 1980-81 was that the GLC elections for 1981 were fought largely on the issue of the transport policy of the Labour group, fighting for control at county hall. Its promises to use subsidies from the ratepayers generally were popular. It gained substantial support. The result, as the Minister knows, was that fares were held down below the level of inflation and, in many respects, people at least had the service near where they lived, even if there was not on occasions a massive demand for it; it was still needed by them, however big or small the demand.

It is no good saying to a community like that in Surrey docks two years ago, a few thousand people, "I am sorry, but there are not enough of you to justify a bus service", when there is no other public transport service available to that community.

It is unfair to believe that the policy of keeping fares down is incompatible with having support from the public and from the customer and with the increasing demand which is possible if one is then imaginative about the schemes, the passes and the general forms of service that are offered to the consumer.

My last point to the Minister, which I made to his predecessor, I make in part in a parochial way but also more substantially. Some of the complaints seem to be to do with the regular day-to-day management decisions of London Transport. They go something like this: if we had shorter routes, less delay would be caused by congestion. All the predictions are that our streets will be more congested, and we need to counter that in the planning of the routes of London Transport, and not allow delays to build up, which, unfortunately still occurs on some routes.

However, we need to concentrate on some of the more important capital investment to which the Minister pays so much attention, particularly in some of the areas that continue to be badly served by public transport. In Committee, the two priorities in capital investment terms were said to be improved services to Heathrow and improved services in the docklands. There has certainly been a movement in the case of the docklands light railway, but south of the river there has been little improvement, if any, in docklands. It is still the gap in the London Transport map.

I ask the Minister to take away from the debate a much less complacent attitude than that with which he came to it. People in London are not saying that it is a wonderful new service in all respects as the result of London Transport. More often than not they are saying—and I ask him to accept that I represent the views which I hear and the experiences which are relayed to me—that there is not as much control, the prices are going up and the bus services in general and in many specific cases are not being improved. That is not sufficient to make LRT anything like the success that the Minister's predecessor and the Secretary of State said it would be.

12.6 am

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Contrary to the belief of many Opposition Members, the Conservative party believes that public transport is absolutely vital to the capital. It is vital as a service to those who need to use it, it is vital as a service to the economy of the whole region and it is vital as a service to those who ought to use it more. It is only by a professional service, by an attractive service and by a well-run commercial service—indeed, by a proper public service—that we can bring more people on to public transport which will help to reduce the already overburdened roads throughout the capital. The only way to reduce the terrible traffic conditions in London is by making public transport more attractive.

I well remember the Standing Committee in February 1984 when we discussed this subject. I well remember the scare stories put out by the Opposition. However, there is one important thing to remember about that debate in Standing Committee: what were the objectives of the London Regional Transport Act 1984?

London Transport was taken from the Greater London council, first, to restore a stable framework for public transport planning; secondly, to reduce unnecessary costs and provide better value for money for travellers, ratepayers and tax-payers; thirdly, to bring bus and underground services into the same policy framework as BR commuter services and to improve co-operation between the two; fourthly, to redirect resources to cost-saving investment; fifthly, to ensure fully professional management; and, sixthly, to encourage competition and contracting out.

Have those six objectives been achieved? The first—to restore a stable framework — has certainly been achieved by taking LRT out of the directly political arena. There are no political appointees there now.

Mr. Tony Banks: They are all political.

Mr. Hanley: They are there for quality. It is not jobs for the boys or jobs for the girls.

With regard to the second objective — reducing unnecessary costs—bus costs have gone down by 6·4 per cent. and the costs of running the tube by 3·7 per cent. No longer is LT a job-protection scheme; it is a service for the consumer. I cannot blame Opposition Members for wanting to keep LRT as a job-protection scheme.

Any party founded and funded by the unions has a duty to those unions. Now the duty is to the consumer, and not to those who work in the industry. LRT is now a partnership between the employees and the consumer. It is an organisation that runs with pride in itself and not embarrassment about the political kickbacks that occurred.

Bus and underground services have been brought into the same framework as British Rail. There is through-routeing and there are imaginative ticket schemes. The present system encourages people to use London's services. It is one of the London Regional Transport Act's great successes. People can now use public transport without unnecessary restrictive practices to make their journeys harder.

The fourth objective related to redirecting resources to cost-saving investment. We have already heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) of the increases in capital expenditure. Those increases are vast. There are new buses, stations and ticket machines. Anyone who uses the underground system, as Conservative Members regularly do, will feel the pride that exists in the attractiveness of the underground stations, the new designs and the cleanliness which was never present in GLC days.

We have also ensured that there is a fully professional management. That has worked. London Regional Transport is no longer run by a bus driver who was promoted above his ability. It is run by a professional manager who has learnt how to drive a bus, and does so regularly, to find out about the problems of buses in London. That is the right way to run the system.

We have also encouraged competition and contracting out. Recent announcements are excellent for the consumer and for future competition.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that fares have gone up. It is always a sad reflection on those who are meant to lead the community that they tend to pick statistics to try to prove their own sectional point. *[Interruption.]* As an accountant, I hope that people will believe the statistics that I choose to quote. Since 1983 and the GLC fare rise of that year, fares have increased in line with inflation. The plea of Opposition Members was that fares should not rise by more than inflation. Fares are now 87·2 per cent. of what they were in May 1981. That means a reduction of 12 per cent. since then.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman cannot believe that he is proving his case with those figures. He is well aware that between 1981, when the GLC went into Labour control, and 1984, when it went out of its control, fares hardly increased. In the past two years they have increased by 15·1 per cent. That is considerably more than inflation since LRT took over. Please let the hon. Gentleman be honest with the House if he is trying to prove that he is an accountant.

Mr. Hanley: By last summer, LRT fares had been eroded by about 20 per cent., in real terms, compared with their May 1981 values. The recent increase was 9 per cent. Therefore, overall there has been a 12 per cent. reduction in real terms since 1981.

Mr. Stott: It is essential to have this matter correct. The figure to which the hon. Gentleman referred—the increase that took place in January when we all returned to the House of Commons and found that bus and underground fares had been increased—was an increase of 6·5 per cent. Inflation at that time was 4·5 per cent. Fares have increased above the level of inflation.

Mr. Hanley: Let us look at the facts put out by the Opposition. Many Conservative Members remember the scare stories that were put out, not just in Standing Committee in February 1984 but in printed leaflets funded by the GLC. The scare stories were funded by the rates. A GLC-funded body, Capital, a so-called voluntary body, raised rates being spent involuntarily on a body which could not survive voluntarily if it tried. It produced leaflets and distributed them on buses, and I received them myself on the day of a lobby here at the House of Commons. It said that 20 to 30 tube stations would close within one year of the LRT Bill coming into force, and that a sixth of the bus routes would be withdrawn and not replaced.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) remembers very well a poster which I brought to

[Mr. Hanley]

his attention, saying "Come on in No. 9, your time is up." The No. 9 bus runs through the centre of my constituency. Many people use it every day. For posters to say that that service would be withdrawn was a wicked lie. When I said to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, "The No. 9 bus service I hear will not be withdrawn. Why did you choose that poster?", he replied, "We didn't mean it literally. We had to choose some number."

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman should have referred to the No. 172, because that was the route that went.

Mr. Hanley: The only reason why the Advertising Standards Authority did not discuss that poster campaign was that political advertising was not covered by the legislation.

I also remind the House of the scare campaign directed at the disabled and elderly to the effect that the concessionary fares would be taken away. For the first time under this Government, concessionary fares have been protected in statute—the complete reverse of what the GLC was trying to put out at ratepayers' expense. I pay fulsome tribute to the board and chairman of London Regional Transport, and to the chairman and managing director of London Bus Company whom I have always found to be responsive to the needs of bus passengers in my constituency.

Mr. Telford Beasley has driven a bus through some of the problem spots of London, and has learnt by looking at the areas that I have brought to his attention. He has always been sensitive to any requests for services which are not being supplied currently. That is imaginative and flexible management, and it can exist in a free society but not under political control.

If the people of London believe posters and stories put out in February 1984 which were created by politically motivated lies, all I say is that those posters, that scare campaign, and those leaflets have been proved to be untrue. I believe that all of the scare stories we have heard tonight will be proved to be untrue in the future.

12.19 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): If the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hauley) thinks that control by the Under-Secretary of State or the Secretary of State is not political, there is something basically wrong with his constitution. Hon. Members representing the ratepayers of London are permitted to discuss London's transport affairs for one and a half hours a year. What wonderful democracy that is compared to what used to exist. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes should remember that when he talks to his constituents.

I have a Travelcard. With my muscles, it provides the only way I can get around London, as it does for the majority of my constituents. I hope to speak for the ratepayers of Newham, South and the rest of Newham——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): And Islington.

Mr. Spearing: And the whole of London. All hon. Members can do that.

On 13 January, the Minister of State said, to the surprise of the House, that the docklands light railway —LRT is an agent of that railway—would be privatised and would never make a profit. Previously, the Secretary of State had said that public money would not provide an eastern extension to that much-needed form of public transport. The Government's attitude to London's public transport turns on private profits and investment—not by the community but by a private organisation which will make money out of the recently purchased royal dockyards, if it can, to the detriment of the rest of the Newham people. That is te Government's plan for the rest of London.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman's constituents will agree with me, even if he does not, that developments with private capital in the docks area will bring a remarkable increase in prosperity that those constituents have not experienced for many years.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is not right. The mere fact that he is requiring private capital to carry the capital and revenue costs of such a development means that that development is much more likely to bring prosperity to bankers and property developers than to the people of Newham. The borough council does not agree with what is going on. The Government want to develop that area, and elsewhere in the docklands, not for the benefit of the people who live there or who use public transport to get there, but for the benefit of big City and international businesses. The Under-Secretary of State knows that very well.

In London Transport terms, there has been a remarkable turn-around. Until 1982, the number of passengers on buses and trains was decreasing. There has been a remarkable upsurge. From the base 100 in 1979, between 1982 and 1985 the number of rail passengers increased from 82 to 120 and bus passengers increased marginally from 87 to 96. The Conservative Government should not crow about that. What is the reason for the sudden and welcome increase in the number of passengers using public transport in London? The Travelcard has been responsible. It was introduced by the GLC when the Conservative party took office. That is the reason for the buoyancy in public transport.

Although bus passenger mileage has increased by a small amount, there have been major cuts. Efficiency has been increased, but only by causing inconvenience to the passenger. Costs have decreased — that might be welcome—but income has increased. That is the magic formula for fattening calves and chickens for killing. Those routes might be ripe for privatisation. That is the key to the Government's policy. The Government are already introducing their policy on the buses in outer London. They are trying to have super efficiency in the centre of London by getting rid of bus conductors. People in London want bus conductors to be retained, in central London at least.

Although there has been a welcome increase in passengers because of zoning and Travelcards, there have been anomalies, which should be cleared up. If people in my constituency wanted to travel from Green Gate to Plaistow station, it would cost them 30p for less than a mile. That is rather more than the equivalent Civil Service House of Commons car allowance for one person. Therefore, although I welcome the principle of Travelcards and zoning, there are anomalies inside that zone. There should be a much lower fare for people travelling over a shorter distance.

There is a bizarre problem illustrated by travel on the underground. If I and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) wanted to go to the Home Office and it was raining and we did not have Travelcards we would go to Westminster underground station for St. James's park and we would have to pay 50p for half a mile. That is £1 each there and back and £2 for the two of us.

Mr. Parris: Use your Travelcard.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps I should not use the example of my hon. Friend and I, because I am talking about ordinary people who do not have the benefit of their employers paying some of their travel expenses. They would have to pay £1 each there and back. It would be £2 for two of them which is a huge multiple of the cost of company cars or, in our case, the House of Commons travel allowance. Therefore, I support the Travelcard and zoning scheme for what it has done to produce a buoyant system, but for people travelling short distances in east London, Newham in particular, there are anomalies that need to be sorted out. There is a bizarre cost of 30p which applies for short distances between two adjacent stations in the outer London area. The cost per mile is bizarre relative to the cost of the transport provided.

The turn-around has been achieved only by GLC policies and the Government have reaped the benefit for the future. The Government are getting a public system of transport the profits of which they ultimately want to pay to private contractors. One might ask how that can be the case, because everybody knows that public transport, even in London, does not pay. The Government are doing that in the outer area on selected bus routes. What happens is that the service is subsidised by rates and transport supplementary grant and then the contractor is allowed to make the profit, just as the Government are allowing many contractors, instead of London Transport Building Services, to make profits. No doubt that is the case in all the reconstruction schemes we see around, where safety has been a problem. That is the plan for the future.

The Government do not worry too much about the quality of service. For example, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes knows that the Richmond service on a Saturday is every 20 minutes and that those trains are fairly full. That is not good enough. Central line tubes in east London in the evenings on the Newbury park branch in Redbridge—a Tory area—run every 20 minutes and they have escalators. That is not good enough. It shows a lack of sensitivity. Even reducing the interval to 15 minutes, let alone 10, would be a marginal cost to transport management, but they are snipping money wherever they can, irrespective of the convenience to the public.

Therefore, the improvements that have been brought about by a Labour-controlled GLC are now being used to prepare LRT services for privatisation. Why else would the Government split the buses and the railways into separate companies? It is all being produced over a period of time so that the next phase, no doubt with the enthusiastic co-operation of the non-political gentleman named by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes, will be to privatise what was a public asset, not for the benefit of the people of London, but for continuing the Leeds school of non-political economy — the social market philosphy of the Prime Minister. She should have paid more attention to the views of her constituents because if she had, she would not be preparing LRT services for so-called profitable privatisation at the expense of the ratepayer.

12.29 am

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The order and the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister show the solid progress now being made by the London Regional Transport, and I pay tribute to it. The order also gives the lie to the scurrilous GLC stories which were spread at the expense of ratepayers, including those in my constituency, because of contributions which they were obliged to make to the GLC.

I am glad that, through greater efficiency, LRT now provides better services at no discernible extra cost to the travelling public. That shows the wisdom and rightness of the Government's policy, flowing from the London Regional Transport Act 1984. It is especially good that the unit costs have been reduced by 6·4 per cent. on the buses, and 3·7 per cent. on the underground.

It is good for my constituents in Sutton that their position in relation to dial-a-ride is to be safeguarded. All in all, a good story lies behind the order, which I support.

However, I have four suggestions for my hon. Friend the Minister which I hope will be drawn to the attention of the excellent new LRT management. First, I strongly agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) about the need for shorter bus routes. My constituents often find themselves at the end of such routes in the outer part of the greater London area, and the difficulties facing some of the hard-working drivers and staff are unavoidably increased by congestion. The map of LRT's routes shows clearly that, unlike other metropolitan cities in advanced countries, we have inordinately long routes. Bearing in mind the congestion problems, which have not been fully solved even by bulldog clamps, which I support, LRT should consider linking shorter routes.

Secondly, I welcome the progress made on the underground in creating cleaner, brighter tube stations. That is important psychologically, because it makes the travelling public feel better. More salient, in these days when people worry for their safety, it makes nervous people more confident if stations are well lit, clean and not covered in graffiti. LRT should spend small sums on improving the look and feel of tube stations.

Thirdly, as a frequent traveller on LRT and not owning a car, I am acutely aware of the deficiencies of the Circle Line. If a train is cancelled it invariably seems to be on the Circle Line rather than on the District or Metropolitan Lines. During the rush hours it is sensible, if there is a staff shortage or an operating problem, to give priority to the radial lines. At other times when Members of Parliament, tourists and others use the trains, it is important that the integrity and reliability of the Circle Line service is preserved. It pains me when I and others must wait about 20 minutes between Circle Line trains because one has been cancelled. Half the point of the tube service is its convenience.

Finally, I want to congratulate LRT on it brave decison to ban smoking from the underground. I declare an interest in that I am an aggressive non-smoker, but even allowing for that foible, on health and cleanliness grounds and the general acceptability of the environment underground, quite apart from on safety grounds and the danger of fire,

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

LRT has led the way splendidly. I hope that it will extend the policy to the buses so that we do not have to have a lower deck where life is tolerable and a cancer deck upstairs. We should have smoke-free buses for the sake of common sense and health.

This is an excellent sign of progress for LRT and I commend my hon. Friend the Minister on his efforts to push LRT in the right direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. David Mitchell.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister has already addressed the House once and must ask the leave of the House in order to do so again. In the circumstances, I would object to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister does not need the leave of the House. I thought that the House wanted a reply from the Minister. The debate must finish at 12.41 am. I assumed that the House wanted to hear the Minister's reply to the debate. Mr. David Mitchell.

Mr. David Mitchell: If the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) feels that he has been cut out, and if you will allow me to split the time with him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am prepared to try to sum up in rather less time in order to meet the wishes of the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Tony Banks.

12.36 am

Mr. Banks: I shall split the time available with the Minister and I am grateful to him for that.

It is unfortunate that we have had a debate of one and a half hours yet some hon. Members still want to speak. This is what London Members now have as a substitute for the democratic accountability of the control of the GLC over the affairs of London Regional Transport.

A lot has been said about the GLC in an accusatory fashion by Conservative Members. Let me remind them that, under the control of the GLC from 1981, until London Transport was snatched back from the ratepayers of London in order for the Government to make a better case for the abolition of the GLC, the GLC kept fares down. Since LRT took control of London transport in 1984, the fares have gone up 16 per cent.

The GLC produced, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said, a radical blueprint for the future for the integrated transport system of London, dramatically increased public transort usage and, in doing so, reduced the level of traffic congestion on London roads and cut down on the number of road accidents.

In the final year when the GLC had London transport taken away from its democratic control, a £35 million operating profit was made by London Transport. That does not seem to me to be a record of which the GLC should feel ashamed. On the contrary, it seems to be a record of which the GLC and London ratepayers should feel proud. Since then, the record has been quite the reverse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that the sudden change in the fortunes of LRT, as Conservative Members see it, has not come about simply because of a new management structure. It has been the result of building on what the GLC established by the new management of LRT. Incidentally, those managers were appointed by the GLC. I was a member of the committee that appointed Dr. Bright as the chairman of the executive. Frankly, that point should also be made by Conservative Members when they congratulate the management. We not only built the fare structure at county hall; we also appointed the managers to carry it out and they are the same ones who are here now.

We now find that LRT presents an annual plan. We have an hour and a half for people to rush in a few points. There is no consultation on the annual plan. No alternatives are put to the people of London and there is no real scrutiny. LRT's financial benefit derives from the 1983 Travelcard package, which the GLC introduced against the advice of and in opposition to the present senior management of LRT. LRT's success is entirely predictted on the successful policies of the GLC.

12.39 am

Mr. David Mitchell: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) took rather more of the time than I suggested he could barely have.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am sorry.

Mr. Mitchell: That is perhaps a further illustration of the unreliability of some of the assertions made by Opposition Members.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said that many of his hon. Friends' predictions had come true. He failed to show where the 33 tube stations that it was predicted would close have closed. He failed to show where the 34 bus routes that it was predicted would close have closed. He failed to show where pensioners have lost their free passes, as was predicted. It is clear that the passengers of London are voting with their feet by using services more. LRT is now providing what passengers want at a fair price that passengers are prepared to pay. That is why more people are using its services. It is therefore clear that LRT is achieving what it was asked to achieve and what the people of London want from it.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 161, Noes 109.

Division No. 54] **[12.41 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Bright, Graham
Alexander, Richard	Brinton, Tim
Amess, David	Brooke, Hon Peter
Ancram, Michael	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Arnold, Tom	Bruinvels, Peter
Ashby, David	Bulmer, Esmond
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Burt, Alistair
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Butcher, John
Baldry, Tony	Butterfill, John
Batiste, Spencer	Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Bellingham, Henry	Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Bendall, Vivian	Carttiss, Michael
Best, Keith	Cash, William
Bevan, David Gilroy	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Chope, Christopher
Blackburn, John	Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Bottomley, Peter	Coombs, Simon
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Cope, John
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Couchman, James
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Dorrell, Stephen

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

12.51 am

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that the Chair was put in some difficulty during the previous debate, and that the courtesy of the Minister of State, Transport allowed three, not two, Back-Bench Members of the Opposition from London to contribute to the debate. But for his courtesy, only two London Members of the Opposition would have been able to speak. In view of the importance of London Transport services, the money involved and the parliamentary democracy which Britain is fortunate to have, I must put it on the record that the time allowed for the debate was insufficient. I hope that those responsible will take note that that view was expressed not only by the Opposition, but by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose——*

Mr. Corbyn *rose——*

Mr. Cohen *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are these points of order on the same matter?

Mr. Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in thanking the Minister for his courtesy in allowing me to grab slightly more than half of the remaining time when I rose. I would ask you,

[Mr. Banks]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the custodian of the rights of Back-Bench Members to represent their constituents' interests, to say that the time and opportunities for the scrutiny of London Regional Transport are grossly insufficient.

I am not altogether sure how you can assist us in this respect, but every London Back-Bench Member was either severely constricted in terms of the time available to speak or, in the case of some of my hon. Friends, was not allowed the opportunity to address the House. That is wholly unsatisfactory, and I would ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to consider the points of order and see how you can help us to look after the affairs of London in terms of travelling on London Transport. It used to be done by the democratically elected councillors of the GLC.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is this exactly the same point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: My point of order is simply that, in one and a half hours, we have dealt with the transport affairs——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Corbyn: I am just trying to make the point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is the same point that I have already heard from two hon. Members.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, I wish to apologise for causing you difficulties with my point of order during the debate. But that difficulty arose because I had sat through the debate and tried to speak—I was one of three Labour Members who tried to do so—and was given no opportunity because of the shortage of time. What I wanted to put to you——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making the same point. I appreciate what hon. Members are saying and I sympathise with them, but the point that they are making is not one for me but for the procedures of the House. We have been following the procedures as laid down in the Standing Orders. If hon. Members are dissatisfied with those procedures, that is not a matter for me but, rather, for the Committee of Procedure and the House. Until the Standing Orders are changed, the Chair and the House must observe them.

Poverty (West Midlands)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

12.56 am

Mr. Bob Edwards (Wolverhampton, South-East): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the staff of the House for raising an issue at this late hour, but I have a duty to perform on behalf of the West Midlands county council and the citizens of the borough of Wolverhampton.

Representatives of county and borough councils from many parts of Britain came to the House last week to express distress about the rising plague of unemployment and poverty in their areas. I feel under an obligation to bring before hon. Members the issue that they raised when I presided over a meeting in this building.

In August 1985, supplementary benefit was paid in the county area of the west midlands to 353,949 people, an increase of 69 per cent. over December 1980. Since 1984, that number has increased by a further 7,744. Between July 1981 and July 1985, the proportion of long-term unemployed—those out of work for more than a year—in the west midlands has more than doubled. Two out of every five people in the area are living below the poverty line. Local services are experiencing increased pressure on their resources to the point of crisis.

Those were the major points that the representatives from the area raised with me. In other words, more than 1 million citizens in the west midlands now live on or below the poverty line.

I have been an hon. Member for 30 years. I remember when the economy of the west midlands was growing and when wages there were among the highest not just in Britain but in Europe. Today, the greatest concentration of low-paid workers in the United Kingdom is in the west midlands.

Unemployment and low wages create extensive health problems, particularly among mothers and wives, who bear a greater proportion of the burden than do their menfolk.

In Wolverhampton, 15 per cent. of the work force is currently employed in wages council industries where low wages are commonplace. Some 35,600 pensioners live in Wolverhampton, and 13 per cent. of them receive supplementary benefit. This month 7,375 pensioners living in council houses received housing benefit and 6,700 owner-occupiers received rate rebates. Some 11,983 children in Wolverhampton qualify for free school meals. Only 9,950 pay for school meals and the parents of many of those children are too proud to claim, although the children are qualified.

In Wolverhampton, 26,158 employable workers are unemployed. That is a rate of 19 per cent. compared with 16·7 per cent. in the west midlands county area, and 13·4 per cent. in the United Kingdom. There are 2,000 people on youth training schemes and 1,600 on community training programmes. Those people would accept employment if it was available, so they can also be regarded as unemployed. Some 52 per cent. of Wolverhampton's unemployed have been out of work for over a year, and have poor opportunities for employment.

The inner urban areas suffer from the highest unemployment. Eight Wolverhampton wards are among the worst of the 25 wards in the west midlands with unemployment of more than 20 per cent. of the

employable population. In my constituency four wards have a high percentage of unemployed people. In Ettingshall the figure is 27·8 per cent., Blakenhall 27 per cent., Bilston, East, 26 per cent., Bilston, North 22 per cent. and East Park 25 per cent.; and in St. Peter's ward, which is not in my constituency but in Wolverhampton and has the greatest concentration of ethnic minorities, the figure is 34 per cent. In another ward it is 50 per cent. That is again a ward with a high concentration of what are called black people. Those figures speak for themselves and to some extent highlight the special problems of black and young people in the inner city areas.

I know that quite a lot is being done and I welcome the Government's proposal to extend the youth training scheme by two years. I also welcome the fact that the west midlands is now eligible for regional development aid and can receive funds from the European Economic Community. We wonder why it was that last year, the first year in which the west midlands received regional development grants from the EEC, £7 million went to British Telecom. That was illegal because it would not qualify as an agent for such a grant when it was due for privatisation.

Furthermore, one of the conditions for a grant, based on the rules of the Community, is that the project should creat new jobs. The purpose of that grant, agreed by the Government, was not to create jobs but to rationalise communications. Rationalisation of communications is a good thing, but it puts people out of work. I do not know what justification the Government make for that grant to British Telecom.

I suppose that I should be more constructive because so far I have been critical. Pay is low in the west midlands and particularly in my constituency. Invariably, where there is low pay, there are high profits. Last year the 10 top profit-making companies in Britain made more than £0·75 billion. The profits of the five main companies with headquarters in the west midlands were Guest Keen & Nettlefold, £163 million; Cadbury-Schweppes, £172 million; Jaguar, £91 million; Birmid Qualcast, £12·8 million; and Lucas Industries, £70 million.

I repeat that where there are low wages there are high profits. Those great profits were sweated out of the toil and industrial intelligence of the workers in the west midlands but were not ploughed back in investment there. Most of the surplus was exported to Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and South Korea to establish industrial projects manufacturing goods to compete with the products which we used to export.

Massive development of the infrastructure is required. In 1979-80 expenditure on housing was 5·88 per cent. of public expenditure, but in 1984-85 it had declined to 1·98 per cent., a dreadful drop. If more were spent on housing, it would create jobs, improve the environment and give the opportunity of a decent, dignified life to people living in high flats and rotten slums that should be razed to the ground.

The Labour party, the Trades Union Congress and even the Confederation of British Industry all agree that improvement of the infrastructure is one way to develop the economy. Housing, the road network, hospitals, communication centres and research centres are all crying aloud for development. It is high time the Government did something to alleviate the dreadful poverty in many parts of the country and particularly in the west midlands.

In closing, I will be a little sentimental and will read a letter presented to me by an unemployed person. It is headed, "The torments and hardships of the victims of unemployment":

> "Unhappy when employer makes you redundant.
> Nothing to look forward to for the future.
> Evil—envious people talking and taking advantage of your circumstances.
> Money not available for food when required.
> Poverty taking hold of its victims.
> Life—love life almost in ruins.
> One chance in life to prove your ability or capabilities.
> Young children crying with hunger because of delay in receiving benefit.
> Man—pride and dignity taken from him.
> Energy running out as costs rise higher.
> No friends to ease the strain of your problems because rejected by society.
> Tension rising higher as days and months go by.
> These are experiences and facts as suffered by its victims, on behalf of victims of recession.
> by patrick anthony friel."

1.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): I accept the seriousness of the situation in the west midlands, and I understand the relationship of the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Edwards) to the lobby which came here from his constituency and neighbouring regions. I have listened with interest to the points that he has made. He has ranged widely over the plight of his constituents, and certainly no one can have listened to the text of the letter which he read without a disturbing feeling of anxiety for the plight of the author and those like him.

Before I deal with the particular points that the hon. Member has raised, I should like to answer one point of which he very kindly gave me notice yesterday, regarding the European regional development fund payments. This is primarily a subject for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. If the hon. Member wishes, I will try to give him a fuller answer to the complaint that he made. It is, however, my understanding that British Telecom projects were at the time eligible for ERDF as a publicly funded infrastructure contributing to the development of the region. I agree with his point that it did not lead directly to jobs but, as I have said, telecommunications are part of the infrastructure, and this leads to the safeguarding of existing jobs and to the generation of a climate in which new jobs can be created.

Before I go on to the other points that he made, I would like to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman. I am very conscious of the fact that he has represented Wolverhampton and Bilston in the House for over 30 years. He will have seen many Ministers come and go at the Dispatch Box. It is in the spirit of respect for his long service in this place that I respond to what he has said. His knowledge of the area and his sympathy with the frustration and hardship suffered by large numbers of his constituents cannot be doubted.

Although I cannot disagree that many people in the west midlands are suffering considerable hardship as a result of the recession and high unemployment, poverty is a relative matter, and we—like previous Governments—do not accept that a simple poverty line can be drawn. To use the supplementary benefit level as a definition of poverty must

[Mr. Alan Clark]

be mistaken. Apart from anything else it would mean that whenever the benefit is increased in real terms, more people would be defined as being in poverty.

I am not denying the amount of genuine hardship that exists, particularly among the unemployed, and the hon. Member is perfectly right to draw attention to it. The problem of unemployment is one of the most serious facing not only this Government but Governments throughout the industrialised world. We, however, have suffered more than most because unemployment in this country has been rising for the past 20 years.

The west midlands—the black country in particular—has been particularly hard hit by market shifts. The root causes are familiar: the area has depended on traditional industries that have suffered setbacks in recent years—"metal bashing", heavy engineering and motor vehicles—industries that were overmanned, slow to change, and slow to adapt to new technology. There has had to be a fundamental shift from the old industrial pattern to new technologies such as electronics, and advanced manufacturing. It is particularly in those new technologies that hope for the future is to be found. Fundamental changes take time for their full effects on the local economy to be felt, but there are already a number of encouraging signs, and the region should not despise the expanding service sector as a source of jobs and wealth.

I do not wish to imply that manufacturing is of lesser importance, and it is encouraging that the downward trend in manufacturing employment has eased considerably since 1983. We need a prosperous and competitive manufacturing sector, but it is unrealistic to expect the share of manufacturing in total employment to return to the levels of the past. The whole direction of our policy since 1979 has been designed to reverse the long-standing deterioration in the competitiveness of our economy and to create the conditions in which enterprise, initiative and wealth creation can flourish. Manufacturing and service industries have responded well since the trough of the recession, but there are now five jobs in services for every two in manufacturing, and a substantial number of the new jobs created over the past two years have been in the service sector.

Despite difficult times, contracts are being won and new jobs are being created. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think it only fair if I put some of these on the record. I must admit that I was rather taken aback when he told us of the profits that are being earned in his constituency and in the area, and to hear his accusation that these profits—he cited the companies, many of which are household names—are being sent abroad to Thailand where they will be used to start competing businesses. I do not know of any such instances. If he has further details, I hope that he will send me a note to enlighten me. As I say, I was quite unaware that any of the companies he mentioned were funnelling their profits directly out of the country in the manner he described.

GEC, Rugby, has won a £250 million contract to build a power station in China, and GEC Turbine Generators, Coventry, will carry out part of the work. Metro-Cammell at Birmingham won two major contracts in late 1985, one worth £65 million to build rolling stock for British Rail, and the second worth £22·5 million, from Hong Kong's mass transit railway corporation. British Leyland's Land Rover UK has won a £70 million a year contract to sell four-wheel drive Range Rovers in the United States. The hon. Member will be interested to know that at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning I am catching a train to Birmingham, and I shall be visiting Land Rover and Range Rover in the morning. This contract will primarily benefit the Land Rover plant in Solihull and, if successful, could lead to new jobs. That is one of the matters I shall be discussing in the course of my visit.

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): How many jobs will the contracts that the Minister has enumerated bring to the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Edwards)?

Mr. Clark: I cannot answer that, but I am interested to hear of these contracts, and it is one of the subjects about which I shall be seeking further information when I visit the factory tomorrow.

The new Guy Motors industrial park has opened in Wolverhampton on the site of the former British Leyland-owned Guy Motors. The park accommodates 28 small factory units, about half of which have already been let, and will create 140 jobs. Lucas Aerospace at Wolverhampton is reporting excellent growth in 1985, and increased orders for military and civil aircraft. Hundreds of jobs could be created in Walsall if a proposed £17 million shopping development and canalside marina goes ahead.

Unemployment in the region fell between December 1984 and December 1985, and unfilled vacancies increased by over 20 per cent. in the same period. Over 96,000 people were placed in work by the public employment service alone between April and December last year, and many more will have found jobs by other means.

Mr. Bob Edwards: There are 20 people chasing every job in the west midlands.

Mr. Clark: Yes, the hon. Gentleman makes his point again. The position remains serious, but I know that he would not wish to exclude the good news that I am reporting to the House. Unemployment is falling and unfilled vacancies have increased.

The growth of self-employment in the region is encouraging, especially since the west midland has traditionally depended on large employers. The latest statistics show 206,000 self-employed people in the region — 20 per cent. higher than three years earlier. The region's recovery is gradual, but we are seeing the beginnings of a welcome turnround in its fortunes.

I said earlier that we should not disregard the potential of the service sector. The west midlands contains well established tourist attractions, and existing transport links and available accommodation make Birmingham an ideal centre for conference tourism.

Mr. Edwards: Is that a substitute for manufacturing?

Mr. Clark: If it will generate the same level of prosperity and as many jobs, it is a substitute in the terms in which the hon. Gentleman addressed the House.

In 1984, 12 million visitors spent £440 million in the region, sustaining 65,000 jobs. About 85 per cent. of the employment is all year round, and three quarters full time. Day visits to and within the region accounted for further expenditure of about £300 million and employment for

20,000. Some estimates indicate that the opportunity exists to increase the annual value of tourism to the region by up to £150 million in 1990, creating as many as 15,000 new jobs. The hon. Gentleman was generous enough to acknowledge the level of regional aid which the Government have put into the region. I answered his point about the regional development fund grant for British Telecom.

The Government have a role in encouraging those positive changes. The severe economic problems of the region were recognised in November 1984 when the whole of the west midlands metropolitan county plus Kidderminster, Telford and Bridgnorth received assisted area status. Since then, the region has received offers of over £24 million by way of regional development grants. That money has helped create nearly 7,000 jobs and safeguard some 8,000 existing ones. Wolverhampton alone has received offers of nearly £2·5 million, helping to create nearly 1,000 jobs and safeguard a further 100.

That represents an impressive amount of Government assistance. It is also Government assistance focused directly on job creation. The review of regional policy in 1984 led to a new system of regional aid focused on job creation rather than encouraging capital-intensive investment by companies which were not expanding their work force significantly. We also made some service sector activities eligible for regional aid for the first time. We ourselves cannot create the jobs that are needed in Wolverhampton and the west midlands, but through regional aid we can, and do, help the people of the west midlands attract investment which creates jobs.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Police

1. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which Scottish police forces are currently under establishment strength; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): With the exception of Strathclyde police, all Scottish police forces are currently operating close to their authorised establishment levels. Allowing for officers on secondment to central service, Strathclyde is some 180 officers below establishment.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that it is a matter of serious concern that Strathclyde regional council has persistently refused to bring its police force up to establishment strength? Is my hon. Friend aware that that is causing operational problems for the police? Will he and his ministerial colleagues tell the regional council to do everything it can to bring the police force up to establishment strength as quickly as possible?

Mr. MacKay: I share my hon. Friend's concern. The Government continue to give the highest priority to law and order in their expenditure plans. We are ready to pay our share of the cost of a fully manned force in Strathclyde. It is up to the regional council to show the same determination.

Mr. Ron Brown: Was undermanning the cause of the death of Gary McGregor, a young constituent, who was knocked down and killed by a speeding police car? If I provide the details to the hon. Gentleman, will he investigate the matter?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman provides me with the details, I shall certainly look into the case.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the police forces in Scotland for their outstanding work? Will he encourage all local authorities to do everything they can to keep their police forces up to strength and to provide them with adequate equipment?

Mr. MacKay: I am happy to respond to my hon. Friend's invitation to pay tribute to policemen throughout Britain. They do a splendid job, and it is essential that they have the best and most modern equipment available in their fight against crime.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that some of the establishment figures are probably too low? Some regional forces in widespread rural areas, such as the Highlands, are terribly stretched in trying to provide proper cover.

Mr. MacKay: I recall the problems of the northern constabulary. I would not like to say that they were caused by establishment figures being too low. These figures are arrived at with the clear aim of meeting the operational needs of the police forces of the various authorities.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Minister aware that the great surge in recruitment came as a result of the recommendations of the Edmund-Davies commission, which was set up by the Labour Government? Does he agree that the underestablishment at Strathclyde is out of a force of more than 6,000 officers? The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) said that underestablishment was causing operational difficulties. Has the chief constable of Strathclyde approached the Minister or the Secretary of State and expressed anxiety about operational difficulties because of an underestablishment of 100 officers out of a force of more than 6,000?

Mr. MacKay: It is 180 officers out of a force of more than 6,000. The chief constable has not approached me directly and officially about that, but I know from my predecessors that the previous chief constable was worried. We must all share his concern. It is obviously best if the police force is up to its establishment.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

2. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will receive a delegation from the work

force at British Rail Engineering Limited, Springburn, to discuss compulsory redundancies at the workshops; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, is to meet the hon. Member shortly on this subject. Accordingly, no additional meeting is felt to be necessary.

Mr. Martin: Is the Minister aware that this is the first time in the history of BREL that there have been compulsory redundancies? He knows that Springburn is the only remaining railway workshop in Scotland. Although I shall be meeting the Minister of State, Department of Transport, it is important that the Scottish Office gets involved in this serious problem. The Government claim that they want a return to an industrialised society and to increase industry in Scotland. We must therefore have an efficient railway system. Will the Minister meet the delegation?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the future of the works is a matter for the commercial judgment of the British Railways Board and BREL. It is for the board to take account of the need to provide adequate repair and maintenance capacity to meet current and future needs.

As for the effect on the area and the role of the Scottish Office, I can say that we stand ready to deal with any selective financial assistance or regional development grant proposals for projects in the area.

Mr. Pollock: If the Dornoch firth railway bridge project went ahead, might it not provide further job opportunities for the BREL work force at Springburn?

Mr. Ancram: That is still a matter for the British Railways Board to consider. The board and BREL are considering future as well as present requirements and will take account of that when making a decision.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister agree that the Springburn works have a long record of excellence in the railway industry and that the threatened loss of 1,100 jobs in an area of high unemployment is something about which the Scottish Office must be deeply worried, especially as a new crisis has blown up with the recently announced reorganisation of rail workshops which relegates Glasgow to maintenance—very much the second league? Will he use his influence and have positive discussions with his colleagues in the Department of Transport and with the British Railways Board, because our fear is that, once again, the Scottish Office will end up being nothing more than a spectator at the funeral?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the recently announced reorganisation. British Rail has made it clear that more work is needed to determine the effect of its proposals on the work load. At this stage, the board has decided only its general principles. The level of staffing required at Springburn to enable it to fulfil its new role will be a matter for the board to determine in due course.

Local Government Finance (Reform)

3. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish Her Majesty's Government's proposals for reform of local government finance.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I did so yesterday.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am deeply touched by the Government's response to this question, which I tabled a fortnight ago. Concerning commercial and non-domestic rates, I understand that there will be an interim transitional period and that there will be a revaluation. When the day dawns that a national business rate is set, what system of litigation will there be for regions such as mine which are traditionally low-rated? Any level of national rate must militate against the south-east of Scotland and the borders and lead to further closures of small businesses there.

Mr. Rifkind: Any question of a national rate is a good number of years ahead. We have proposed that, in the first years of the new system, there should be an effective freeze on the level of existing non-domestic rates, any increase being accorded to some national index, such as the cost of living or the rate of inflation. I do not have the slightest doubt that that will be a significant improvement for small businesses, including those in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is to be a statement on this matter, but we shall have a short run on it.

Mr. Forth: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that English ratepayers are looking with envy at the speed with which he and his hon. Friends are proceeding with the excellent reform of local government finance? We hope that England will follow the initiative taking place north of the border at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Craigen: When the Secretary of State came round to the idea of a penal poll tax on the domestic sector in Scotland, was it because he had forgotten about the two Green Papers published by previous Conservative Governments which rejected the idea? Was he simply so busy with foreign affairs in recent years that he forgot the history of England? The poll tax of 1380 led to the peasants' revolt.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman has read the Green Paper, he must realise that such a selective reference is misleading, because the Green Paper states that the proposal of the kind that the Government have put forward will

"strengthen the accountability of authorities to their electorates"

and that it

"would have a very broad base and would be suitable for all tiers of local government."

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will take that into account.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) were truly worried about small businesses in his constituency he would drop his party's absurd view that we should have a local income tax? That would have the effect of small businesses having to find an extra 11p in the pound under the PAYE and almost certainly mean their sacking staff and going out of business.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon Friend is quite right. The standard rate of local income tax would be increased by between 2p and 11p in the pound. The least prosperous areas would attract the higher increase in the standard rate of income tax. If the Liberal party believes in that policy, it will take some time to convince the people of Scotland of its desirability.

Steel Industry

4. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Scottish representative of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation to discuss the future of Gartcosh and Ravenscraig and the implications for the Scottish economy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, including its Scottish representative, on 20 January. He also met representatives of the STUC, including the assistant general secretary of the ISTC, on 23 January. There are no plans for a further meeting.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister accept that that was more than the Prime Minister did when the men marched more than 500 miles to state their case? Will he join me in paying tribute to the dignity and commitment of the workers of Gartcosh, especially in recent weeks? Will he respond to their demand that the plant should be retained on a care and maintenance basis and not canabalised, in view of the promised upturn in our country's economic fortunes?

Mr. Stewart: Hon. Members on boh sides of the House have the highest respect for the Scottish steelworkers. The Prime Minister was unable to see the marchers at the time that they had requested. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry wrote to the marchers explaining the position. He offered a meeting either with himself or with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Allen Adams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While we are discussing a matter as important as Gartcosh, is it not a contempt of the House for Conservative Members to be lying down? Will you remind——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: Will my hon. Friend take the earliest opportunity to make it clear to the British Steel Corporation that, while he has accepted its advice that the closure of Gartcosh will not prejudice the future of Ravenscraig, he will not accept similar advice from the BSC if it proposes to close any other significant steelworks in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: The Government have consistently made it clear that any question about Ravenscraig is a strategic matter involving the Government. I have no reason to doubt that there is no question mark over the future of Dalzell.

Mr. George Robertson: Has the Minister's new boss yet told him whether he, like his predecessor, is willing to threaten to resign if there is any possibility of the Government and the British Steel Corporation closing Ravenscraig?

Mr. Stewart: What has become important about the long debate over the Scottish steel industry in recent months is the clear implication and unambiguous statement from the British Steel Corporation that it does not believe that the closure of Gartcosh in any way affects the viability or will determine the future of Ravenscraig. The Government's commitment to Ravenscraig is clear.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend next meets ISTC representatives, will he draw their attention to the fact that if more of them bought British cars that would more effectively ensure the survival of Ravenscraig, and that if more of them supported the Trident programme that would also affect the BSC?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend's points, especially in relation to Trident, are well made.

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister advise his new colleague, the Secretary of State, not to rush into a decision about the moth-balling or maintenance in working order of Gartcosh until he has had time properly to examine the evidence? He did not have time to examine the evidence before taking a decision on Gartcosh, but its maintenence in working order is a different matter.

Mr. Stewart: I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. and learned Friend fully briefed himself from all the papers about that matter. He is arranging to meet the chairman and chairman elect of BSC.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. Friend agree with the ISTC that Ravenscraig is of strategic importance to the Scottish economy? No good is done to that by continually suggesting that the future of Ravenscraig is dependent on Gartcosh. Does he also agree that the wholly unparliamentary demonstration after the meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on 20 January will do no good to the cause of Scottish steel and shows a curious sense of priorities when many more of our constituents work and are involved in higher education than ever worked at Gartcosh?

Mr. Stewart: I thought that the debate on higher education in which my hon. Friend took part was a good one. I was not there for the subsequent demonstration to which he referred. There is a serious danger of talking down the future of the Scottish steel industry. I hope that no Opposition Members will fall into that trap.

Mr. Dewar: Whatever disagreements there may be on the link between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig, does the Minister accept that there is an important continuing role for the Dalzell plate mill and that it is essential for Ravenscraig's future? He said a few minutes ago that he knew of no plans to close it. Is he aware that there are strong rumours — apparently based on information reaching the trade union side—that there is such a plan? Has he investigated that possibility? Can he give a positive assurance that there is no threat to the future of Dalzell? I ask him to be specific on this. Will he make it clear that any plans to close Dalzell will require political and Cabinet approval and will not be left in the hands of the BSC management as some kind of tactical decision.

Mr. Stewart: I have no reason to doubt Dalzell's future. As the House is aware, it serves the offshore industry. There has been scaremongering, and I do not think that that is in anyone's interest.

Economic Policy

5. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to stimulate the Scottish industrial economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's economic policies are already securing growth in the Scottish and United Kingdom economies. The latest figures show strong growth in Scottish industrial output in the first half of last year. A further rise in activity is expected.

Mr. Maclennan: The Secretary of State's reply is complacent. Does he recognise that the worldwide difficulties of the electronics industry bode ill for the future of the 40,000 jobs in the central belt, and that the downward pressure on oil prices must call in question some of the activities in the marginal areas of the North sea? Is it not the Government's duty to take counter-cyclical measures to stimulate the building industry, in particular, which is depressed?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that there have been some problems in the electronics industry, especially regarding semi-conductors, but that does not apply to the whole of the industry. My first responsibility as Secretary of State for Scotland was to take part in setting up a new company in Cumbernauld — Isola, from Germany — providing 200 jobs in the electronics industry.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman referred to the need to stimulate the economy. He should be aware that since 1980 the Scottish Office has substantially increased capital expenditure in real terms on the Scottish economy in areas for which it is responsible.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. and learned Friend not find it a sad reflection on the Scottish media that although during the past month the Department of Trade and Industry has assisted in bring two major job-creating projects to Scotland, there has been virtually no publicity for the fact that TMC and English Sewing Cotton are moving to Scotland and creating as many jobs as are lost at Gartcosh?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Sadly, there is a much greater willingness to announce job losses than job gains. The media's responsibility should be to give equal publicity to both.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Scottish Development Agency, from which we expect development of the Scottish economy, should not be using the rate of return as a test? One can get a high rate of return by spending money on financial instruments. The SDA should be spending it on getting more jobs and improving industry. Its success should be judged against those objectives, not against the rate of return.

Mr. Rifkind: I am willing to listen to any suggestions that the SDA wishes to put to me for an improvement in its performance. I must emphasise that the SDA has a high budget and has been extremely successful in attracting investment and building up our economic infrastructure.

Mr. Pollock: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Scottish economy will not be stimulated, certainly in rural areas, if there is a re-rating of agricultural land? Does he recall that until recently that appeared to be the policy of the alliance? Does he expect the alliance to reaffirm that policy in our debate later this afternoon?

Mr. Rifkind: That may well have been the agreed policy of the alliance, but we can confidently expect to hear little about it in the months to come.

Mr. James Hamilton: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Confederation of British Industry has stated that it expects a reduction in manufacturing industry and that that will mean an increase in unemployment in Scotland? In addition to the closure of Gartcosh with the loss of 700 jobs, 460 jobs will be lost at the Clydesdale and other tube manufacturing works. Is he aware that, because of that, Lanarkshire is fast becoming an industrial desert? Is it not time that the Secretary of State did something about that, and paid attention to the point about the SDA made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)?

Mr. Rifkind: Lanarkshire's problems are indeed serious, especially regarding employment. The SDA already has a substantial role in both the Motherwell and Coatbridge projects. It hopes to enable those projects to continue and, if possible, to expand. In addition to the money that the BSC provides in areas of steel closures, and new money from the European regional development fund, there are substantial sums of both public money and private investment in Lanarkshire. We welcome and encourage that.

Mr. Lambie: Why is the Secretary of State allowing Scottish Office officials to stop a Finnish company from constructing a paper mill in Irvine, which will create 700 jobs? Surely that is interference in the commercial judgment of the company, which wants to come to Irvine?

Mr. Rifkind: That is an absurd remark. Obviously we are extremely anxious to attract pulp mill facilities to Scotland, and naturally we will do all that we can to facilitate that. The Government cannot direct which part of Scotland shall have such a facility. If the hon. Gentleman has the interests of Scotland at heart he should do all that he can to ensure that the facility comes to Scotland, and should not deter that prospect by irresponsible comments.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that Icarus Trucks is going to Austria rather than Prestwick freeport because his Department refused the company a grant? Is he further aware that Argyll Sports Cars will go to another part of Scotland rather than Prestwick freeport because it has been directed to do so by the Scottish Development Association? Will the Secretary of State investigate why it is that Customs and Excise, the SDA and, indeed, his own Department are undermining Prestwick freeport?

Mr. Rifkind: On reflection, the hon. Gentleman will be the first to appreciate that the SDA cannot direct anyone to go anywhere. The Government and the SDA have a responsibility to attract investment to Scotland. The precise location chosen by an investor is determined by that investor in the light of all the circumstances.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is no lack of demand in Scotland, and that the Government's proposals on rating reform by making more people accountable, will, certainly help industry? The proposed Buy British campaign will also stimulate demand. These things will do a lot to offset the imbalance in imports.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Scotland is doing reasonably well compared to the United Kingdom

as a whole. The latest figures show an increase in manufacturing output in Scotland of 5½ per cent. compared with 3 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. From a Scottish point of view that is an encouraging development.

Mr. Ewing: Does no one in ministerial offices tell Ministers anything now? Has no one in the Secretary of State's office drawn his attention to the CBI survey published in today's *Glasgow Herald?* That survey shows that orders are down, employment is down and output and investment are back to 1963 levels, not 1979 levels. Against the background of that CBI survey, how on earth can the Secretary of State say that the Scottish economy is flourishing? It is precisely because the Secretary of State and his colleagues have presided over the destruction of the Scottish industrial economy that they will be completely wiped out at the next general election.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is quoting the CBI. He might like to find out from the CBI, including the CBI in Scotland, whether it would welcome the return of a Labour Government in preference to the present one.

Schools (Closures)

6. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applies in determining the provision of new schools to serve developing areas; and what criteria are used by regional authorities when school closures are proposed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In determining capital allocations, priority is given to projects designed to provide additional places in areas where the school population is growing and there is insufficient accommodation, and to rationalisation proposals. The criteria for most school closures are determined by education authorities without reference to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Is the Minister aware that there is a crying need for a new school in the developing area of Balloch/Eastfield in my constituency? Is he further aware that the policy he has just mentioned means that a new school will be built only if another school closes, possibly Seafar primary school? Will the Minister see to it that Strathclyde regional council is given sufficient funds to build a new school and maintain the existing primary school provision throughout Cumbernauld and Kilsyth?

Mr. Stewart: There is substantial overprovision of primary places in Cumbernauld, and simply to add a primary school at Balloch-Eastfield would worsen that problem. That would be bad educationally and a waste of resources. As part of a process of rationalisation, the capital allocation for education authorities shortly to be announced will include provision for a new primary school at Balloch-Eastfield. Work on that school will start next year.

Mrs. McCurley: Does my hon. Friend agree that in my constituency, in the greatly expanding village of Houston, there is a legitimate demand for extra school places and additional school building? That is a highly rated area. It is extremely dangerous for some of the children to travel the miles expected of them to the nearest school.

Mr. Stewart: I note with interest and sympathy what my hon. Friend has said. As she will appreciate, proposals have to come through Strathclyde region to the Scottish Office, but I shall investigate the up-to-date position on Houston.

Agricultural Advisory Service

7. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following the DAFS paper on agricultural advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: A substantial number of comments have been received on the Department's consultation paper. Further responses are expected. Careful consideration will be given to the views before a conclusion is reached.

Mr. Stewart: Is the Minister aware that the maintenance of research and development services is vital for Scottish agriculture and that the intentions announced are causing grave disquiet throughout Scotland? Those are in addition to action such as the removal of the MacCaulay institute from Aberdeen and the curtailment of the veterinary investigation services, which will lead to a decrease in the supervision of diseases communicable to man. All the cuts are having effects on the industry, on employment and possibly on health. What action does the Minister intend to take?

Mr. MacKay: As usual, the right hon. Gentleman greatly overstates the case. The Government fully recognise the value of advisory services on the ground. For that reason we believe that producers, as direct beneficiaries, should themselves make a contribution towards costs, besides the major and continuing funding from Government.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister accept that the consultative document has nothing to do with priorities for agriculture in Scotland, but has everything to do with Treasury cuts? We have a 41 per cent. cut in the advisory services, downright dangerous proposals for the state veterinary service in Scotland, and now the moronic idea of removing the Macaulay institute from Aberdeen. Is there no end to the sacrifices which rural Scotland will have to make under the Tory Administration?

Mr. MacKay: I invite the hon. Gentleman to do a check on the amount of money that the Government spend on rural Scotland. He will then see the absolute fallacy of his case. On the future of the Macaulay institute, the rationale behind the proposals was set out in the paper published in December. Further study will be required before a decision can be taken on whether the new amalgamated institute should be in Aberdeen or in Edinburgh.

Mr. Bruce: Notwithstanding what has been said by other hon. Members, will the Minister acknowledge that the 41 per cent. cut is proving extremely difficult to implement and will be very damaging if implemented on the time scale that the Government want? Even if he will not rescind the cut, will he agree to extend the time scale to give the colleges a reasonable opportunity to cope with what is being asked of them? To implement the time scale as proposed will prove very damaging.

Mr. MacKay: I have no plans to adjust the timetable already announced.

Teachers (Dispute)

8. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am in no doubt of the urgent need to get a resolution of this protracted and damaging dispute. I believe that that can be found only through negotiation between teachers and employers on the basis of the resources which the Government have already said they are prepared to make available in return for a suitable agreement on teachers' duties and conditions of service.

Mr. Dalyell: The Secretary of State was reported as saying to parents at Balerno high school that there had to be some compromise. What does he have in mind as regards compromise?

Mr. Rifkind: I can tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what I had in mind. In response to the wishes of the unions, the Government indicated in an unprecedented way that they were able and willing to make £125 million available on top of whatever was negotiated in the normal fashion. I believe the union response to that proposal was depressing and unjustified.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although we have been arguing for about 18 months, there is no sign of a welcome from the Educational Institute of Scotland for the very generous offer of £125 million that my right hon. and learned Friend has said he will make available? In view of the fact that many parents are reaching the stage of despair about their children's education, will he make a last effort to get the EIS to meet him to resolve salaries and conditions of service through the proper channels?

Mr. Rifkind: The proposal which the Government made would, if accepted, add an average of about £1,000 to a teacher's salary on top of what might be negotiated otherwise in the normal fashion. I have received a request from the Churches, which have been helping in this matter, to come and see me, and I have said that I will be very happy to see them.

Mr. Steel: To what extent is the settlement of this dispute being held up by the lack of a settlement in the parallel dispute in England and Wales? In the course of seeking a compromise, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman talk further to his colleagues in the Treasury about securing more for the current year's settlement? Is he aware that the Scottish Examination Board says that it will be one-third short of the number of markers that it needs, which surely brings into danger the whole academic year for many of our pupils?

Mr. Rifkind: We all welcome the prospect of an end to disruption in England and Wales. We have to note that the agreement seems to have been reached on the basis of no new resources being available from the Government in addition to those already promised. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the position concerning examinations in Scotland is very worrying. The Scottish Examination Board is doing all in its power to minimise the problems that will be caused, and the Scottish Office will be giving full support to efforts of that kind. Nevertheless, one cannot avoid the inevitable conclusion that if this disruption continues it will be impossible to provide a normal examination service.

Mr. Henderson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the wisest decision of the EIS in the past year has been to hold its annual conference in St. Andrews next week? Is he aware that I will be addressing that conference? Is there any message that he would like me to give to the Scottish teachers on that occasion?

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted that my hon. Friend will be addressing the EIS conference in his constituency. I hope that he will put to the EIS the very clear view of the overwhelming majority of people in Scotland that, whatever view they take of the merits of the dispute, this disruption of our schools and the threat to Scottish examinations is not justified.

Mr. Strang: Now that the initiative of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church has been cautiously noted by the EIS, and the management side has agreed to a continuing commitment to an independent pay review, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that he probably has a better chance now than his predecessor had of resolving a dispute which is seriously blighting the future of many Scottish schoolchildren? Will he, therefore, make every effort to come forward with a positive initiative or response when he meets the Church leaders on 10 February?

Mr. Rifkind: The views which Mr. Pollock is reported to have put to his colleagues in the EIS were, as the hon. Gentleman says, noted rather than approved, and Mr. Pollock himself expressed considerable disappointment at the response of his colleagues. Naturally, I will listen with great interest to the Church leaders. I must emphasise that this, as we all know, is a dispute not just about pay but about conditions of service. It has to be pointed out that all the local authorities in Scotland, Labour-controlled as well as Conservative, have emphasised to the teachers that any final package must include conditions of service as well as pay. It is not just the Government, not just Conservative authorities, who are saying that. Labour authorities are saying it as well, and that is a very important consideration.

Mr. Canavan: Instead of merely repeating the bland statements of his predecessor, when will the Secretary of State get it into his head that the surest way of bringing to an end this very damaging dispute is to set up an independent pay review? In the meantime, will he investigate one aspect of the examination boycott, namely, the alleged inconsistencies in the marking of SCE examination papers, possibly caused by the methods used by the examination board to recruit markers, some of them scabs and blacklegs with dubious qualifications and little, if any, experience of presenting pupils for Scottish examinations?

Mr. Rifkind: I have every confidence in the Scottish Examination Board. The hon. Gentleman is showing disgraceful contempt for many honourable people who have given time and energy to assisting Scottish youngsters in the pursuit of their education. The hon. Gentleman really should substantiate his disgraceful allegations, or withdraw them.

Mr. Fletcher: Even allowing for the responsibilities of local authorities in this matter, will my right hon. and learned Friend lay his best proposals for teachers' pay and conditions of service on the table, if only to make it abundantly clear that the responsibility for this damaging and protracted dispute lies with the EIS?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have put their proposals on the table. Eighteen months into the dispute, the EIS and teachers' unions have yet to put forward a claim, and that itself is a most extraordinary position to be in.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Secretary of State aware that for the first time he has conceded today that the examinations are in serious jeopardy? So far his predecessor has given the impression that the examinations would go ahead uninterrupted. Since the right hon. and learned Gentleman became Secretary of State, has he approached the EIS and other teaching unions with a view to discussing this serious dispute? Will he be a bit more flexible about conditions of service, against the background of the introduction of the standard grades and Munn and Dunning? Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman will concede that even teachers find it difficult to know what their conditions of service will be until the introduction of the standard grades and Munn and Dunning have settled down. That will take some considerable time, so may we have some flexibility on that point as well?

Mr. Rifkind: The teachers' unions have said that they would like me to meet the delegation from the Churches. I have already said that I shall be doing so, and a meeting has been arranged.

The Government have always been flexible on conditions of service. We have not sought to lay down in advance what the final detail of a package must be. What we have said, and what the local authorities, including Labour local authorities, have said, is that this must be part of a package and must be negotiated.

My right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State for Scotland never gave a categorical assurance that examinations would not be affected, because he was not in a position to ensure that that would be the case. The extent of disruption will be determined, not by myself or, indeed, by the hon. Gentleman, but by the extent to which members of the teaching profession refuse to carry out their normal responsibilities. That is something in their control and not in that of the Government.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply, I give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State take an initiative in this matter? When he was appointed to his present office he took the view — [HON. MEMBERS: "Order."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should not have called the hon. Member, but I have. Please carry on.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State take an initiative in relation to the education dispute, because one of the grounds on which his appointment to his present office was welcomed was that a new incumbent might be able to take steps which his predecessor could not? Does he understand just how deeply feelings run in relation to this matter and that we look to him for some initiative?

Mr. Rifkind: Not only do I understand how deeply feelings run, but I share those feelings. No one who has the best interests of Scottish education at heart can simply look with equanimity at the major problems that are being caused, not simply in regard to examinations, important though they are, but in relation to the long-term damage being done to the education system as long as the dispute continues. That is why I have said that a compromise is necessary. There will be no victors and vanquished in this dispute, and it is necessary for the unions as well as others to show a willingness to achieve an acceptable package, acceptable not just to themselves and the Government, but to the local authorities, which are their employers.

Youth Training Scheme

9. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the youth training scheme run by the volunteer centre in the west of Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Since the decision by the Glasgow volunteer centre to discontinue its participation in the YTS when the two-year scheme begins in April was announced on 15 January, the centre has sought further clarification from the Manpower Services Commission on a number of points — I understand with a view to its possible continued involvement with YTS.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Minister aware that there will be a loss of 213 training places on the scheme and 50 full-time jobs if the volunteer centre is forced to close because of the financing now given by the MSC? That will also apply to many other voluntary organisations throughout Scotland. Will he meet the MSC urgently to ensure that such schemes continue, otherwise there will be a loss of places, which will make nonsense of the Government's promise that every youngster will get a training place?

Mr. Stewart: I am in touch with the MSC on this matter, but I emphasise that the MSC has gone to great lengths to accommodate the current mode B1 providers. In addition to the standard monthly payments and management agents' fee, such providers would get premium funding of £110 per month and transitional funding over the first two years of up to £70 per filled place per month. Naturally I would regret it if the centre withdrew, but my understanding is that out of 15 voluntary organisations currently providing the one-year YTS only four have said that for various reasons they will not participate in the two-year scheme.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Is the Minister aware that widespread dismay is being caused by the prospect of the cessation of the centre's work in this respect? As this is due to take effect in March, owing to a change in the method of funding, will he at least ensure the postponement of that change so that the matter can be discussed in depth to see whether a satisfactory solution can be found?

Mr. Stewart: I repeat that detailed discussions are continuing. On the general point, the funding arrangements take full account of representations on behalf of voluntary bodies at the youth training board and were agreed by the MSC, which, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, represents a wide range of interests.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that the problems in Glasgow have also occurred elsewhere? Is he further aware that experience in other areas shows that disabled individuals can be offered training under the schemes and that an approach by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and myself in relation to this problem has met with a very positive response?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about provision for disabled youngsters. On the point that he and others have raised with me, I can reassure him that there are applications on the Dundee schemes.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister aware that more than one third of the people involved in this come from my constituency in Paisley? Is he further aware that the real problem is the alteration in funding, because certain organisations are not in a position to raise, as it were, employer money? Does he accept that this means not only a social loss for the young people, who could not easily adapt to participation in a Government scheme, but the loss of the social work carried out by them, which includes the decoration of 2,000 houses in my constituency, which otherwise could not have taken place?

Mr. Stewart: I know of the hon. Gentleman's constituency concern, as he has written to us about it. I must emphasise, however, that employer placement is an important aspect of the two-year YTS because it provides wholly realistic work experience and enables employers to contribute directly to the cost.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Drink-driving

39. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many drivers were prosecuted for drink-driving offences alleged to have been committed between 24 December 1985 and 3 January 1986.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): As at 22 January 1986, 22 offenders had appeared in court and proceedings have been instituted against another 15 in respect of drink-driving offences committed during the period to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Marshall: Can the Minister say how many of those cases were just above the limit, how many a fair bit above the limit and how many a great deal above the limit? Is he aware of the very large increase in drink-driving offences since the new year, especially in Strathclyde? Will he guarantee to wage war on drunk drivers all year round and not just during the festive season?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I regret that at this stage I cannot give any idea of the levels applying in the particular cases. As the figures that I have given relate only to cases that have already reached the procurator fiscal or gone into court, I expect that there will be a considerable number in addition to that. As I told the House recently, in 1984 the total number of people successfully prosecuted for drunk driving in Scotland was about 13,500. As far as I and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate are concerned, there will certainly be no let-up in the prosecution of those who drink and drive.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the message from the Scottish police forces at Christmas that they intended to get tough on drunk drivers was successful in making people think twice about drinking and then driving? As so many road accidents after dark are drink-related, does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is an acceptable infringement of personal liberty for the police to be able to carry out random breath tests at the roadside?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: At the moment it is difficult to say whether the campaign has been wholly successful. The point that I should like to emphasise to my hon. Friend, and more generally, is that I do not believe that it is simply a campaign that needs to be waged at Christmas and the new year. It must be maintained throughout the year, because, contrary to popular belief, there is still an unhappily high incidence of drink-driving at other times. On the matter of random testing, I think my hon. Friend will appreciate that it is not strictly a matter for me. However, he may already be aware that under the Road Traffic Act 1972 the police have a general power to stop such people from driving.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Minister recall the case that I brought to his attention where a drunken driver who was three times above the limit killed a 69-year-old woman in my constituency and was given a slap over the wrists for it? Does he not recognise that there is widespread anger throughout the United Kingdom over the leniency of sentences given to those potential murderers? What steps are the Government taking to see that sentences reflect the seriousness of the case against the drivers? Can the hon. and learned Gentleman give any figures of the sentences imposed on such people during the winter season, over the Christmas season in particular, and over the year in general in Scotland?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I certainly remember the case to which the hon. Gentleman and many of his hon. Friends have already referred. I think he will appreciate that in Scotland we try to separate the prosecution and the judiciary as rigorously as possible. Accordingly, it is inappropriate for me to comment on any sentence. However, I take into account what he has to say and the feelings that are expressed by others on this matter. That is always taken into account when deciding whether a particular case is more appropriately dealt with summarily, by a sheriff and jury or possibly by the High Court itself.

Crown Immunity

40. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what consideration has been given by the Crown Office to the implications for prosecution policy of changes in Crown immunity.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In the event of any change in Crown immunity whereby persons who at present are not subject to prosecution could become liable, no special consideration would be necessary. The same criteria as are applied in all criminal cases would be used.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the revelations last week about the deplorable standards of kitchen hygiene in hospitals such as Stanley Royd hospital in Wakefield and Woodilee hospital in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), where cockroaches were found in the kitchen, is it not time that hospital premises were deprived of Crown immunity so that the Solicitor-General could, if necessary, take out a prosecution against the Secretary of State for Scotland, who, as Minister responsible for the Health Service in Scotland, is primarily reponsible for putting the health of patients in our hospitals at risk?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that that is not strictly a matter

for me, indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already said that there is to be a review of the matter in relation to the National Health Service. In any event, I think the hon. Gentleman appreciates that, flamboyant as it may sound, my right hon. and learned Friend would not be someone who is subject to prosecution.

Mr. Kennedy: When this matter was raised in a much earlier Scottish Question Time, the Solicitor-General referred to the internal review that was taking place. He may recall that I asked whether his Department had been in touch with the Department of Health and Social Security south of the border, which is instituting the review and had tried to put something in to it. It had not then. Has it now?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In view of the observations that have been made about advice from my counterpart south of the border in relation to other Departments and any legal advice that might have emanated from the Law Officers in Scotland, I think that in the circumstances I should decline to answer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that if the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) is concerned about dirty conditions in hospital kitchens he should advise the health boards to contract out the services, and the contractors would enjoy no such Crown immunity?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My hon. Friend is correct. If there were a private contractor providing those services, because of its relationship, it would not enjoy Crown immunity.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that there was great concern in my constituency about the disclosures in Woodilee hospital, and one of his hon. Friends, the Minister responsible for health, was kind enough to meet me? Notwithstanding that, will he give an assurance to the House that the review to which he referred will be completed in the near future and that action will be taken as a matter of extreme urgency?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have to say that that is not a matter for me. However, I will say, as I said in my original answer, that if there were to be a change in Crown immunity I can assure the hon. Gentleman that no one who is in breach of the criminal law, whatever position he holds, would be afforded any special treatment. They would all be treated in the same way, with the same criteria applying to anyone who breaks the law.

Abusive Language and Threatening Behaviour

41. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether he has any plans to initiate a more vigorous prosecution policy in respect of abusive language and threatening behaviour generally, and in particular when directed against persons in positions of responsibility, including the police; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Procurators fiscal presently give full and proper consideration to reports of such behaviour and criminal proceedings are taken where appropriate. I am not aware of any cases where that has not been done, but if my hon. Friend will provide me with details of any case concerning him, I shall certainly investigate.

Mr. Henderson: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that in some sections of society there seems to be an idea that people in positions of responsibility, such as teachers and policemen, are fair game for the abuse referred to in my question? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the opposite is the case? We, as a society, put those people in a particular position of responsibility, and abuse of them is an abuse of society, and should be treated much more seriously than it sometimes is.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As I have said, the policy that we try to follow in prosecution is to make no special distinction between ordinary members of society and those who hold other positions. I accept that sometimes it seems to be the view that police officers, in particular, are fair game for assault and violence, whereas they are entitled to the protection of the law as much as are ordinary citizens.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Solicitor-General for Scotland aware that the only two recent incidents of abuse and such offences against people of public standing were in the Tory-held constituencies of Tayside, North, against the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), and in Perth and Kinross, against the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn)? Is there not a lesson to be learnt when there is all that violence in Tory heartland? Nothing like that ever happens in any of the 41 Labour-held constituencies.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am certainly aware of the two incidents to which the hon. Gentleman refers. He talked about the incident at Tayside. I am pleased to say that no such incident has happened on the eastern seaboard, in Angus.

Later—

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recollect that the last question to my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland drew attention to an assault on me. The individual who was charged and convicted of that assault was judged to be in need of medical attention. I suggest that the question was unworthy of the House, and did nothing for the standard, conduct or reputation of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for the way in which questions are presented.

Local Government Finance (Scotland)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I make a short statement on specifically Scottish issues arising from yesterday's publication of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government".

The general lines of the proposals were explained by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Government are ready to deal with the manifest defects of the present system of paying for local services, and we plan to introduce legislation which will replace unfair domestic rates by a community charge; will bring reasonable protection to shops and businesses; and will set up a fairer and simpler grant system and remove the need for the present system of penalties against local authorities. We have invited comments on those proposals by 31 July.

In Scotland, experience of the past few years has shown conclusively that existing domestic rates are wholly unacceptable to a very wide range of the population. We recognise that and are therefore at present planning for early legislation in the coming parliamentary Session to abolish the domestic rating system in Scotland. The Green Paper envisages that all domestic rate bills in Scotland would be cut by 40 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1989 and would be finally abolished at the end of March 1992. It will follow that there will be no further revaluation of domestic property in Scotland.

The proposed community charge will, we believe, be fairer than domestic rates. Those who have been used to contributing nothing from their earnings to the revenue raised by domestic rates may regret the new charge, but most will accept that it is not unreasonable that we should discontinue a system that imposes the full burden on a minority of the public, including some of the poorest members of the community.

Shopkeepers and business men who have had taxation without representation will now be protected from the effects of an unfair system. Any increases in their rates will only occur on the basis of a national index. Business in both rural and urban areas will find this far preferable to the present Scottish system.

Scottish local authorities will, we hope, welcome the end of the present system of penalties that has not helped the relationship between central and local government.

For some time the Scottish public and ratepayers in particular have called for effective action. These proposals represent a fair and reasonable response, and I look forward to hearing the views of ratepayers and others affected by them.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I extend my sympathy to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He has inherited this rather ramshackle and confused scheme from his predecessor, and, of course, every advocate on occasions gets a rotten brief. I am sure he is doing his best with it.

There is a large number of points in connection with non-domestic rating and the grant system that could be raised, but I want to concentrate on domestic rates. Will the Secretary of State accept that his so-called community charge is no more than a flat-rate poll tax—so much per Scot—which means that a man of modest means would pay the same as the richest in the land? Is the key to the philosophy behind this scheme the admission on page 23 of the Green Paper:

"Moving from rates to a flat-rate community charge would mark a major change in the direction of local government finance back to the notion of charging for local authority services"?

That is a direct repudiation of the redistributive principle which will have woeful consequences for many in our society. The Green Paper concedes that 52 per cent. of Scottish households will be worse off when the community charge is implemented.

Will the Secretary of State accept that the majority of the victims will be ordinary working families, and that those who will largely benefit will be the upper income groups—doctors, lawyers, accountants and Members of Parliament?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman seriously asking me to back this scheme, which may well reduce my personal outgoings by £700 a year, when I know that cash will have to be recouped at the expense of families, perhaps in my own constituency, who have a lot less money and many more financial problems? Is the only basis on which I could give my support the principle of self-interest? Whichever way the figures are presented, will not the poorer families with three of four adult members be hit, and hit hard?

I protest about the ram-stam rush to legislate in Scotland. Has the Secretary of State reflected on the contrast with yesterday's statement from the Department of the Environment, which made it clear that the pace of further development would depend on the outcome of consultation? Does the pledge that there will be legislation in the next Session mean that consultation in Scotland is an empty sham?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman promise that there will be a White Paper before we legislate, dealing with the many practical problems that will arise? What will be the cost of the special register? Once the Social Security Bill is in operation, does the Secretary of State expect local authorities to sue an unemployed 19-year-old for his poll tax contribution of £40 or £50? If he does, will that money be clawed back out of that person's benefit?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman deal with issues raised in the White Paper, such as second homes —who pays and how much? Will he give a guarantee that students in digs and in halls of residence will be adequately compensated, and that this matter will be negotiated and settled in Scotland before Scottish legislation is introduced? We need detailed answers to that and a myriad other questions, and we need the opportunity to have an early and thorough debate.

Does the Secretary of State accept that this is an exercise in political opportunism which will lead to confusion and injustice? Does he recall that in August 1983 the Scottish Office produced a White Paper entitled "Valuation and Rating in Scotland: Proposals for Reform"? Will he confirm that a poll tax was canvassed at that time but the result

"was not at all conclusive for radical change"?

Will he confirm that the Government then decided to reform the basically sound rating system, and concluded:

"there is little point in replacing rates with an untried and unfamiliar system having little support from the outset"?

Is that not exactly what the right hon. Gentleman now proposes? Is not the scheme which is on the table

unfamiliar, unjust and lacking in popular support—all that — and socially divisive? Will the right hon. Gentleman think again?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman gave exactly the predictable and depressing response that I and my colleagues confidently expected. I remind him that, earlier this year, during discussions on these matters, he said that there was a case for reform. We have not heard one indication today of the type of reform that the hon. Gentleman would support. The hon. Gentleman and the Labour party are entirely wedded to the existing system of domestic rates, because it suits their political requirements. If the hon. Gentleman had had the courage to admit that fact, I think that we would all have thanked him for it.

I am happy to respond to the hon. Gentleman's questions. He suggested that this was a poll tax. He knows very well that the phrase "poll tax" normally means that one will not have the right to vote unless there is a right to tax.

Mr. Dewar: So much per skull.

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted that the Opposition now accept that the right to vote will in no way be affected by these proposals. *[Interruption.]* I wish that they would make up their minds about exactly what their view is.

Mr. Dewar: So much for Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman did not need to read the Green Paper to know that. The important point I am making—I think it is accepted by the Opposition—is that the various claims in the past about a poll tax being a tax on the right to vote were always absurd, as is now acknowledged.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that working families will be worse off. Let us be quite clear about this. A household which consists either of a single pensioner or of a single-parent family will undoubtedly be better off. A household which consists of two working adults will be better off, or in the same position; or, if it is worse off, the difference will be relatively minimal. Those who will be most significantly damaged——

Mr. Dewar: Not in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Indeed, in Scotland. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would let me answer his questions.

The most significant loss will be experienced by those single working adults who, until now, have paid nothing whatsoever towards the requirements of domestic rates. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman, who rightly prides himself on being a fair person, would say that a system that allows many hundreds of thousands of people to earn money not to pay a penny towards the cost of domestic rates does not require change.

In Scotland, 2 million adults, including many spouses, are not householders and are not liable to pay one penny in rates. Even if the number of spouses of existing ratepayers were deducted from that number, there are still hundreds of thousands — probably as many as three quarters of a million—single adults who do not make any contribution to the cost of the rating system. Any tax system that rests on such a narrow base is profoundly unfair. As the Green Paper states, for those on the lowest incomes domestic rates are more regressive than the proposed community charge.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether households with three or four working adults will be worse off. I accept that the majority of households with three or four working adults would be worse off. The hon. Gentleman may prefer a system in which four working adults in one house pay exactly the same as the single old-age pensioner next door. He may think that that is fair, but I certainly do not and nor do the people of Scotland. It is no use the hon. Gentleman referring to single old-age pensioners who may be on rate rebate or receiving social security benefits, as there are many single old-age pensioners whose income is just above the level required for rate rebate or social security benefits and who pay the same as a household with four adult earners. If that is what the hon. Gentleman believes to be a fair system, he has changed his definition of fairness.

The hon. Gentleman had the sheer nerve to criticise me and the Government for contemplating legislation in this Parliament. Only yesterday, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, criticised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for not abolishing domestic rates in this Parliament. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. The fact is, as the people of Scotland well know, that the Labour party is so wedded to the system of domestic rates that, whatever alternative the Government came up with, it would have been condemned by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) on bringing forward this progressive measure. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Opposition's reaction shows that they would do much better to read Green Papers before they criticised them?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that many households comprise only one wage earner or one retired person, who will be manifestly much better off under these proposals? Does he agree that, under the community charge scheme, ratepayers in Dumfries and Galloway who might be on a charge of only £155 would be considerably better off than they are under the existing arrangements?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. Many people, especially single people, will be considerably better off. When people are evaluating the proposals, they should not look simply at the immediate effect—the community charge that their household would pay as compared with domestic rates. Existing domestic ratepayers should also be aware that any future increases in local authority spending, instead of being paid for by the minority of Scottish people who are ratepayers, will be paid for by all Scottish adults who benefit from local services. That is a much fairer system and one which will bring not only short-term but long-term benefit to ratepayers.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman's attention been drawn to the far-seeing editorial in the *Glasgow Herald* —not a trendy Lefty or wishy-washy Liberal paper— which, on 27 November 1985, commenting on the rumours of that time concerning the Government's proposals, said:

"It will mean the laird in the castle pays the same as the gardener in the cottage."

Is the Secretary of State aware that this sums up perfectly the alliance view about the so-called community charge

[Sir Russell Johnston]

which, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has said, is a poll tax which does not differentiate between how much someone who is well off and someone who is not well off pays? How can the Secretary of State genuinely justify such a stride back into the middle ages?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if the long campaign to replace the repressive, regressive and unjust rating system is to succeed it is important that the new system is not unfair? Can he promise us that, in inviting comments by 31 July, he will open mindedly and fairly examine them all? From the alliance he will get a cogent case in favour of a local income tax.

Mr. Rifkind: If the local laird moved out of his castle and into a permanent suite at Gleneagles, he would not be liable for one penny of domestic rates, irrespective of his income. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that domestic rates are not an agreeable option, either, from the point of view of the objective that he seeks.

As for the Liberal attraction to local income tax, if it were introduced, it would result in an increase in the standard rate of income tax of between 2p and a maximum of 11p. Moreover, the least prosperous parts of Scotland would be liable to attract the largest increase. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it would be manifestly absurd if, instead of one level of income tax in Scotland, we ended up with 56 different levels, one for each of the local district councils. I am sure that most people would not want that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we are dealing with a Green Paper which will no doubt occupy much of the House's time this Session.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Is the Secretary of State aware that most of us feel that these ill-considered proposals have much more to do with the peasants' revolt at Perth last year than with the one in medieval times? Is he further aware that his proposals will result in a considerable shift of the burden of local government finance to the poorer section of the community? If he wanted any proof of that, he needed only listen to the cheers that came from his Back Benchers when he made his statement. Is this really a Green Paper? Does the Secretary of State still have a receptive mind? Is he really willing to listen and make changes on the basis of comments from right hon. and hon. Members and others?

Mr. Rifkind: We are anxious to hear any ideas and responses. Is the right hon. Gentleman asking us to say that he is comfortable with the system which requires single pensioners and single-parent families in his constituency to pay the same as households of four adults, all of whom are bringing good money into the home? Does he believe that that is a fair and defensible system? If not, what does he propose as an alternative?

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most interesting and pleasant by-products of the new system is the possibility of a truce between central and local government?

Mr. Rifkind: It ought to be an added attraction of our proposals that the system of penalties will no longer be necessary, primarily because local authorities will be genuinely accountable to the whole of their electorate rather than just theoretically so. As long as we have a system in which only a minority of the electorate has to pay for excessive expenditure, some local authorities will be attracted to exploit such an arrangement. Because that opportunity will not be available to them in future, the system of penalties such as we have had will no longer be necessary.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I ask a very simple question: who will come off best, the rich or the poor?

Mr. Rifkind: I have told the House before, and I shall say it again, that the people who will be least well off as a result of these proposals are single earning adults who until now have paid nothing. Wealthy people will not be alone in benefiting, as is suggested by the Opposition, as the beneficiaries will include large numbers of people on modest incomes living in heavily rated properties, single pensioners and single-parent families—people whom the hon. Gentleman would like to pretend that he champions.

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the advantages of the new system is that business in Scotland will now be able to look forward to a period of stability? It will be able to plan without worrying about rapidly changing levels of spending by local authorities? Does he agree that a uniform national rate confined to Scotland might be good for the business sector in cities but would not be helpful to the hard-pressed business sector in rural areas?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. A uniform business rate in Scotland would create major increases in the rates burden for many businesses in rural areas. Those who argue for that proposition would not find favour among small businesses and industries in those areas.

The chambers of commerce and others who have spoken to me have always said that they most need predictability to enable them to plan what the extra burden on their business, shop or industry is likely to be. If any future rate increase is tied to a national index, they will have that predictability. That is why I believe that the business sector will welcome the proposals.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): As the right hon. and learned Gentleman rightly refuses to stick to the present domestic rating system, and wrongly dismisses local income tax, can he tell us in what important respect his mind is open to consultation between now and 31 July?

Mr. Rifkind: We have said that the Green Paper is subject to consultation. We wish to hear proposals from local authorities, ratepayers and all interested parties. As the House would expect, we have shown that we have proposals. This is not a new debate; it has been going on for a long time. We will be happy and willing to consider constructively any reasonable ideas that are put to us.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Surely the Minister will accept that the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) is the heart of the matter. Is it not the case that the rich will benefit and the poor will suffer? Would anything other than a Thatcherite Government have dreamt of replacing a reactionary, repressive, unfair tax like rating with something even worse?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand why the Opposition do not like the proposals. They interfere with the cosy arrangement that has suited them for so many years.

On the basis of the Green Paper, 48 per cent. of Scottish households will benefit. If the hon. Gentleman's definition of the rich extends to 48 per cent., it is a curious definition. As a significant proportion of the remainder are single adults who at present pay nothing, he might like to reflect on the equity of that.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the proposals for non-domestic ratepayers would be of immense significance and benefit to the business community in Scotland and would be recognised as such if it were not for the even more dramatic proposals for domestic ratepayers? Does he agree that the alliance party's proposals on non-domestic rates could help hypermarkets and city centre department stores but would do nothing for small businesses in rural areas?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend has put his finger on it. Perhaps the Alliance is more interested in hypermarkets and supermarkets than in small businesses. In Scotland, small businesses want certainty and predictability. For years they have said that, if there is to be an increase in the rating burden, a rate linked to national changes in the cost of living is fairer and more sensible.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that his concept of a Green Paper would have more veracity if he stopped behaving as if everything were cut and dried? People consider the burden of taxation as a whole. Does he accept, therefore, that the poll tax increases the regressive nature of taxation as a whole?

The real problem is the imbalance of rating and valuation on both sides of the border. What peculiar alchemy does the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Secretary of State for the Environment propose to deploy to harmonise the rating system on both sides of the border?

Mr. Rifkind: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, may I say without fear of contradiction, and as the Green Paper demonstrates, that those on the lowest incomes are better off with a community charge than they are under domestic rates. As a significant proportion of the poorest households in Scotland are single pensioners and single-parent families, the community charge should be welcomed by the Opposition if they are genuinely interested in the welfare of those people. Their reluctance casts doubt on whether their position has been considered or whether it is a knee-jerk reaction to the Government's proposals. I ask the hon. Gentleman to study the Green Paper before he comes to any firm conclusions.

A different time scale may be suggested by my colleagues in England and Wales. If the hon. Gentleman reads the Green Paper, he will see that it suggests that there should be a revaluation of non-domestic property throughout the United Kingdom in 1990. Scottish business has always emphasised that that is important and that if there is to be a revaluation it should take place throughout the United Kingdom and not be concentrated in one area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is outrage on the Opposition Benches because the game is finally up—the game in which they bribe the electorate with extravagant proposals in the sure knowledge that only a minority will have to pay? Under the new proposals, everyone who casts a vote in an election will do so in the knowledge that he is electing an administration to carry out programmes to which he will have to contribute. That is surely a great victory for the local democracy for which the Opposition have been crying out.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, indeed. The Opposition know well that if all the people of Scotland had to pay for the consequences of excessive expenditure, its attraction as supported by the Labour party, might seem much less attractive that it has seemed in some areas. Remarks about a charge to vote are absurd. Foreigners, for example, will be liable to the community charge, although they have no right to vote. Students in halls of residence will not be liable to register, although they have a right to vote. The link being drawn between the two is manifestly absurd.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Does the Secretary of State realise that, despite all his verbal facility and bluster this afternoon, he cannot disguise the fact that the new scheme is not related to an ability to pay, and that it will be expensive to implement and difficult to enforce? In the consultations, will he say whether he will make adjustments to the scheme so that it is related to an ability to pay? Will he say that in no circumstances will he use the scheme as a smokescreen under which the central Government contribution to local government funding will be allowed to decrease?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman that 60 per cent. of all that local authorities spend is provided under the rate support grant paid for by the taxpayer. The bulk of local authority expenditure is provided on a progressive basis. We are dealing with the 13 per cent. provided currently under domestic rates, not the other 87 per cent. The question is not whether a community charge is a progressive system but whether it is less or more regressive than domestic rates and whether it is fairer than domestic rates. I have not the slightest doubt that it is fairer than domestic rates.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Does the Secretary of State remember that when this proposal was last discussed he was the Minister for the Environment for Scotland and was opposed to a poll tax? In his new-found enthusiasm for revaluation, will he remember that he delayed a revaluation in Scotland and precipitated the crisis and chaos which resulted in a revolt in Perth a year after the revaluation?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his rather selective reminiscences which I am delighted to hear. The statutory requirements for a revaluation were, as he will recall, introduced by a Labour Government.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the proposals will be widely welcomed by my constituents who have the invidious distinction of being the highest average rated constituents in the land? Does he agree that the test of the acceptability of the proposals is not the number of gainers or losers but whether the proposals are intrinsically fair? Does he find it deplorable that the Opposition cling to a terribly unfair system which favours their supporters when

[Mr. Michael Hirst]

the major part of the funding of local government expenditure comes from taxation, which is paid according to an ability to pay?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. The Labour party's desperate desire to defend the present system has been most noticeable today. It has not provided one proposal as to how single parents, pensioners and others who are unfairly treated under the domestic rating system would benefit from any Labour party proposals. It is wedded to a corrupt and out-of-date system. *[Interruption.]* It is wedded to a corrupt and out-of-date system. Any system of finance that requires a minority to fund services that will be provided for the whole community and produces a system where many will not pay one penny towards the services that they receive is worthy of that description.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that the proposals are taking him perilously near the Irish experience that turned out to be disastrous? Does he accept that working people, especially working families, will be paying much more under the proposals, and that that fact cannot be disguised? Does he agree that no new rating system that is deliberately devised to reduce the Exchequer contribution to local services can ultimately succeed?

Mr. Rifkind: As I understand the Irish system, the rates were abolished and replaced by 100 per cent. central Government funding. I do not think that that is what the hon. Gentleman wants or what the Government propose. I do not see that that point is terribly relevant.

Our proposals will increase local accountability because they will create a more meaningful connection between a local authority and the electorate it is meant to represent. I believe that that is a system which stems from the old principle of no taxation without representation. The reverse should also apply. If someone is to benefit from local services, it is not unreasonable for him to make a contribution to them.

I emphasise the fact that the Government intend to provide income support comparable to the present rate rebate system for all those on low incomes. That is another factor which Opposition Members have chosen to ignore.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the reasons why the Opposition are so upset is that they have been rumbled and the people of Scotland will begin to see that they have been rumbled? Does he also agree that when one considers a local income tax there is not just the fact that there would be 56 different varieties of tax; there is the problem that the people of Scotland would not take kindly to having those employed by local authorities knowing what their income was.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. Confidentiality is important. I do not believe that many people in Scotland would welcome the Liberal party proposal that a local authority should have access to details of their income.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat that this matter is likely to be the subject of debate for a considerable time. I shall endeavour to call those hon. Members who have been rising provided that we can get through by 4.15 pm.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is almost impossible to evade rates but that this tax will be relatively easy to evade? What method does he propose to use to deal with evasion?

Mr. Rifkind: No tax system is 100 per cent. effective or this country and many others would not have a black economy.

Mr. Foulkes: Answer the question.

Mr. Rifkind: That is exactly what I am doing. I believe that the system proposed by the Government will be effective and that the vast majority of those liable to register will be registered. Details have been given in the Green Paper. I shall be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman to explain in greater length than I can today the various proposals that will produce that effect.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Is the Secretary of State aware that the people of Scotland pay into two kitties—one for the rate support grant and the other for rates? Someone who does not pay rates certainly pays into the overall contribution. Does he accept that the crisis in rating was deliberately and cynically caused by the Government who clawed back over £1·5 billion from the Scottish people? Is that not the answer — the rating system is not so bad; it has simply been made to look bad?

Mr. Rifkind: It has not been made to look bad. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a few more discussions with pensioners and single parents in his constituency. He will find that they will give a warm welcome to the Government's proposals and will not like what he has to offer.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): If the new proposals are so good for Scotland and the Scottish people, why is the Secretary of State for the Environment not immediately introducing the same proposals for the English and England? Is this not another case of Scotland being used as a guinea pig and of the ratepayers being discriminated against?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is one of those people who cannot be satisfied in any circumstances. He knows well that if I were saying that we cannot achieve anything in Scotland until the same happens in England and Wales he would be accusing me of all sorts of terrible tendencies and saying that it shows that I do not have the slightest ability to meet Scottish requirements when they are different from those of England and Wales. Under this Government, if Scotland has requirements that justify quicker implementation of policies, the Government recognise that fact, even if the hon. Gentleman does not.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): At one time the Secretary of State would have said that these matters should be dealt with in an elected Scottish Assembly. He would not have got away with this sort of rubbish there. How on earth did he manage to come up with a poll tax, a system of local revenue raising which is even more unfair and, to use his terminology, corrupt than the present rating system?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the present domestic rating system is unfair and corrupt——

Mr. Home Robertson: The Secretary of State's words.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman described the rating system as "even more corrupt". If he believes that, I look forward to hearing what he would replace it with.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Secretary of State expressed concern for shopkeepers and business men. Will he confirm that assessors in Scotland will carry out the 1990 revaluation but that the Inland Revenue will carry out the revaluation in England and Wales? Will he consider the fact that Scottish ratepayers will be paying for their revaluation? Will he confirm today that the allocation of the rating burden between non-domestic and domestic ratepayers will be the same north and south of the border after the revaluation?

Mr. Rifkind: Under the proposals the ratio between non-domestic and domestic ratepayers will not change for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that under existing rules assessors carry out revaluation in Scotland, while the Inland Revenue does so in England. We shall have to consider that for the future.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): If the proposals are so good, will the Secretary of State tell the 2 million victims by how much they can expect prices to fall as a result of them? Why is it necessary to have a 10-year transitional phasing-in period for England but no such period for Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will have worked out for himself that Scotland is a slightly smaller country than England. The range of rates bills at present is far wider in England than in Scotland, and it is too wide in Scotland. If it is practical to implement proposals in three rather than 10 years, it is surely in everyone's interest. I noted that the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland seemed to be under the impression that a 10-year transitional period was required in Scotland, and that it wanted quicker implementation. I am sure that it will be delighted.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): While I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on the community charge, I am grateful to the Secretary of State for acknowledging the special position of Orkney and Shetland as a result of oil developments. Will he be more specific about what is meant by "special consideration", which the Government will give to the islands councils? During the consultation period will the councils, if they so wish, have direct access to the Secretary of State or his junior Ministers to discuss these matters, rather than through the usual channels of COSLA?

Mr. Rifkind: It is not for me to intervene on the delicate question whether COSLA or individual local authorities should approach us. We shall consider with interest any proposals from the convention and individual local authorities. I thank the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging that the Government accept that special requirements will be necessary for Orkney and Shetland. I assure him that during the consultations we shall seek to achieve a system which is fair, and recognises the special position of the northern islands.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the Secretary of State explain to the House how four adults in a household make four times the use of local government services as a single person? That is what he implied. Does he recognise the following quote about rates:

> "They are highly perceptible to ratepayers and they promote accountability. They are well understood, cheap to collect and very difficult to evade . . . . The Government have concluded that rates should remain for the foreseeable future the main source of local revenue for local government."

That comes from the Government's White Paper of August 1983. What has changed since then is Government support in Scotland, which has slumped to an all-time low.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman believes that four adults who are all earning should pay the same contribution towards local rates as a single person——

Mr. Foulkes: That is not the question.

Mr. Rifkind: The question is not whether they use four times as much. They will certainly use local services much more than one person. They will use public transport, water services, refuse disposal, and perhaps education services. To suggest that a single pensioner makes greater use of local services than four adults is absurd.

The hon. Gentleman appreciates that within his constituency and elsewhere in Scotland there is a deep belief that the domestic rating system is grossly unfair. Our proposals will abolish and replace it. I still wait to hear what Opposition Members will do to meet the deep sense of grievance at the existing rating system. Until they produce some alternative, their criticisms will be seen to be bogus, and more concerned with their political objectives than with serving the needs of the Scottish people.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My father served for 40 years in Scottish local government, and many of my hon. Friends and, indeed, the Secretary of State for Scotland have served in it. While the Secretary of State is entitled to describe a system as grossly unfair, he is not entitled to impugn the character of people who have served on Scottish local authorities by describing the system as corrupt. Knowing the Secretary of State as I do, I am sure that he said that in the heat of the moment, and that he will wish to withdraw the word "corrupt" because it impugns the memory and character of all who have served in Scottish local government at any time during the existence of the rating system.

Mr. Rifkind: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Anyone who was listening to what I said will be in no doubt that I was referring to the rating system, not to either local authorities or individual members of local authorities.

Hon. Member for Cynon Valley

4.18 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the House appointed me to serve in Committee on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill—an opposed private Bill. This morning I informed Mr. Deputy Speaker that I had left the Committee permanently. I wish to seek your guidance for the future so that all hon. Members can benefit from your wisdom on this point. I left because of a smear campaign against me by the Conservative party, including a Minister, and suggestions that I received money from the Transport and General Workers Union, which opposes the Bill.

I wish to place it on record that I have never received any financial inducements, or inducements of any kind, from the TGWU. I deeply resent any such suggestion. The managing director of the company, Mr. Parker, last week impugned my integrity at a Committee hearing when he was being questioned about massive donations by the company to the Conservative party. Will you give guidance on the question of private companies appearing to offer inducements to hon. Members through political donations prior to a private Bill coming to the House, and apparently buying a slot in parliamentary proceedings? Will you also advise the House how hon. Members can be protected from scandalous attacks from a company and other hon. Members? The issues are so serious that it is doubtful whether any Labour Members can or will be able to sit on this Committee in my place. I appeal to my hon. Friends not to undermine my position, which I believe is important to the integrity of Parliament.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, a serious point is at issue here. It is slightly tangential but bears on the point made by my hon. Friend. We are in danger of seeing the start of a new venal practice which can only damage our parliamentary democracy. As you know, Mr. Speaker, "Erskine May" makes it clear that neither individuals nor private companies should offer inducements to hon. Members either directly or indirectly, which might affect the way they speak or the way they vote. It doubly sets that standard in the case of attempted bribery.

The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is wholly owned by European Ferries. It was preparing the relevant Bill for some years and was pouring money into the Conservative party over those years. The company has provided a handwritten document giving details of its donations to the Conservative party. The document is dated 23 January 1986. In the years 1980 and 1981—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman. If he is alleging contempt, he must write to me in the proper way and I will look at the matter to see whether it is a matter of privilege. We cannot have a debate on what is happening in a private Bill Committee. That is not a matter for the Floor of the House. If some irregularity is alleged, the proper course is for the Committee to make a report to the House so that the House can deal with it.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am not sure whether I am alleging contempt or a breach of privilege. I am not attempting directly to do those things. My point is that in the run-up to the placing of this Bill before the House last year, large donations were made by a company to a political party. This year a clear statement has been made that the directors of that company will not advise shareholders to make a donation. What kind of people do they think we are? Do they think we do not know the purport of that statement? You, Mr. Speaker, ought to help to protect us in this matter.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it, but it is wasting a bit of time.

Mr. Sayeed: Unlike the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), I have attended every meeting of the Committee. I was at the meeting the hon. Lady has mentioned. I can assure the House, and any sensible person who has read the transcript will accept, that Mr. Parker, the managing director of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, did not impugn the integrity of the hon. Lady. The hon. Lady brought up the question of political donations and started a line of questioning which was not germane to the Committee's proceedings. I can assure the House that no approaches were made to me or to my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee about the political donations made by European Ferries to the Conservative Party.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want any more help. We have a private Bill procedure and this is a matter for the Committee dealing with that Bill. If the Committee wishes to make a report to the House on this matter, that is the correct course.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not want to refer specifically to any allegations that I have made, Mr. Speaker, but over the past few weeks you have received a number of allegations about contempt and privilege. In the replies that you sent to Members, you expressed the strongly held view that matters of contempt and privilege should not be raised on the Floor of the House but should be dealt with by correspondence. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has written to you about the matter under discussion today. If she has written to you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just the point. The hon. Lady wrote to me about a matter of privilege. I have dealt with it and followed the recommendations of the Select Committee, which recommended that in future matters of privilege should be dealt with in that way.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If, as per the judgment you gave, Mr. Speaker, the matter is not one of contempt or privilege, how can we possibly raise the matter of a statement that was made during the course of the proceedings? The representative of the company said:

"I suspect the reverse is true of people who contribute to your party like the Transport and General Workers might also expect you to take—"

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman raises a point of order every day and does not listen to what I say in reply to previous questions. I have already said that this is a matter for the Committee. If the Committee wishes to make a report to the House, it has that power and it should do so. I cannot deal with the matter now.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: This is getting to be a bore.

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? I have posed some questions to you that are in addition to the questions I raised in my letter which you kindly answered. I am not seeking to raise those matters now, but I am asking some additional questions and would be grateful for your guidance about what we should do about these matters in future.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady. I fully appreciate and understand that the private Bill procedure puts a considerable strain on Members who have Select Committee and Standing Committee work. I have discussed the matter with the Chairman of Ways and Means and I am trying to see in what way it may be possible to resolve these difficult matters.

Mrs. Clwyd: With respect, Mr. Speaker, that does not cover the point I raised in my original request to you. I raised some points of principle which have nothing to do with the difficulties of serving on two or three Committees at the same time. They relate to the integrity of Members of this House and I am asking how we can protect ourselves.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady raised that very point in her letter and I answered it in the letter that I sent to her. We had better leave the matter there, because the proper procedure has been followed. If the hon. Lady is dissatisfied with my ruling, she should take the matter to the Committee and the Committee will report to the House.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider the advice you have just given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), because the issues she has drawn to your attention have developed during the course of the day. The comments made to my hon. Friend, which she obviously considers have offended her dignity and honour as a Member of this House, have caused her to relinquish her membership of a Committee dealing with private business. Obviously, sanctions can be applied against my hon. Friend and surely there is a responsibility on you, Mr. Speaker, to give further advice to my hon. Friend about whether she is now breaching a principle.

Mr. Speaker: I have already given the hon. Lady my advice. She raised the point as a matter of privileges and I have dealt with it as a matter of privilege. She and no doubt the hon. Gentleman know what my answer is on that matter. I cannot say any more. I have given my ruling.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

4.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement.

The Government's proposals for a fundamental reform of the way in which we pay for local government were presented to Parliament yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. While the Government's objectives and the principles underlying the proposals for reform apply to the whole of Great Britain, the structure of the reforms has been tailored to the particular circumstances of each country. The major differences between the proposed package of reforms for Wales and those for England are as follows.

The relatively low level of domestic rates in Wales, and the fairly small variation between authorities, will allow rates to be eliminated earlier in Wales than in England. It should take only six years; and in half of Wales they are likely to be phased out within three years.

The smaller range of domestic rates in Wales also allows us to consider two options for the transition to the community charge. The first — a common percentage reduction in rates — is the same as in England. The second involves using the community charge to cut rates by a standard cash sum within each district area. We are seeking views on these two options. The relatively compact range of non-domestic rate poundages might make it possible to move to a uniform non-domestic rate in Wales in only three years.

The smaller variation in average non-domestic rateable values in Wales also offers the prospect of allowing Welsh local authorities the freedom to "top up" the yield of the uniform business rate by—at some stage—10 per cent. in Wales, rather than the 5 per cent. flexibility proposed for England.

On the capital expenditure front, the Green Paper suggests that the control regime need not be exactly the same as that in England. My preference—at present—is for authorities to continue to have direct access to their capital receipts, within a thoroughly overhauled control system.

Chapter 9 of the Green Paper sets out these proposals in more detail. A Welsh language version of the chapter is available from my Department on request.

The need for councils to be made fully accountable for their decisions has been dramatically highlighted by the succession of reckless rate increases proposed by county councils in the last week or so. The Government's proposals would significantly reduce the risk of such irresponsible action. They would ensure that authorities would need to go to their entire electorates to find the extra cash, not just to the minority who now pay domestic rates. Furthermore, industry and commerce would be secure in the knowledge that they could not be used as a milch cow for excessive spending.

The Government hope that the Green Paper will be carefully considered and commented on not only by the major interests and representative bodies in Wales but also by individual taxpayers and ratepayers — those whose contributions actually pay for local services.

[Mr. Nicholas Edwards]

The consultation process provides a unique opportunity for all those who feel aggrieved at the present unacceptable situation to make their views known in writing to my Department. I urge them to do so.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Is it not spiteful of the right hon. Gentleman to denigrate the Welsh county councils? They are under-funded and they must tackle the serious consequences of the Government's economic policies. Has he forgotten that, for example, Clwyd county authority is £1·8 million short, largely because of his actions?

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the Green Paper summary and for the Welsh language version. I agree with his decision to make a statement to the House. It was inappropriate for him to be mute yesterday on the coat tails of the Secretary of State for the Environment, particularly since the proposed scheme is his brainchild.

The right hon. Gentleman has boasted that local authorities in Wales are in real terms operating financially at 1979 levels. Why then does he propose this bureaucratic scheme? Is he aware that, if the scheme is introduced in Wales, domestic tax bills will more than double in the Rhondda while there will be a 40 per cent. reduction in Cardiff? Does he realise that that is precisely what the Government wished to guard against in the Green Paper? The valley communities of Mid Glamorgan, Gwent and West Glamorgan will be most seriously affected. Do they not face large reductions in the business rate and large rises in the domestic rate? Will we not have the anomaly of people in the Rhondda paying a higher domestic tax bill than people in Cardiff?

Do not the proposals mean that an additional 1·4 million Welsh people will pay for council services, that homes with three or more people will have to pay more and that every adult will be eligible to pay the poll tax? Will not a new class of local taxpayer emerge—those aged 18 to 24? is it not the case that households with young adults living at home will be targeted for what is in effect a poll tax? I remind the right hon. Gentleman that Wales is a land of university colleges and higher education establishments. Can he tell us of any plans to make students liable to a poll tax? If students are exempt, what will he say to the young adult unemployed who must pay?

Does not the right hon. Gentleman see the need to come clean about the difficulties of collecting what he calls the community charge? Has he overlooked the massive practical problems? Is he not proposing a new criminal offence for the Welsh—the refusal or neglect of the head of a household to register his unemployed teenage sons or daughters? There is a hint of Big Brother in the proposals. The right hon. Gentleman should tell us how the register will be monitored. Will it not invite evasion?

On commercial rates, I am concerned that Wales, with a massive unemployment total, may be adversely affected by the proposals. What guarantees can the right hon. Gentleman give that changes in commercial rating will not increase unemployment? I fear in time the large-scale loss of jobs at several levels within the local government sector in Wales if the scheme goes ahead. Can the right hon. Gentleman give a guarantee that Wales will not be used as a test bed for the scheme ahead of its introduction elsewhere?

With regard to his own role, the right hon. Gentleman must be ashamed of himself because he is proposing a face saver for his Prime Minister and injustice for the people of Wales. The proposal is unacceptable and I do not think it will work. The economy is now too fragile to bear the strain he will put on it.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman started by suggesting that local government is under-funded. In Wales, central Government grants provide for 67 per cent. of the cost of local government and commercial ratepayers contribute 56 per cent. of the rate burden. Indeed, in 1986-87, central Government will provide the equivalent of about £500 per adult in Wales.

The hon. Gentleman said that it was inappropriate for me not to make a statement yesterday. I have doubts about the value of three statements being made on a Green Paper that covers the whole of the United Kingdom when, as you observed earlier, Mr. Speaker, we will have extensive opportunities for debate and when only seven, I think, Back Benchers have turned out to press questions——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to make such a comment about hon. Members when Back Benchers are at this moment serving on committees and on delegations of crucial importance to Wales doing a job on behalf of Wales——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is said from the Front Benches or from the Back Benches, provided it is in order, is not one of my many responsibilities.

Mr. Edwards: What I said was simply a statement of fact. I think there are more Conservative Members than Labour Members present.

The need for reform is the same in Wales as in England. The evils and shortcomings of the present system are as prevalent in Wales as in England. As I pointed out, the recent actions of county councils have confirmed the need for further action.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to the difference in the rates bills in the Rhondda and in Cardiff. He will have to explain to the House why he thinks it just that a ratepayer living in, shall we say, a three-bedroomed terraced house in his constituency or in Cardiff, with an identical income, perhaps doing an identical job and having an identical social background, should at present pay almost exactly double the rate bill of a similar person living in the Rhondda. That is not a system which is based self-evidently on equity.

The hon. Gentleman referred to West Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and Clwyd, and the particular consequences for them. The rating revaluation, in particular, will help the industrial premises in those areas. They are likely to benefit in relative terms from the reduction in rates. That could surely help to reduce unemployment and reinforce regional policy.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the effect on individual local authorities. We have set out a series of safety nets so that the income of the local authorities is protected. He has pointed out that more people will pay. That is the object of the proposals, that we should not have such a very narrow band of people who bear the financial burden. In Wales about 2.1 million people are eligible to vote, about 1·1 million are eligible to pay rates and about 700,000 actually pay rates in full. It is our intention to try to extend the number of people who pay for local services.

The hon. Gentleman identified the young adults—between 18 and 24—living with their families as those who would pay in the future while not paying at present. Perhaps he should have pointed out that those who will gain significantly are single pensioners—some 69 per cent. of single pensioners will benefit, as will 83 per cent. of one-parent families. Surely these are the people who need help, the people on low incomes. If the hon. Gentleman looks at annex F of the Green Paper, he will see that the effects of the community charge on low-income households is that they will pay less than they do under the present rating system.

The hon. Gentleman asked about students. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment explained yesterday the complexities of the present arrangements. I will not repeat them, but I confirm that we will be exploring the best way to deal with that matter.

The hon. Gentleman asked about collection and how it was to be enforced. A number of proposals have been set out in some detail in the Green Paper. Local authorities have a wide knowledge of what goes on in their areas. Penalties are to be introduced for non-registration. It is suggested that it might be possible, for example, for local authorities, in providing certain services in their areas, to seek to ensure that people are actually on the register before the services are provided. That is one of the options being considered.

As to the effect on industry, I believe that industry will welcome the fact that two companies doing the same business in different parts of Wales will not now face widely different rate bills or the possibility of very substantial rate increases which they are unable to influence. I have had representations in the past week or two from a number of companies who will be paying, under proposals put to them by county councils at present, up to £250,000 extra in rates and who will either have to accept the addition to their costs or have to reduce their labour force by about 25 in each case. So there is a direct effect on jobs.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether Wales was a test bed. It is not. The proposal is to introduce the legislation in Wales at exactly the same time as in England. The only difference is that, because the gap between different local authority rate poundages and different rate levels is so much less in Wales than in England, we expect to get rid of the rates in about three years' time for half the ratepayers in Wales and totally within six years. It will take probably ten years to achieve the same thing in England.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the Secretary of State has said, this is a Green Paper. It will no doubt be the subject of debate for many weeks. I ask hon. Members to make their questions brief.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is it not a fact that any change will be an improvement on the present system, which incites irresponsibility, invites political corruption and defies comprehension? Is there not a danger, however, that the community charge, in itself commendable as a means of restoring the content of responsibility, will, like rates, become unacceptable if the level becomes unpleasantly high? That being so, there will be many who will regret that the Government have not taken the more radical course of transferring great blocks of expenditure, such as that on education and the police, to the general tax system.

Mr. Edwards: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment spelt it out very well yesterday. If we were to take over the responsibility for financing education in the way suggested by my hon. Friend, it would mean switching to central control of the education system. There may be some arguments for that, although it would mean either setting up something on the lines of the National Health Service or taking it into Government Departments; it would mean knowledge of what was going on in local schools, the number of teachers required in such schools and details of local situations. The degree of centralisation represented by such a step would be an enormous price to pay for a more sensible system of local government finance. I ask my hon. Friend to consider those drawbacks.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are misgivings in many parts of Wales that, despite the need to change the present rating system, any change should certainly encompass a change in the present water rating system as well? Is he aware that there are misgivings about the regressive nature of these changes and their practicality, where people register in one area and shortly afterwards move to live in another, giving rise to enormous bureaucratic problems?

Will second home owners need to pay this tax in the area of the second home? Will the Secretary of State guarantee that the proportion of Welsh local authority expenditure met by central block grants will not diminish at all in this change?

Mr. Edwards: May I say how glad I am to see the hon. Gentleman back in his place in the House?

On the "regressive" nature of the proposals, as the Green Paper makes clear, lower-income households will benefit. I have already given the proportions of single pensioners and one-parent families who will benefit. These are some of the poorest in our community.

Under the new system, second home owners will pay. The Green Paper suggests that the assumption should be made—this is the average position, we think—that each second home contains two adults, and there should be an automatic charge based on that assumption. That is what we propose.

As regards the reduction of the proportion of local authority expenditure met by central block grants, we start the whole division from where we are, from the present 67 per cent. grant in Wales compared with 47 per cent. in England and Wales. We start by ring-fencing the non-domestic rating in Wales and redistributing within Wales. Of course, future Governments will have to make yearly decisions as to the total contribution of central Government to the bill, but we start from the present system and there is nothing in these proposals that represents a change of the allocation between England and Wales.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, while the present system may be seen as unfair, it represents a form of crude wealth tax, whereas a poll tax is regressive by its nature? Does he also agree that the proposed register is a legal nightmare? Would he

[Mr. Ian Grist]

like to say how anyone will draw up a register which will be more accurate than the electoral register which, as we all know, is riddled with mistakes?

Mr. Edwards: Every system that we have considered has its drawbacks. Successive inquiries have shown that. My hon. Friend is aware that over the years I have expressed doubts about our ability to find a workable system which does not have serious shortcomings. But having had my present responsibilities for nearly seven years——

Mr. Ron Davies: Too long.

Mr. Edwards: I might almost agree with the hon. Gentleman on that, for personal reasons.

Having sat through almost every discussion, not only on the Welsh rate support grant system but on the English rate support grant system over that period, I believe that the present rate support grant system is so unsatisfactory and has become so difficult that the drawbacks are unacceptable. Therefore, we must look at the alternatives. We have looked at them in great detail and we believe that, although there are shortcomings in any alternative system, they are far fewer than we would have under the present system if we were to continue it.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The right hon. Gentleman talks of a Green Paper. He does not seem to be clear about that. Is he not saying that the highly regressive poll tax, described by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), is a proposal which will not be altered? Is it not particularly offensive that, after the Government have created more unemployed people than ever before in Wales and among them more young people, a poll tax is to be imposed on them? However the Government may try to vary that by some kind of rebate, is not that a monstrous system for a Government to introduce when they have created so much unemployment?

Mr. Edwards: The situation that I described previously, where perhaps a poor family in one area has to pay twice the rates of a family in identical circumstances in a different district, is not a basis for justice. I pointed out that the community charge provides a benefit for some of the poorest in our communities. We made it perfectly clear that there will be social provision for those on low incomes. The right hon. Gentleman referred to that obliquely. Those who do not have the means at the lowest level will continue to receive help as they do at present and the right hon. Gentleman should not try to create the impression that they will not.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Is it not strange that the Opposition are opposed to a scheme which would attract industry into high-spending Labour areas because it would make it so much fairer for industry, irrespective of where it set up? Is it not doubly strange that the Labour Party should be opposed to a system which will discriminate fairly in favour of the single pensioner? Not one voice has been raised on the Opposition Benches in favour of those who are suffering under the present system. When it is proposed that an alternative should be a local income tax system, is that not nonsense, bearing in mind that, whereas only half the electorate in Wales are liable to pay rates, even fewer than that number are people who pay income tax?

Mr. Edwards: If we are to have a system based on local accountability, a local income tax has severe drawbacks, because probably 30 per cent. of households would pay no local tax at all and it would be just as complicated a system. It would mean an increase in income tax generally. After the Opposition's defence of a faultless rating system, we shall be interested to hear whether they want to defend and continue the present system, and, if not, what alternative they would put forward.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the Secretary of State were really concerned about the poverty which resulted from the payment of rates, he could resolve that problem by changing the rebate system. His comments today about reckless increases do not sit well with the statement that he made from the Dispatch Box not 10 days ago, when he applauded the efforts of Welsh local authorities in maintaining low rates and said that he was happy because they had met Government targets. Is it not the case that those who suffer will be old people living with and dependent on their families, young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are living at home and, in particular, those who are unemployed? There is no justification at all for the changes that the Secretary of State is proposing. As he is in a rather more relaxed mood than when he usually comes to the Dispatch Box, will he tell us whether there is any justification for those changes, other than his desire to increase his standing with the Prime Minister?

Mr. Edwards: Since my saying what I hoped would happen, based on my experience of the past, a number of county councils have been offered substantial increases in grant by the Government. I made the forecast in the expectation that they could maintain spending broadly in line with increases in costs. They have put forward proposals which are indefensible and which will have severe consequences for employment in the areas concerned. Dyfed is one example and South Glamorgan is another. It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should get to his feet to say that it is right that a family of four or five should pay no more than an old person living on her own in her house and that he should apparently advocate that system as being socially just and defensible.

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that there is never a right time to reform local government——

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): That is right.

Mr. Terlezki: The hon. Gentleman says that that is right because most of the Labour-controlled local authorities do not want to be reformed. They are rotten to the core, from within the core, and they simply do not want to see any reforms. Having said that, how will young people be affected? Several hon. Members have mentioned the 18 to 25-year-olds who are unemployed. How will they be affected? Furthermore, how will small businesses be affected? I am speaking in particular of the small shopkeepers in my constituency.

Mr. Edwards: Certainly the proposal is that young adults should make a contribution to the services provided locally, but the provision of social security is for separate

legislation. We have made it clear that there will be income support in future as there has been in the past. As my hon. Friend knows, it is the intention under the Social Security Bill presently before the House that everyone should contribute 20 per cent. to the cost of local services; that would be so under the community charge as under the existing rate system. Income support for people on low incomes under the social security system will remain and will be introduced in an appropriate way for the new system.

What small businesses find intolerable is that local authorities put up rates in the knowledge that small businesses contribute the greater part of the rates bill but have no say in the decision, and 56 per cent. of the rate contribution in Wales comes from businesses and industry. If local authorities such as South Glamorgan suddenly impose swingeing increases that is gravely damaging for small businesses and this measure will provide a great deal of protection for them.

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Why will the proposals that the right hon. Gentleman has described today be more workable, more equitable and less unfair than those in the Government's White Paper in the autumn of 1983, which they rejected? Why will the community charge which he proposes today eventually translate itself into better community care?

Mr. Edwards: The whole point about the introduction of the community charge is that there should be a connection between those who vote, those who receive services and those who pay. There is no such connection at the moment, so there is an enormous encouragement for those who use the services to demand more and more services with complete disregard to the additional burdens that that places on the small minority who pay. We believe that it is right that there should be a relationship between the two.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) asked what changes we had introduced and why changes were needed since the Government's White Paper on rates reform in 1983. In that White Paper we said that the flat rate charge could be seen as a tax on the right to vote if the electoral register was used. We decided not to use the electoral register. We said that the flat rate charge would bear harshly on people with low incomes unless there was a rebate scheme. We are proposing that there should be assistance for those on the low incomes.

We have overcome, by examination, many of the administrative shortcomings. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said yesterday, the costs involved in the proposals compare favourably to the costs of running the valuation on which the domestic rating system is based at present.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, by creating a closer relationship between those who vote and those who pay, local authorities such as Clwyd will be encouraged to get their spending under control and so stop the destruction of desperately needed jobs? My right hon. Friend must find it incredible that the Opposition, who make so much of care and compassion, should be standing by a system which they conceded is totally unfair and which hits at so many of those in greatest need.

Mr. Edwards: I agree with my hon. Friend; as I told the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) earlier, it is extraordinary that the Opposition should defend a system under which, for example the inhabitant of a terraced house in Clwyd, earning the same as a person in an identical property in the Rhondda, should pay double what is paid by the person in the Rhondda. That is what happens under the present system. I do not think that that is defensible and I look forward to hearing how the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside explains to his constituents that he wants that system to continue.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): For the record, the Secretary of State for Wales made a despicable attack on some of my hon. Friends who are not present this afternoon. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to know why the hon. Members for Mid Glamorgan are not present.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady should confine herself to the statement.

Mrs. Clwyd: My remarks are relevant to the statement, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friends are not present because they are meeting the chairman of the Mid Glamorgan area health authority to discuss the crisis in the Health Service caused by the cuts imposed by the Government.

Is the Secretary of State aware that people in my constituency, given his proposals today, need such proposals like they need a hole in the head? My constituents live in an area which has some of the highest unemployment in Wales, the lowest incomes, the worst health services and the worst housing. Can the Secretary of State tell me how the proposals will help those people?

Mr. Edwards: There is no way that anyone can discuss cuts in the Health Service when the Government have made substantial additional provision for the Health Service in Wales. I was merely observing that I doubt the value of having a repetitive series of statements like this, when there will be plenty of opportunity in the Welsh Grand Committee to debate such matters in the coming weeks. However, if the hon. Lady thinks that this is a good way of proceeding, that is up to her.

I should have thought that the hon. Lady might think it useful that local businesses in her constituency—which at present, as they are in a high rating area, face severe rate burdens—might expect to pay lower rates and so create more jobs. The hon. Lady might be interested in the benefits for single pensioners, one-parent families and low-income families who will benefit under the arrangements. These groups of people, many of whom live in the hon. Lady's constituency, will benefit, yet the hon. Lady seems to wish to continue with a system that is grossly unfair to many of those people.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I believe that my right hon. Friend's statement will be widely welcomed, as it will put industry beyond the clutches of the high-spending councils. It will be welcomed by councils for the new certainty and simplicity it offers and it will be welcomed by my constituents who, as my right hon. Friend knows, are facing an horrendous increase of 25 per cent. As I understand the proposals, the community charge wil be payable by all adults over the age of 18. Can my right hon. Friend tell me how students in full-time education over the age of 18 would fare under the proposals?

Mr. Edwards: A firm with its headquarters in my hon. Friend's constituency told me last week that, under the

[Mr. Edwards]

proposals of the county council, it would probably have to reduce its work force by 25 to meet an extra rating bill of £225,000. I agree that we wish to protect businesses of that kind and stop jobs being put at risk.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said yesterday, there is a fairly complex series of arrangements covering students and we have said that we will wish to introduce arrangements to provide for students. That is one of the matters for consultation in the Green Paper.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is it not the height of hypocrisy for the Government to raise the level of direct taxation when they are committed to reducing it?

Mr. Edwards: The effect of the proposals is to maintain the very substantial levels of Government grant on exactly the same basis as at present. Therefore, if there is to be an increase in direct taxation in Wales as a result of the measure, that can happen only as a consequence of the decision of local authorities. Under the proposals, local authorities will then have to answer to their electorates for the first time and will therefore have to defend their decisions to their electorates.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the great advantages of the rating system in the domestic sphere and to some extent in business premises is that it is not difficult for the local authority to establish and keep a constant knowledge of the ratepayers' identity? Will there not be considerable difficulties for a local authority to enforce payment of a community charge when the authority does not know of the ratepayers' identity in relation to a particular premises?

Mr. Edwards: Almost all tax systems provide the possibility of evasion, and there is a large black economy. Certainly no system can entirely counter that.

We believe that the proposals that we have set out in detail in the Green Paper will enable local authorities to maintain a register that should enable them to collect from the vast majority of those concerned. The authorities have great experience in such matters and keep many registers for payment purposes. A number of measures could be taken. For example, people who use local services could be asked to show that they are on the register before services are provided. Such checks, and penalties on householders who fail to register, will provide the means of compiling an accurate register. Although there are difficulties, which have been recognised in successive Government papers, those problems are far fewer than the enormous shortcomings of the present system.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Would the Secretary of State explain how the new system will affect areas of sparse population in Wales? I am concerned that, with low populations and with the business rate being centralised, there will not be adequate compensation for areas of sparse population.

Mr. Edwards: The proposal is that the Government will redistribute a business rate on a per capita basis throughout Wales. That will have a substantial redistributive effect. Furthermore, there is a thorough system of safety nets to protect individual councils. The system of needs assessment that is proposed and the new needs grant, though very much simpler than the present system, will provide adequately for the varied needs based on such matters as population, social structure and such matters as are covered under the present needs assessment.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Secretary of State agree, despite what he said to his hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower), that he has outlined a system that is open to massive evasion? Does he agree that the first other list that the local authority is likely to use for checking purposes will be the electoral register and that the likely consequence is that the electoral register will become as corrupt as the community tax register?

Mr. Edwards: No, I do not believe that that is so. There is a great deal of material to enable local authorities to check whether people are registering. I have mentioned one means of checking. I am not sure that I would have used the word "corrupt" in quite the same way, but I have some sympathy with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who used that word to describe the existing system. Under the present system, a relative handful of people have to pay the cost demanded by the very large number of people who do not pay. I think that that can fairly be described as corrupt, and that is what we seek to prevent.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Is it not clear from the anxiety expressed in these exchanges that if the proposals ever come to fruition they will lower the standard of living of the people of Wales, which has fallen far enough already with unemployment running at 17 per cent., appalling housing and environmental conditions in so many areas and ever-deteriorating public services?

Has the Secretary of State given full consideration to the difficulty of identifying young people over the age of 18, especially as the new social security regulations tend to keep young people on the move so as not to lose the benefits to which they are entitled? Is this not yet another example of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing and the policy of one Department being at variance with that of another? Perhaps the Government should bring in Mr. Bernard Ingham to sort out the complexities.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the proposals will mean an increase in bureaucracy and may well throw local government services into chaos? Are not the proposals a heavy price to pay for the Prime Minister's promise in the 1979 general election? Is it not remarkable that the proposals come seven years after that promise, showing the Prime Minister's inadequate understanding of the complexities of local government?

In speeding up the process for Wales, the Secretary of State seems to be using Wales as a guinea pig. Does he agree that Wales deserves better from its Secretary of State? Finally, does he appreciate that the real problem is that local government is under-funded and that it is no use blaming the county councils because the responsibility is his?

Mr. Edwards: One of the problems with the hon. Gentleman is that he apparently did not bother to listen to any of my previous answers in this long exchange. I have made it perfectly clear that Wales will not be used as a guinea pig and that the measure will not be introduced sooner than in England. The hon. Gentleman should have taken that on board, but he is apparently unable to understand these simple matters.

There is absolutely no basis for the charge that the proposals will lead to a lowering of the standard of living.

The hon. Gentleman questioned whether young adults would register. It will be for householders to ensure that people in their households register.

As for the hon. Gentleman's reference to the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, there is one thing of which we can be certain. The left hand of the Labour party has no sensible proposals for reforming a system that is regarded as complex, unsatisfactory and unfair by the vast majority of people in local government as well as the electorate. It is typical of Labour Members that they have not one positive proposal to make about anything that the electorate cares about.

BILL PRESENTED

TOBACCO SMOKING (PUBLIC PLACES) (NO. 2)

Mr. George Foulkes, supported by Mr. John Maxton, Dr. Roger Sims, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Clement Freud, Mr. Laurie Pavitt, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. George Robertson, Dr. Norman A. Godman and Mr. Alfred Dubs presented a Bill to limit smoking in public places; to make provision with regard to smoking and employment; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 February and to be printed. [Bill 68.]

Abolition of Crown Immunity

5.16 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to remove Crown Immunity from public premises so that such premises can be inspected by local authorities and be subject to appropriate standards of health and hygiene.

There is no doubt that there is strong feeling throughout the House that a change must take place. The problem of Stanley Royd hospital has brought the subject of hospital hygiene to the forefront, but the concentration on that report overlooks the problem nationwide.

I praise my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for his earlier attempts to persuade the Government to move in the direction that I propose today. My right hon. Friend worked extremely hard, but time was lost. It is time that the Government accepted their responsibilities in this respect. It is a matter not just of hygiene in hospitals but of life itself, in view of the number of deaths from food poisoning.

The Government must realise that the privatisation going on in hospitals is having a detrimental effect on the services provided. There is evidence that certain areas of many hospitals are understaffed because of the rundown in manpower. The result is conditions such as those at Stanley Royd. I charge the Secretary of State for Social Services and the Minister for Health with total responsibility for what is now going on and with the responsibility to put right those wrongs. Indeed, I go further. A few minutes ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) introduced a private Member's Bill related to smoking. Cigarette packets carry a Government health warning. In view of what is happening and of the feeling throughout the country, I suggest that when people make an appointment to see a consultant or whoever at a hospital the notice of attendance should carry a Government warning, "Some hospitals can seriously damage your health."

The problem goes much further than food poisoning. Pest control is a major problem in the hospital service. Not long ago a patient was lost from a psychiatric ward due to an absence of supervision and was missing for 24 hours. The police were called in to search the grounds and gave all possible assistance. In searching for the missing patient, they happened to look into the air ducts. They found them alive with wild cats—vermin. That is the problem of many of our units and something must be done about it. I believe that the public have lost confidence because of the publication of reports such as the report on Stanley Royd hospital. There is a feeling in the nation that something should be done. I hope that the House, including the Government, will support any Bill that suggests the abolition of Crown immunity.

I do not think that it is good enough for the Minister for Health to stand at the Dispatch Box and say that he is concerned about the reports that he has read in the newspapers. That does not go very far. We are looking for action from the Ministers and from the Government to overcome many of the problems that we have in the National Health Service.

I praise and take my hat off to the Institution of Environmental Health Officers. I believe that its officers do a first-class job on behalf of the local communities in which they work. We have to give them a chance to do

[Mr. Frank Haynes]

their job fully on Crown property. There is a groundswell of opinion to support the suggestions that are being made in relation to the abolition of Crown immunity.

I shall give a few figures. The number of hospitals where the standard would have been considered sufficiently serious to warrant prosecution if Crown immunity did not exist from September 1976 to August 1977 was 13 per cent. of the total. From April 1984 to March 1985 it increased to 16 per cent. That was almost a year ago, and I will gamble that when the figures are presented they will be higher than 16 per cent. They are getting worse as time goes on. The Government must accept their responsibility and do something about the problem.

There are a number of hospitals at which recommendations had not been acted upon or accepted by the end of the review period. I am talking about instances where environmental health officers manage to get on to Crown property. Some of them are turned away and are refused entry to Crown property, particularly hospitals. That is wrong. They should be given the right to enter Crown property whenever they think fit in the interest of health, hygiene and people's lives.

In one large group of hospitals, the senior administrator had selected the cheapest quote on a contract to go private. When the tender was accepted he was asked how he would keep an eye on things. He said that he could not be bothered and that he had too much on, anyway. That does not go down very well in terms of covering health and hygiene in a hospital. That was a senior administrator, so it shows where the problems are.

A few days ago a supermarket was prosecuted and fined £2,500 for breaking food hygiene regulations. That is an example of an environmental health officer doing his job. They should be allowed to do their job on Crown property. We must break down the barrier of officialdom.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Laurie Pavitt, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Conal Gregory, Mr. Gerald Bermingham and Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark.

ABOLITION OF CROWN IMMUNITY

Mr. Frank Haynes accordingly presented a Bill to remove Crown Immunity from public premises so that such premises can be inspected by local authorities and be subject to appropriate standards of health and hygiene: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 February and to be printed. [Bill 67.]

Opposition Day

[5TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Exchange and Interest Rates

5.26 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): I beg to move,

That this House urges the Government to bring the United Kingdom into the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System forthwith.

The European monetary system, which this motion calls upon the Government to join forthwith, will be seven years old in a couple of months time. It was the most recent major initiative taken by the European Community and it was put into place remarkably quickly, partly because it did not involve a great series of interlocking individual decisions and therefore did not fall foul of any unanimity rules or even the need for a qualified majority.

I tried to relaunch the idea of a monetary route forward in a speech in Florence in the autumn of 1977. The European Council after that, in December, showed polite interest, but to say that there was any great sense of urgency or serious intent at that stage would be an exaggeration. The whole thing changed dramatically in the late winter and early spring. For most of its life the EMS has had to contend with the dollar being too high. Paradoxically, that changed because of the temporarily collapsing dollar in the early months of 1978. I vividly remember the occasion when I went to Bonn and Helmut Schmidt told me that he had changed his mind and he thought it was essential to go forward straightaway. He believed that he could get it on board as soon as the French legislative elections, due that year, as this year, were out of the way. So it happened.

The scheme was unveiled at the Copenhagen European Council that spring and was in place exactly a year later. I do not think there is serious doubt about its limited but substantial success for the participating countries. It has established the fact that it is a lasting entity, despite the fact that the buffeting waves of a violently fluctuating dollar, in particular, have been much greater than anybody expected when the scheme was being put into place. The EMS has survived well.

There have been many changes of central rates affecting nearly all the currencies in varying degrees but they have been carried through remarkably speedily and smoothly. That is a dramatic contrast to the delayed and traumatic devaluation under the otherwise admirable Bretton Woods system. Those changes have gone through with remarkable speed. When the Foreign Secretary held the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer he presided over a number of meetings of the Economic Monetary Council which put them through. That is an extraordinary example of presiding from outside over a thing which was working extremely well internally.

Some of the changes have not been such as to render the system nugatory. The Italians asked specially for a wider margin of 6 per cent. either way for the lira compared with the margin of 2·25 per cent. for the other participating currencies. When the Italian lira moved sharply last July, that was the first move for three years. The idea that there has been constant instability and change is certainly not true.

The fairly recent International Monetary Fund study calculates that the EMS has taken about 30 per cent. off the fluctuations between the participating currencies that would have occurred otherwise. That has been extremely valuable, particularly in view of how much Europe has been plagued by currency fluctuations within the Community, especially in the mid-1970s. This is one of the things that set my mind moving in this direction in 1977. Europe had been doing well throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s compared with America or Japan, but in the mid-1970s it suddenly started to do much worse. I was convinced that one of the major reasons was that the 1960s and early 1970s were a time of relative currency stability in the world, whereas the late 1970s were a time of violent currency and exchange rate fluctuations. That was internal, in Europe—outwith Japan and the United States. There was a considerable effect, but it was external to those countries.

In addition, there has been a remarkable recent development in the past couple of years in the private use of the ecu, paradoxically, perhaps, more than in the public use of the ecu. It is now a major borrowing and lending currency.

Therefore, there is no question but that the system which, by our own choice, we are outside, is successful. I think that all the participants value it and other potential participants are eager to join it. For instance, Senor Gonzalez told me just before he came into the Community that he believed that he could bring forward by a year the date of Spanish adherence to the EMS, and he would regard that as very desirable from the point of view of full Spanish membership of the Community and influence within the Community. We might well take a little notice of that point.

How was it that we did not join at the beginning? Three countries had doubts, although at slightly different stages. Italy and Ireland went away from the last European Council leaving serious doubts as to whether they would join. Then they took their courage in both hands and came in. I am sure that neither of them has regretted that decision at all. Why not us? I heard the reasons given by two successive Governments. Indeed, they are engraved on my mind. I remember that in November 1978 I went to see the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), and he assured me that, in principle, he would like the Labour Government to bring Britain into full participation in the exchange rate mechanism. However, he added, "I am extremely worried at being locked in at too high a rate, which would inhibit our ability to deal with unemployment." Almost exactly six months later I went to see the right hon. Lady who still presides over the Government, and she assured me that in principle she was extremely anxious for Britain to be a full participant, but, she said, "I am extremely worried about being locked in at too low a rate, which would inhibit our ability to deal with inflation." So we did not join. As a matter of fact, all the participating countries had lower unemployment and lower inflation than we did in the two years that followed.

Therefore, it is difficult to believe that such fears—no doubt legitimate—as well as an endemic offshore mentality were not at work in both those Governments. That worked still more strongly than the reasons given. It was careless and sad that we should have repeated for the third time the mistake of joining late. We did so with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and the

[Mr. Roy Jenkins]

European Community in 1957. If one is joining an organisation it is sensible, if possible, to be there at the beginning because one can influence the organisation's shape. It is better to do that than to stand aside for the third time, never learning the lesson, and saying that the shape does not fit, when one has not been there to influence its creation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the point that the volatility of sterling, because it is an oil currency, makes membership of the EMS more difficult for this country than for the non-oil economies?

Mr. Jenkins: That will make British membership more difficult for the European monetary system rather than for this country. In a way, we are lucky that it has been, and is still, willing to have a more volatile currency in full membership. We want to try to control the volatility of sterling as much as we can.

In view of the fear of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—*[Interruption.]*—what happened to sterling subsequently—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. If the hon. member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wants to intervene in the debate, he should come into the Chamber.

Mr. Jenkins: Following the fear of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that he would be locked in at too high a rate, what happened was that, with us outside the EMS, sterling appreciated beyond the wildest fears of anybody in 1978-79. Over two years it rose from $1·60 to $2·40. The result was that our competitive index worsened by 60 per cent., on the scale measured by the IMF. The result of that was the destruction of one fifth of our manufacturing industry and the associated increase in unemployment.

Nobody should suggest that membership of the EMS would have obviated all that. However, I believe that it would have reduced it substantially. It is a great mistake to believe that any monetary scheme or monetary mechanism can or perhaps should resist the long-term swell of the currency ocean. It can substantially take the top off the waves, particularly when, as happens too often, exchange rates are reacting not to differing levels of inflation, not to differing rates of productivity growth, not to trade imbalances, but much more to changes of sentiments or capital flows. The monetary system can do a great deal to cut the top off such waves.

That was very much the case in 1980. Everybody knew that rate could not be sustained. It was just a question of when it came down. If we had been in the EMS, the bubble would have been pricked much more quickly, and the damage to our industry and employment would have been much more limited. We would have avoided much of the ridiculous parabola in the sky of sterling going up from $1·60 to $2·40 and then coming down within 18 months back to $1·60, and, for a short period, down to $1·07.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I should like to take the right hon. Gentleman back to some of the possible disadvantages he mentioned in relation to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). Is it not a fact that the EMS is much more than a smoothing insurance mechanism? Are there not potential disadvantages in a Government's requirements in respect of a general economic policy to maintain parities? Is not the ruling mechanism—that of the central banks—likely to create difficulties for any member Government which they might not have if it were not a member of the system, bearing in mind particularly the strength of the Bundesbank and of the market?

Mr. Jenkins: I hear the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, but I think that the hon. Gentleman has himself complained about how British economic policy has developed over the past seven years. He has complained that we have had by far the highest unemployment rate in years. I do not understand how his dedicated, dogmatic anti-Europeanism can lead him to say that he would rather have what has happened outside the EMS than operate on a co-operative basis. In my view, we would have been able to avoid a significant part of the sterling fluctuation. That would have given us a substantial and healthier base for our economy.

I have been dealing in detail largely with the past. I shall now consider the position today. Although it would be better to enter the exchange rate mechanism at any time than never to enter it at all, there are obviously some times when it would be much better to enter. This is a very good time because there is a particular conjunction between the sterling-dollar rate and the sterling-deutschmark rate. Those are the two factors of primary importance at which people have been looking in seeking the most favourable juncture.

Last February, 11 months ago, there was a good occasion. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) noted that in his interesting publication, which I read carefully. That opportunity was allowed to slip away, but now there is another good occasion. The pound is approximately 3·33 deutschmarks, down from 3·75 a month ago—a devaluation of more than 11 per cent. against a major European currency.

I believe that most of the decreases in oil prices may have occurred. The price was $30 a barrel in November. The price is moving, but let us assume that it settles down somewhere between $17 and $20 a barrel. We will have a very uncertain market, but at least the really substantial move has probably occurred.

Sentiment in the oil markets is very uncertain, and the price is likely to fluctuate with every rumour about what Saudi Arabia is going to do, or about the date of the next OPEC meeting. The problem is how to tame the impact of the short-term changes in sentiment without hopelessly disrupting the domestic economy.

Outside, interest rates are almost the Government's only weapon. If we were fully in the EMS, support from our partners would provide an alternative means to manage short-term fluctuations. We would have a much better chance of living through a period of see-sawing expectations without disruptive alterations to either exchange or interest rates.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I am following the right hon. Gentleman's argument with great interest. He talked about interest rates and the damage that fluctuation of the pound has done to manufacturing industry. The right hon. Gentleman knows Birmingham almost as well as I do, so he realises the effects. Control of the EMS would not rest on good will,

which does not exist between central banks—only logic does. Because of what has happened to the pound as a result of the influence of the petrocurrency, and because of the present interest rates structure, would not interest rates be 2 to 3 per cent. higher now if we had been in the EMS? Would that not be more dangerous for us than the present system?

Mr. Jenkins: I think that interest rates would be lower if we were in the EMS. I would not say that interest rates would in all circumstances be lower in the EMS, but I would say at the present time in my view—one can only express one's own view—interest rates would be lower, and the immediate prospect would be one of lower rather than higher interest rates.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The motion says that we should forthwith join the exchange rate mechanism. Suppose we had joined in October or November last year and the best rate we could have achieved was 3·60 or perhaps 3·50 deutschmarks to the pound. Considering the pressure on the pound last week, is it not the case that we would have been raising interest rates?

Mr. Jenkins: I am saying that we are now at the best juncture we have reached for some time. There have been other good ones. I would not have joined last October. I would have joined last February——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The right hon. Gentleman said "at any time".

Mr. Jenkins: I said it is better to get in, rather than never to get in. Over the past seven years we have become like lift dwellers in a department store. We have gone into the lift, and it has gone up and down past every floor. The attendant has called out, "Soft furnishings, hard furnishings, sports goods, toys" and we have said "No, we want none of those." We always want to move on to the next floor. Lifts are very useful objects, but they are not suitable for permanent living. If one is always to say that there is never the perfect opportunity and thus try to get out before it is suitable, it would be more advantageous to get out on the floor that suits one, rather than on the floor that does not suit one. I would not stay in the lift indefinitely, and that is what the policy of the Government is about.

Apart from the short-term fluctuating position, there is also the medium and long-term position, and without the oil price shocks of recent weeks we would anyway have been in for a rough landing as our oil surplus runs down. What I am saying is that our huge surplus of oil will certainly be given to Russia, and it seems to me that we greatly want the assistance, if we can have it, of our other European partners to try and make that landing smoother. Be in no doubt that having reserves 10 times ours, which are those that are at the disposal of the EMS, is a considerable benefit. We are lucky that they still want us in.

Why do they? I think the reason bears upon another more general reason. They want us in more because of the importance of the City of London as a financial centre, rather than because of the importance of sterling as a currency. It is not nearly as important as the deutschmark.

It is greatly in the interests of every trading country and every economy to make sense of the world monetary system. Be in no doubt, with the fluctuations that we have had recently — and I am in favour of changes in currency rates which reflect realities in the performance of different economies—nobody is suggesting that we can or should resist the violent changes which make the free-floating rate the enemy of international trade, of international investment flows, and bring into being the grave danger of creating protectionist forces to a strong degree with currencies such as the dollar, which are forced up and kept at artificial lengths for some time. I do not think we can possibly put Bretton Woods back on its pedestal again, but we can create a tripod of greater stability, and if we are to do that, it manifestly has to be on the basis of the dollar, the yen, and the ecu as the currency of the European system.

As long as Britain is outside the mechanism, the European leg of the tripod will be hobbled by the absence of the City of London more than by the absence of sterling. It is as though New York and Chicago were outside the dollar area. That is why Britain is still welcome in the exchange rate mechanism. It is also an additional reason why we should be in favour of entering it. Enlightened self-interest is our motive for getting some sense and stability back into the international monetary system.

I am convinced that so long as Britain remains outside the ERM—outside the only major Community initiative in the past 10 years—and so long as she manifestly repeats the old habit of 1951 and 1957, we shall inevitably diminish our influence on other matters concerning the European Community. Spain noticed that fact as soon as she entered the EEC. She said, "We want to have full influence and we must be a fully participating member." It is curious that somehow we cannot see that.

On direct and indirect grounds, the case is strong. The moment is as good a one as we are likely to get. I urge the Chancellor to overcome what I fear has now become the Prime Minister's prejudice and, in accordance with what is now a substantial balance of informed opinion, to get on with it.

5.50 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) has made, as is his custom, an elegant speech. He was a distinguished President of the European Commission. He has always been an eloquent advocate of the cause of Europeanism.

It is important to put the question of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system into its proper perspective. It is not a question of our being for or against the development of the European Community. The Government's commitment to constructive membership of the European Community is beyond dispute. The fact that we have remained outside the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS casts no doubt on our European commitment. On the other side of the coin, it is right to point out, too, that, contrary to the assertions from time to time of some of those on the Opposition Benches, membership of the exchange rate mechanism would not lock us into some irrevocable commitment to full economic and monetary union. The truth is more complex, yet more prosaic. The ERM is a fixed, but adjustable, exchange rate system on Bretton Woods lines intended to promote greater economic convergence between its participants, particularly on inflation.

The Government's position on membership has been clear throughout. We would be ready to join the ERM as and when we judge the conditions are right for us to do so.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

I recognise that the right hon. Member for Hillhead believes that those conditions are right today. That is his judgment. However, he will recognise that many factors affecting sterling need to be weighed carefully. The Government have to take account of the fact that, unlike all other ERM currencies except the deutschmark, sterling is a widely held and internationally traded currency. It is, furthermore, a currency subject to different and often opposite strains from those that affect the other currencies currently in the system. We have seen evidence of these conflicting pressures in exchange market movements in recent weeks. The House does not need me to explain that conditions in the exchange markets have been, even by their standards, remarkably turbulent of late.

In recent weeks, the major influence on sterling has been the weakening of the oil price. To some extent, this is a problem of perception. Even before the latest movements in the market, oil accounted for only 5 per cent. or 6 per cent. of our national income and less than 8 per cent. of all our exports. It accounts for only 0·5 per cent. of all our employment and only 5 per cent. of capital investment, despite the massive capital investments required to develop the major fields in the North sea. Those who operate in the markets, as many commentators are increasingly coming to note, often have an exaggerated perception of the importance of oil to the United Kingdom. That is something with which we have to live. It came as no surprise that a fall in the price of oil on the scale we have seen in the past three or four weeks, when the price has fallen by around 30 per cent., should have had some impact on sterling. I would like to think that the markets have already begun to take a more balanced view, but these realities can take time to gain hold.

The other major factor in the exchange markets recently has, of course, been the decline of the dollar and its differential impact on other currencies. Since the Plaza agreement, the yen has appreciated by nearly 19 per cent. against the dollar, the deutschmark by about 16 per cent. and sterling by 22·5 per cent.; so the decline in the value of the dollar has given rise to substantial adjustments between the exchange rates of other currencies.

It is against this background that we must judge the question of membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. We must recognise in so doing that for sterling to join the ERM would bring about a significant change in the operation of the system itself. At present, the deutschmark plays a dominant and central role. The addition of sterling, another widely held and traded international currency, would undoubtedly introduce an element of bi-polarity into the system with which it has not yet had to cope. It may be that it could do so, but it is a question that must give us pause. We should note that the currencies of the other two major countries in the mechanism—the French franc and Italian lira—are both protected by a variety of exchange controls.

I need hardly say to the House that we have no intention whatsoever of restoring the exchange controls which my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary removed in 1979 when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such controls inevitably hinder the development of financial markets. Indeed, it is interesting to note, following a point made by the right hon. Member for Hillhead, that London is one of the leaders in the ecu market even though the United Kingdom does not participate in the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS.

The question for the United Kingdom is, therefore, in a number of respects rather different from that which other menber states have faced. The common element, which is insufficiently understood by many alliance Members, is that for our European partners the exchange rate mechanism is not seen as a soft option to be adopted as an alibi. There is no disputing the view of our partners that the ERM can be a helpful and effective anti-inflationary discipline. Indeed, it has by and large worked successfully for those countries participating, particularly since 1983.

The vital question is not so much membership itself as the resolve with which responsible financial policies are pursued. It is on this point that we must have doubts about the attitude of the right hon. Member for Hillhead and his party. They are very keen to join international organisations. They want us to join the exchange rate mechanism. Indeed, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) was using language at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday that suggested they also wanted us to join OPEC.

In spite of that apparent enthusiasm for the exchange rate mechanism, it is clear that they would not be joining it in the same spirit as our other European partners. The other European countries have submitted to the discipline it imposed, and had significant success in reducing their inflation rates. Yet the Social Democratic party has revealed that this is not its intention at all. Its autumn statement published last year — a rare example of precision by a party that usually likes to leave its intentions as vague as possible—explained how it would manage the economy. It showed that the Social Democratic party expected, if its policies were implemented, inflation to rise to 7·5 per cent. in 1987. That makes it clear that the Social Democratic party regards the ERM not as a discipline against inflation but as a cover for its own inflationary public spending plans. As such a cover, of course, it would not work.

This Government may not have joined the exchange rate mechanism, but we have remained firmly committed to the principles of financial discipline which underly it. We have chosen a different route to success against inflation, but one which has been equally effective. The average rate of inflation during this Parliament has been just over 5 per cent., which compares with an average of over 15 per cent. for the Labour Government of the 1970s. The prospect this year is for continued falls. We expect inflation to be below 4 per cent. in 1986. This inflation record has been accompanied by a remarkable turnround in our growth rate, especially when compared with that of our European partners. For a decade from 1973 to 1982 we were consistently at the bottom of the European growth league. In 1983 we grew faster than any of our major European partners, we would have done so again in 1984 were it not for Mr. Scargill's strike, and every indication is that in 1985 we shall once again be the fastest growing major European nation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has told us that the Government are not opposed in principle to joining the EMS and that we shall do so when the time is right. Will my hon. Friend tell us what the conjunction of circumstances will be which will suggest to him when the time is right?

Mr. Stewart: I am not going to offer my hon. Friend or the House a check list of circumstances because, as we have seen in recent weeks and days, circumstances of many kinds can change unpredictably and at short notice. The balance of judgment has to be made in the conditions of the time.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Gentleman has said that we in the alliance have perhaps misunderstood certain consequences of joining the exchange rate mechanism. Can the hon. Gentleman say succinctly—he has not yet done so—what disadvantages would affect this country if we joined?

Mr. Stewart: Greater fluctuations in the market in relation to sterling, to which I have already alluded, do create difficulties in operating any financial or monetary system. That is a point to which the hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead drew attention. One has to take these questions into account. There are arguments both ways on this matter and one must take a balanced judgment.

The record of success which this Government have had, without being a member of the ERM amply demonstrates that it is commitment to sound finance and lower inflation which is the key to economic prosperity, rather than the fact of holding a club membership card in the exchange rate mechanism.

The judgment the Government have to make in relation to the exchange rate mechanism is not, as I emphasised at the outset, one of being for or against Europe. Nor is it one of being for or against international co-operation on exchange rates. Our participation in the Plaza agreement along with other major European countries, as well as the United States and Japan, amply demonstrates such co-operation. It is rather whether, bearing in mind the practical problems, membership of the exchange rate mechanism would provide a more effective and safer means of achieving our economic objectives than the strategy the Government have followed for the last six years. Membership of the exchange rate mechanism is not a panacea, nor is it the only option. There are no magic guarantees that it would reduce inflation by itself. Membership would be successful only if monetary and fiscal policies were appropriately firm.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I agree with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) that this is an interesting and important debate. We have talked about whether we should join the ERM or the EMS. However, one of the great problems that we face in this part of the western world is that interest rates are at such high levels — higher than any level in the history of western Europe. America should co-operate and should cease sucking in vast sums of money because it is unwilling to balance its books — there is a $200 billion deficit. Unless we get the co-operation of the United States, whether we join the EMS or any other system, we and Europe as a whole face problems never faced before. We are all pulled down because of the United States' unwillingness to get its own books and ship in the right order.

Mr. Stewart: I do not think I should be drawn into a disquisition on the United States fiscal and monetary policy. I certainly accept the point that the large imbalances in the domestic economy and trade account of the United States have created conditions which have caused turbulence to the rest of the world.

The United States Administration addressed themselves to these problems more realistically in 1985—the Plaza meeting was evidence of that. The new attitude of Secretary Baker at the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund shows that there has been an important shift in American perception of its domestic economy and the international implications of its policies. However, this does not remove the need for each country to deal with its own financial circumstances according to its own policies.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): My hon. Friend has just mentioned that the United States now has a more international perspective on these matters. Does my hon. Friend agree that the reason for this debate is that early in the 1970s the United States broke the gold exchange window and agreed with other western countries to move into an era of floating exchange rates? Membership of the EMS is not the critical issue but the restoration of fixed interest rates based on convertibility of at least one currency——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It cannot be convertibility to gold.

Mr. Browne: It used to be the gold exchange standard. The EMS is founded on a floating base. If we choose a fixed exchange rate—which is much more important—it must be done with at least one currency that can be converted into gold at a price to be agreed. Can my hon. Friend persuade the Americans that this is an urgent problem? Would my hon. Friend urge this factor, given the Americans' new international perspective?

Mr. Stewart: I am not sure that I follow my hon. Friend's analysis and argument. However, the era of floating exchange rates was not a perverse decision taken out of the blue in the 1970s. It was the consequence of increasing instability between a number of major economies under which the old system, under any circumstances, could not be maintained. That is a different cause. Ten years or more later, we are still grappling with the consequences. The major changes in commodity prices —of which oil is the main one—were bound up with this.

The Government have always said that they recognised the advantages that the exchange rate mechanism could offer in the way of providing a framework of financial discipline. It is not the only possible framework, as we have fully demonstrated, but, combined with the appropriate political commitment, it can indeed provide a method of reducing inflation. The considerations which I have discussed this afternoon suggest that, at present, sterling's participation in the mechanism would not, on balance, be of benefit, although it is a question which is kept under continuous review.

6.9 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The question whether the United Kingdom should join the EMS is not an ideological argument but a practical one. Although the present level of the exchange rate makes the argument for joining stronger than it has been for some time, the balance of advantage still lies against our joining.

One reason for saying that is that we think that insufficient attention has been paid to the obligations of

[Mr. Tony Blair]

membership of the EMS. We should treat with extreme caution claims about the stability which membership would bring to our currency. The EMS is essentially a means to an end and for it to succeed there must be a clear and common area of agreement between members on economic policy and objectives. We are not convinced that policy objectives that are currently pursued in the EMS converge sufficiently with those which we would want to be pursued domestically.

The first thing that we should do when discussing the EMS is to debunk some of the mythology surrounding it. There is a risk of it being seen not as a palliative, which is what it would be at best, but as a panacea that can cure the problems of instability in the exchange rate. It is important that our choice is informed and not a careless embrace of anything with the word "European" in it.

We should start by examining what the EMS is. It is a club that can yield benefits to the participants, but only at the expense of certain obligations. The stability arises not by natural process but by the agreement of the members to keep their exchange rates within agreed boundaries. It is essentially a statement of intent to act individually or collectively to ensure that the value of currencies is maintained within agreed margins of a set of bilateral central rates.

Three types of action can be taken. It can be done collectively through mutual support from the pool of reserves—it can also be taken under various short-term financing facilities—it can be taken through members intervening individually and it can be taken through the use of interest rates. France virtually controls its exchange rate by the use of interest rates. The latter two methods of control might be chosen by countries outside the EMS, but they are methods of obligation within it.

The proponents of the EMS say that those obligations are worth carrying because of the stability that will accrue to our currency. Stability can be long-term or short-term. I do not believe that there is compelling evidence that long-term stability has been brought to the exchange rates of currencies in the EMS. The long-term stability will to a considerable extent be contingent upon policy convergence. Such stability as there has been would equally have occurred if the exchange rates had been outside the EMS.

It is worth remembering that, when we talk about the medium term, because there are several realignments in the EMS, it is still possible to get considerable variations in the exchange rate. It is worth examining the two major realignments of the past few years—that of the French franc in March 1983, and that of the Italian lira in July 1985. When the French franc came under sustained speculative pressure in March 1983, there was a realignment, but it occurred as a result of the French agreeing much tighter budgetary fiscal measures. We can disagree about whether that was right or wrong, but it is important to emphasise that it was part of a package.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Has the hon. Gentleman understood that, whatever might be the arguments for or against membership of the EMS, currencies that are in it and that are exposed to speculative pressure have the support of the entire monetary authority system of the member countries? That is why the speculators were seen off against the French franc in March 1983 and why the devaluation was relatively controlled. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has quite grasped that point.

Mr. Blair: With respect, I have grasped it. I said that one of the courses of action available to members of the EMS was collective action from the pool of reserves. France effectively keeps its median line against the deutschmark through the use of interest rates, so the pool of reserves alone is not sufficient to ensure against currency speculation. More important is the fact that the realignment, took place in conjunction with other policy measures. Exactly the same thing happened when the Italian lira was subjected to an 8 per cent. devaluation in July 1985. The price for the realignment was considerable other measures demanded of the Italian Government.

The two lessons to be learnt from those examples are, first, that realignment can occur, but only when combined with other policy packages — that means yielding up some freedom of action in the EMS — and, secondly, that, although short-term fluctuations in currency might be smoothed out by membership of the EMS, some companies say that that short-term risk can be borne by covering oneself in the forward market whereas a much greater risk, to which one is subjected in the EMS, is realignment where volatility can be intense, sudden and unpredictable.

The only compelling argument in favour of membership of the EMS is that it provides a hedge or some certainty against short-term instability in the currency. There has been considerable short-term instability in Britain during the past few years. I accept that there is a strong argument to the effect that being in the EMS might cut such speculative pressure, but I would put qualifications even on that claim. There is no clear evidence, for example, that day-to-day volatility of exchange rates damages trade flows. There have been numerous attempts to find such evidence, but it has not been found.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): What about the Confederation of British Industry?

Mr. Blair: I shall deal with its stance shortly.

The level at which we fix the exchange rate is obviously extremely important, and there is still tremendous disagreement about what its level should be. The most important qualification on our ability in the EMS even to withstand short-term pressures is that Britain has a petrocurrency. With great respect to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), he has not dealt fully with the consequences of that provision.

The first consequence is that the EMS is essentially a deutschmark bloc. It could be said that we would be putting Herr Pöhl of the Bundesbank in 11 Downing street. He might be preferable to the present incumbent, but we should yield our freedom of action. With regard to Britain as an oil exporter, cheaper oil for Germany would put up the deutschmark. If there is a drop in oil prices, cheaper oil prices mean that the deutschmark lifts and, conversely, that the pound is subject to downward pressure. That tension would be built into the system once sterling joined the EMS.

Perhaps most important of all is that we do not prevent speculation as a result of oil price fears by joining the EMS. Much of the clamour for joining the EMS during the past few months results from people thinking that the

exchange rate crisis in January last year and the flutters of the past few weeks would be cured by joining the EMS. That is quite definitely not so.

The alliance says that we should go into the EMS forthwith. It said that we should go into the EMS forthwith last year. It has been saying that we should join the EMS forthwith for years. If we had joined the EMS last year, the best rate that we could have got in against the deutschmark was DM 3·60 or DM 3·50. Many suggest that we would not have been able to negotiate such a rate. The current rate is DM 3·33. When the oil price exerted pressure on the pound last week, the Government, as a member of the EMS, would have been shoving up interest rates and I guarantee that if interest rates had gone up last week, we would have had an alliance motion criticising the Government for raising interest rates. They cannot have it both ways. Penalties are involved and those penalties should be clearly understood.

The problems is not merely the lack of a guarantee that we will not have interest rate crisis of that type. I would go further than that. If the price of oil falls, it is rational that our exchange rate should be allowed to fall, because the price of a major export item is falling. That difficulty, which faces Britain because of its petrocurrency status, does not fit into the circumstances of the other nations in the EMS.

Contrary to what has been said, criticisms of the Government's interest rate policy could be made irrespective of membership of the EMS. January 1985 is the obvious example. The Government appeared to be giving the lie to the market that they would not intervene to prop up the exchange rate. Currency speculators had a one-way bet against our currency. The exchange rate plummeted and the Government had to compensate for that initial period of inaction by jacking up interest rates by 4 per cent. The Government can be legitimately criticised for not cutting rates last summer. They had the opportunity to cut them and their starting base would have been that much less.

When we consider the Government's policy during the past week, we cannot criticise them for not being in the EMS and also for allowing the exchange rate to slide. In many ways is is easier to understand the case for the Government, rather than the Opposition parties, wanting us to join the EMS. Joining the EMS implies a fiscal and monetary policy convergence. The fiscal and monetary polices of the German Bundesbank are tight. One would have thought that the alliance, which proposes a fiscally expansive policy, would be the last party to want to join the EMS. There is a clear argument for the Government wanting to join the EMS.

The argument for the EMS is much stronger if there is an agreement, or the prospect of an agreement, on the fundamentals of macro-economic policy between the member countries. The exchange rate is important, but it is a residuary, not a fundamental. If we join the EMS, it is much better to be certain of the agreed, common policy objectives between the member countries. In relation to the importance of international monetary stability, the initiatives of the Group of Five are of greater significance than what has happened within the EMS. The G5 initiative that forced down the dollar was more important than what was happening in the EMS. The G5 countries criticised Germany for pursuing too tight a fiscal policy, but that is the fiscal policy with which we would be aligning ourselves if we were to join the EMS.

Whether it be the EMS or the G5, acronyms are no substitute for analysis of Britain's economy and its problems. The central and fundamental problem is how to prepare for post-oil Britain. Flutters of speculation against our exchange rate are warning signals. We either build up our manufacturing industry to generate the wealth that we shall need when oil production declines, or we face a poor and unstable future. No amount of juggling at the margin will eliminate the central dilemma. The Labour party, and only the Labour party, has the political will and economic sense to address the dilemma.

6.23 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I hope that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) will not be too disappointed that this subject does not have the same magnetic, attractive power to fill the Benches as some of the subjects that we discussed last week. However, the issue is important and I hazard the view that the subjects for discussion today will be more influential in deciding the political future and the political outcome of the general election than many of the subjects with which the House has preoccupied itself in recent weeks.

The alliance has given us a good opportunity to consider crucial issues. I agree with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that perhaps the motion itself is rather marginal, but we have been given the opportunity to consider central issues for politics and the future of Britain.

I wish to take that opportunity in a way of which the right hon. Member for Hillhead may not approve. I wish to consider the events of the past few days. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the monetary authorities should be warmly congratulated on the way in which they have succeeded in managing a tricky passage in international monetary affairs. They were right to allow the exchange rate predominantly to take the strain during recent weeks rather than giving in to the panic cries for further hikes in interest rates. That would have been a great mistake.

Oil production will come off the peak during the next decade and oil prices will go down, so it is a natural long-term adjustment for the exchange rate to move more favourably for our exporters against the deutschmark and possibly the dollar. It would be absurd to try to counteract that effect. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has made several penetrating speeches looking forward to the era when we are no longer such a major oil exporter, and describing how the adjustment will work.

It would be wrong in the short term to let gyrations in the oil markets overwhelm our domestic policy priorities. We are not an oil-producing nation in the same sense as OPEC members. Oil is only a small fraction of our GNP and a small fraction of our exports. We have discussed sterling as a petrocurrency. That may have been the perception, but it is not a petrocurrency. It is wrong to allow our domestic policies and priorities to be fazed by the oscillations in the oil market. Those will be violent because we have a very market-like market for oil and there is none of the orderliness that existed when the American giants controlled the oil markets before 1973. The prices will swing violently.

It would also have been absurd to take the long-term and desperate action to shore up the pound in the face of oil market gyration, because the oil price will rise again in a week or two. OPEC members are now doing what they

[Mr. David Howell]

said they would. They believed that they could bring Britain into talks if they lifted the lid off Saudi production and allowed it to rise a few million barrels. The oil price would then fall and Britain would realise where its interests lay.

That was the openly declared threat, but it is based on an entirely wrong perception. Britain will not talk to OPEC. Even if it did, little would be achieved. It would be a bad mistake for Britain to become involved in bilateral talks with OPEC now. I was surprised when the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday suggested that we should have talks with OPEC about the price of oil. It is not only in the long-term interest of Britain to have lower oil prices.

Even if we had talks and the Government were in control of North sea oil production—which they are not, because the Goverment do not control production levels —talks would not do any good. Suppose Britain and the Norwegians could get together in the North sea and knock 300,000 barrels off the oil price. That would make no difference, because the world is glutted with oil. The OPEC leaders have at least been frank. They say that they are not interested in figures, but in gestures. They want a gesture, which would be pointless in terms of oil market stability. Their desire for a gesture has more to do with the internal politics of OPEC and their own sensibilities. So we could be dragged into a pointless set of discussions and we should be forced to influence oil production in the North sea and change unnecessarily the entire basis upon which North sea impetus has been achieved.

It is worth reflecting that if oil prices go down to $15, as Sheikh Yamani says, and there is then a perception that they will rise again, to about $20, as they almost certainly will, a great many oil companies will try, if they can, to slow oil production from their platforms. One does not need to be a Government to reach that decision, one just needs to be an oil company. In addition, I believe that it is correct to say that North sea oil production will peak this year and may come off the top. So if OPEC watches the figures, it will see lower North sea oil production anyway and take that as a gesture, without any need for talks, bilateral agreements or Britain being drawn into the OPEC morass.

There is one case where there might be a need for talks. If the oil price goes through the floor, Mexico and Nigeria default, Venezuela goes bankrupt and the world's banking system needs shoring up because of non-performing energy loans, then we should indeed need talks. They would not just be talks with Saudi Arabia or OPEC and Britain but among all the leading financial countries, oil producers and oil consumers to contain and co-ordinate action against a world financial crisis. Those are not the talks for which the Saudis are calling. They are not the talks for which the hon. Member for Stockton, South was calling yesterday — which would be pointless and hopeless. They would be part of "gesture" politics which would gain us nothing and lose us a great deal.

That is the background against which the British Government's policy has been steady and correct in recent weeks. I welcome that fact.

We must consider what the next move is and whether full membership of the exchange rate mechanism has a part to play in it. We must recognise that we need to wait for the oil market to calm down. I believe that oil prices will increase in a week or two, not least because the other, non-Saudi, OPEC members are emitting cries of agony at seeing their revenues disappear. Their market share is not increasing and their budgets are all in a rough condition. We must wait. The motion is, in a sense, premature.

If we can join the exchange rate mechanism at a deutschmark rate of about 3·40—a little higher than now—that would be a sensible and rather limited step. I am not one of those who believe that we should move towards the more fanciful idea of monetary union. I am not arguing for that. There is a limited package which would be sensible from the point of view of this country's economic objectives and financial goals—for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism, for the French and the Italians to do away with their exchange controls and for the Germans to recognise the need for a greater use of the ecu. That would provide a more stable environment in which we could then operate.

Hon. Members have asked about the oil side of things. I have conceded that that is at present a difficulty, but we should not exaggerate it. Although it is on a much smaller scale, the guilder is in the European exchange rate mechanism. Oil and gas production form a much higher proportion of Dutch GNP than oil and gas production do as a proportion of British GNP. Holland is much more of a petro-country in that sense than we are. However, that has not produced all sorts of unthinkable and insuperable problems for the guilder. The Dutch have managed perfectly well. Oil is a problem, but not an insuperable one.

It would be putting the matter much too high to say that joining the exchange rate mechanism would be a major advance, but I believe that it would help. The hon. Member for Sedgefield said that we would have had to raise interest rates. If, in the coming months, we were in the exchange rate mechanism, the downward pressures on the exchange rate and the upward pressure on interest rates would be somewhat modified. Pressure would not be avoided. He is correct, but it could be somewhat modified. We should be in a loose harness and the international market would have a little more understanding of where we stood on our exchange rate policy. Joining the European exchange rate mechanism would not obviate the need to have to resort to interest rate and exchange rate movements and possible realignments from time to time. I am not suggesting that.

There is also a larger stage on which those matters must be judged and even more important issues may need to be resolved. Joining the exchange rate mechanism might be relevant to our local problems in Europe, but the real issues are the ones that the Group of Five has tried to address. That group is interested in international interest rates disarmament and having greater exchange rate stability worldwide between the dollar bloc and the European bloc—whether it is deutschmark-sterling or just the deutschmark bloc—and the yen bloc.

If I had heard the right hon. Member for Hillhead speak more on those aspects and air some thoughts on the way in which those three blocs could integrate more closely so that we might have exchange rate bands between the yen, the dollar and the deutschmark-sterling bloc which would allow rather more orderliness than we have had over the past two or three years, I should have been rather more attracted to his proposition that, within that, we should join the exchange rate mechanism.

In sum, therefore, we have been correct to avoid the huge hike in interest rates for which some people were calling. We should not let oil price oscillations overwhelm us. We should not speak to OPEC countries about trying to rig oil prices in a way unfavourable to all industrialised countries. We should let matters calm down before addressing the issue of the exchange rate mechanism and the way in which any developments there would fit into larger plans for a more orderly world pattern of exchange rates as between the three major blocs, as G5 has been discussing.

6.36 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am somewhat surprised that the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) came to the conclusions that he did about my remarks on the desirability of closer co-operation between the yen bloc, the United States bloc and the European bloc. That type of co-operation, which G5 has been able to bring about and which I am sure all Members of the House will support and welcome, would be much easier and much more effective if the European bloc to which he referred was more effective in running its activities than it is at present.

A broad concensus has developed in this country, which extends to Conservative Members across a wide spectrum of industry and the City, that a move by this country to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system would help with the development of that system and make it more effective. It would make it more possible for the United States, Japan and Europe to co-operate with monetary and exchange rate matters. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman came to a rather unclear conclusion on taking a further step and going into the exchange rate mechanism.

One of the things that depresses me about the comments of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and others is that they seek to pursue a chimera of national sovereignty, as if we could control affairs in this country's economy on our own, with no regard to what was happening in other parts of the world.

The implication of what has been said by those who oppose the proposal contained in the motion is that when we can somehow remain outside the EMS or discussions with others, whether with OPEC on a managed fall in oil prices or with our partners on the other side of the Atlantic, and insulate ourselves against being buffeted by world economic events. All recent evidence is that we cannot do that.

Mr. Blair: Let me reassure the hon. Gentleman. I made no such claim. Obviously we cannot protect ourselves from all the buffets of the world economy, but, with respect, he is suggesting that we should join the EMS forthwith. He must say how he could pursue alliance fiscal policy within the constraints of the EMS and a particular German fiscal policy.

Mr Wrigglesworth: The hon. Gentleman must tell the House whether he would prefer to submit himself to constraints imposed by the IMF, as former Labour Chancellors of the Exchequer have done when they have had to go cap in hand to it, or whether he would prefer to work in co-operation with our partners in Europe, and create greater stability regarding inflation, exchange and interest rates, and not have to go cap in hand to the IMF. It is surely better to work with our partners in Europe to achieve co-operation, as we are doing in other spheres. That will mean giving away some of our sovereignty for the benefits that accrue, but the benefits from joining the exchange rate mechanism outweigh any disadvantage from giving up a limited amount of sovereignty and submitting ourselves to the disciplines of full membership of the EMS.

Many people believe that those disciplines would be wholly advantageous to us, not only because the Government would have to ensure that the wild fluctuations that occur do not take place, but because the markets would have greater confidence in our position, knowing that we have accepted the constraints necessary for being a member of the EMS and that we have the support of the system in withstanding the pressures which force fluctuations in exchange and interest rates.

In recent years, the operation of the EMS has involved a considerable convergence of economies, and of success in getting greater conversion, especially of inflation and interest rates. There have been fewer realignments and stronger reserves. In 1985, the average inflation differential was 2·2 per cent., compared with 6 per cent. in 1980. Interest rate differentials have narrowed to 4 per cent. since the last major realignment in 1983. Ironing out fluctuations in that way would be enormously beneficial to the United Kingdom. That is why the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Governor of the Bank of England, and a variety of other organisations and individuals advocate that we should join.

The Economic Secretary and the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) believe that the influence of the oil sector on the economy is exaggerated. It may have been somewhat exaggerated, but hon. Members will surely realise that it is not the scale of its impact—the 6 per cent. — but its effect on the margins. It affects our balance of payments, and the revenue going to the Exchequer. The contribution to our balance of payments and the revenues going to the Exchequer from oil may not be large in relation to the total, but they are of fundamental importance on the margins.

Nothing demonstrates that more clearly than the way in which the freedom of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on fiscal adjustment and his ability to cut taxes has been limited. Only recently he said that that was a major item in his forthcoming Budget, but the important contribution from the oil sector is not coming. Therefore, it is of importance in that respect. It is of even greater importance for our balance of payments. The oil sector of the economy will put pressures of that sort on our exchange rate, and it is an important factor, which the market is right to take into account.

I join the right hon. Gentleman in congratulating the Bank of England and the Treasury on intervening to resist the pressures of the past week. It is a pity that they have not done so on many past occasions when the money market was looking for a lead from the Bank of England, but was not getting it. On many occasions we could have resisted the pressure for higher interest rates, if the bank had given a clear lead and the Treasury had allowed it to do so. I welcome the new policy of the Bank of England and the Treasury, of intervening in the money markets to keep interest rates down. However, they would be better

[Mr Wrigglesworth]

able to do that if we were members of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS, and had its support in resisting those pressures. The pressures will not go away.

Considering the present levels of exchange rates, it would be particularly appropriate to join. At present the index is standing at 74. The deutschmark rate stands at 3·33 and the dollar at 1·39. At various times in the past Ministers have argued that we should not join because of the dollar or the deutschmark, but surely the truth is that the Government are unwilling to give up what they see as their control over our economic affairs. I wish that they, and particularly the Prime Minister, would admit that.

That sounds a grand nationalistic thing to be doing, and the hon. Member for Sedgefield made much of it, but it has not done much good recently. It has not prevented our manufacturing industry from being hit for six by the exchange and interest rate policies that the Government have pursued. That is hardly evidence that staying outside the EMS since 1979, and particularly between 1979 and 1981, has been good for manufacturing industry. If the hon. Gentleman has a solution to that problem while remaining outside the EMS, and believes that his policy on interest rates, and particularly exchange rates, can resist those pressures and not put further impediments in the way of manufacturing industry, he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

I hope that the House will see the wisdom of our suggestion, as many organisations have. We wish to seek greater international co-operation. The world of trade and commerce, especially the money markets, is becoming increasingly international, partly for technological reasons. It is vital that the political institutions of the world keep up with the rapid pace of development of the international financial markets, and of the international trading, business and industrial world. We do not have the mechanisms to cope with much of what is going on in the world economy today. Our membership of the EMS would provide us with greater control and influence over those events, to the benefit of trade and industry throughout the world.

The one message that I constantly receive from all manufacturing industry, from talking to individual firms or their representatives at the CBI and Institute of Directors, is not that they are terrified about a particular exchange rate or interest rate level, but that they need stability and certainty so that they can plan. That is what the exchange rate mechanism and membership of the EMS would give us, and for that reason we hope that the House will support the motion.

6.49 pm

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): I have listened catefully to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), and if I did not have a view on the European monetary system I would not be able to form many conclusions from doing so.

The debate has understandably been dominated by the arguments about whether we should enter the EMS. We would be deluding ourselves if we believed that problems with high interest rates and volatile exchange markets could be overcome simply by joining the EMS. That is because the dollar is still the chief international currency and it is its effect on the remainder of the world economy that has a much greater impact upon interest rates and exchange rates than anything else.

We should be considering two main factors in detail. First, we must ensure the continuing success of the G5, and, secondly—here I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) who is not in this place—that we must try to persuade the Americans to ensure that all decisions taken in Washington on the future of their domestic economy are reached only after the closest consideration of the consequences which those policies have upon the global economy as well as their own.

The Plaza initiative, to which many hon. Members have referred, has been only a partial success. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has said that the yen and the deutschmark have risen by about 17 or 18 per cent. against the dollar since the Plaza initiative. The meeting of G5 in London only two weeks ago reaffirmed an intention to try to ensure that the American dollar did not rise again. After this meeting there was some anxiety about interest rates, a feeling that perhaps orchestrated action could have been taken to bring them down.

Some people overlook the fact that it is much easier for Governments to intervene in exchange markets than it is for them to co-ordinate cuts in international interest rates.

The dilemma facing G5 is that interest rates low enough to provide healthy economic stimulation may not be high enough to contain inflation. Solving that dilemma is a key issue facing every western nation including our own. The solution cannot be found by the British Government alone; the Americans must take the right decisions about their domestic economy.

The United States problem, the huge budget deficit to which many hon. Members have referred, is fuelled by a tax system that subsidises borrowing by making interest expenses tax deductible. That results in high United States interest rates and they cause many of the difficulties we are debating. As we know, high interest rates attract foreign capital and lead to a high dollar. The risk of world recovery faltering and creating protectionism outweighs the immediate prospect of a surge in inflation because the world is awash with gluts. There is high unemployment, an oil glut and a grain glut, and commodity prices are falling.

Now is the moment for the international economic community to take decisions that will bring down interest rates. If carried too far, interest rate cuts, I accept, could rekindle inflation, so we must look for modest cuts in interest rates in America. Interest rate cuts there are vital for Britain and for other countries in the western world. As guardians of the major global currency, the Americans have an enormous responsibility to the rest of us. But if the global economy does not prosper, nor do American farmers, steelworkers and car workers.

The realisation of that fact has led to a new and refreshing view in Washington of exchange and interest rates. The new view in Washington is leading the United States towards tightening its fiscal policy at the same time as having a much easier monetary policy. That is confirmed in recent speeches by Paul Volcker and many of the people who surround him, whether they be traditional Keynesians or supply-siders.

If Britain wants firmer, stabler exchange rates and lower interest rates, a way for the Government to achieve that end is to maintain their pressure unilaterally, through

G5, and by any other means possible on the American Administration to adopt a looser monetary policy and a tighter fiscal policy. The consequences of that approach may be that British businesses and home owners will gain from lower interest rates.

I may be in favour of Britain joining the EMS, but I cannot go as far as the alliance and say that if Britain enters the EMS it will make all the difference the alliance claims. But less volatile exchange rates and lower interest rates can be brought about by continual efforts in the United States to produce a tighter fiscal policy and a looser monetary policy.

6.58 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): One of the reasons usually paraded in arguments for joining the EMS is that the use of domestic interest rates here to protect the currency would not be so necessary. Another argument introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) is that our interest rates are effectively jerked around on the end of American interest rates and the American deficit.

I suggest that there are some domestic factors in the reasons why our interest rates are so high. It may be that we can do something about that and stop the damage that high interest rates cause to productive investment by discouraging it. Perhaps we can take some action on the domestic front without looking at the international ramifications. Interest rates in any economy must surely be dictated by the relationship of the demand for credit and the supply of savings available. An economy with consistent double digit interest rates is a fair indication that the demand for credit is excessive in relation to the supply of savings.

The bank lending figures—credit expansion figures—for the United Kingdom are deeply worrying. Bank lending is increasing at about 16 per cent. a year. That is considerably faster than GDP and inflation. An interesting contrast is that in West Germany domestic credit expansion is running at about 3·7 per cent. If we compare other figures in the two countries, we will find that West Germany is doing rather better than us.

Of that credit expansion, a disproportionate amount goes to financial institutions, property, house purchase and consumer credit, and nothing like enough of it goes into productive investment. One of the reasons for that is that consumer credit and the credit that goes to financial institutions and into property purchase and short-term investment deals is not very sensitive to interest rates.

Consumer credit is almost insensitive to interest rates, but it is sensitive to income flow and whether or not people can afford the weekly or monthly payments. The fact that people are prepared to borrow on their credit cards at 33 per cent. interest is evidence of that insensitivity to interest rates. Long-term productive investment decisions are sensitive to interest rates. Bank lending is growing far too fast, and that is one of the factors that is creating the high interest rates in Britain.

One looks behind that for another reason why bank lending is growing so fast and why it is resulting in high interest rates. Not long ago we had moderate interest rates in single figures for a long time. Then in the mid-1970s we started to get double digit interest rates. A variety of reasons were paraded for that. Most of them proved to be unpersuasive, such as the public sector borrowing requirement being responsible for driving up interest rates.

I find it difficult to be persuaded that marginal differences in the PSBR in the context of all the credit creation that goes on will have much effect. At one time there were arguments about inflationary expectations. I think one can now measure those expectations fairly accurately because there is an index-linked security market.

One factor, though not the only one, has been the rapid deregulation of credit markets and the banking system. The old banking system was a rationing system; bank managers said no. It was extremely difficult to borrow money. Credit was rationed effectively by a limited and small banking system saying no to people who wanted to borrow. But that has changed. Deregulation has resulted in banks operating in an entirely different way. They actively and aggressively sell credit. There can seldom have been a time when it has been easier to borrow money.

Banks lend and immediately create an asset and a liability on the balance sheet. So long as banks keep their capital ratio intact, which they seem to be able to do fairly easily, they can increase credit creation all by themselves. Some money leaks out of the system and they have to borrow that back on the inter-bank market. That is how interest rates are driven up by the deregulation of banking.

We now have a system in which credit is rationed only by interest rates. Therefore, there is bound to be a dangerous excess of credit. Because a large number of people at the borrowing end of the series of transactions are not influenced by interest rates, as is the case with consumers and short-term investment deals, the people who are sensitive to high interest rates are being jerked around at the end of that series of transactions. The problem will get worse. The big bang in the City will result in a revolution in corporate lending. The growth in the number of foreign banks operating in the United Kingdom is not likely to stop. Building societies seem to be turning themselves into banks and credit organisations. That will magnify the problem

This is only hypothesis, but high interest rates have been obvious in the United Kingdom and the United States where the deregulation of the banking system has gone furthest. One does not see the same phenomenon in other countries such as West Germany and Japan. I am not in any way against deregulation of financial markets. The benefits that it has brought to London as an international centre are enormous, and I would not want to see us going back, but it would be a terrible mistake if we did not appreciate that one of the consequences has been the excessive creation of credit, with resulting high interest rates.

We should try to see whether we can do something. Inflation and high interest rates affect productive investment decisions. That is where we want the nation's savings to go, and not into consumer credit, which is financing the import of consumer electronic goods.

We should consider carefully whether we need a credit policy that would be a little stricter in limiting consumer credit expansion and the kind of lending that is done to finance short-term property and securities dealings. In the past we have had such mechanisms as high deposits for hire purchase arrangements, and larger repayments on credit card bills. It is ridiculous that the minimum repayment on a credit card bill should be just about 2 per cent. of the total. It would be easy to introduce minor regulatory rules which would make consumer lending less popular. If we do not do something like that, high interest

[Mr. John Maples]

rates driven by that kind of lending will persist and will adversely affect both inflation and the productive investment decisions that we make.

7.4 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): This is a most important debate and I am only sorry that the subject will not have a longer airing. In the 1970s we began an era, of which this era is a continuation, of massive inflation on a historic basis, with double digit figures in almost all developed countries. There was massive volatility in the price of major commodities, such as oil, as has been mentioned in the debate. There was also a massive rise in the level of international debt and massive speculation and volatility in exchange rates, so much so that the London market and most of the other currency exchange markets reckon that 85 per cent. of the business is speculation and only 15 per cent. relates to real trade transactions.

When this era began in the early 1970s, the dollar gold exchange standard was unilaterally broken by the United States. If it had not been for that, would it have been possible for the developed western world to pay the high oil prices?

The second event of major significance in the early 1970s was that the United Kingdom unilaterally floated sterling. It was followed by other major countries. So the era of floating exchange rates of no real numeraire began. Massive abuses started, resulting in huge volatility in commodity prices, huge inflation and huge speculation on foreign exchange markets.

Now we have an era of competitive trade. We have a trade war that should concern us all deeply. There are moves in the United States to protect its trade. That is very dangerous, particularly for a country such as ours that depends so much on its earnings from international trade. Despite the existence of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the apparent system of free trade agreements that pervades the world, there is a trade war under the table. It is done surreptitously, by the competitive devaluation of currencies. That is the real danger. For any of us to believe in free trade when at the same time we have floating exchange rates is to believe in pure fantasy.

The problem is serious and urgent. Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have said what a good thing it is to have common policies. In many areas of trade finance, such as the Export Credits Guarantee Department, on the surface there seems to be an agreement on a norm. When we examine it, in countries like France interest rates are subsidised so that French companies can borrow deutschmarks at 7 per cent., lend them on to finance trade to Russia at 7·8 per cent., the Russian maximum; the exchange rate is guaranteed to that company by the Government. It is all done under the table. So French companies become very competitive in trade between western Europe and the Soviet Union.

The root cause of all the problems is a lack of integrity in international money. The Government have re-established integrity in our domestic money by reducing inflation to historically low levels, now getting towards 3·25 per cent. The Government must now urge the re-establishment of international monetary integrity by seeking the restoration of a gold exchange standard for the United States dollar.

Hon. Members have ridiculed what I said in an intervention; they have said that we cannot go back to the gold standard. The gold standard has four gradations. I would be the last to urge that we should go back to the full gold standard. That would be catastrophic to today's economy. But it is essential that the most lenient of the gold standards, the gold exchange standard which existed until the 1970s, is restored.

The Government should, first of all, move to a restoration of fixed exchange rates and not go to the halfway house, what I see as a gimmick, the EMS, because the EMS is not really a group of fixed exchange rates, but a bunch of floating exchange rates, floating without any real integrity in the value of the money, still allowing commodity prices to rise in terms of a bunch of EMS currencies. So I understand the arguments of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) who spoke for the alliance and indeed the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) who spoke for the Opposition; but I believe that the EMS is a gimmick and that we should not be fobbed off with it.

I urge my hon. Friend to take on board the fact that this is a very urgent problem and a very serious one in terms of world trade, on which we all depend. Now that the United States is adopting a much less insular approach to international monetary affairs, will the Minister urge it to restore the convertibility of the United States dollar on the gold exchange standard and to move towards an era of fixed exchange rates? The Government have been very successful at home in restoring monetary integrity. Will they now turn their attention to restoring international monetary integrity?

7.11 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): The contributions to this much foreshortened debate have shown that the specific motion moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) has been of service to the House and, I hope, to many outside. It has provoked some interesting responses from the Front Benches. I do not think that I am alone in detecting in both Front Bench speeches a whiff of the lecture room or of the tutorial rather than a facing up to the grim conditions of the foreign exchanges and all the consequences of severe misalignments and continuous volatility for our trade, about which the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) has just spoken eloquently. The whiff of the tutorial extended also to the reflective speech of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

Let us be quite clear: in choosing this specific motion this afternoon, the alliance was not indulging in some sort of academic exercise. We are concerned, as I am sure Members on both sides of the House are, at the chaos in parts of the foreign exchanges and at the very severe consequences for our own trade, both export and import, and that of many other important industrial countries.

The Economic Secretary gave us a lecture, to which we have become accustomed in the past six years, on the bi-polarity which British membership of the exchange rate mechanism would introduce, along with the deutschmark. He said that this bi-polarity must give us pause—those were his words. The Government have been pausing for six and a half years or, to use the much more graphic illustration of my right hon. Friend, have been moving up and down in the lift, resolutely refusing to get out at any floor.

I must ask the Economic Secretary whether, on reflection, he thinks that it is good enough to tell the House that there is this well-known problem of bi-polarity which still gives the Government pause. I hope that when he replies, necessarily briefly, he will say what, for the Government, would constitute the right time and the right conditions for Britain to enter the exchage rate mechanism. The Government cultivate a liberal air of saying that they do not exclude it, that their minds are open and so on; but they have never at any time defined the conditions under which they think that it would be right to join the exchange rate mechanism. The Economic Secretary owes that reply to the House this evening.

The hon. Gentleman also said that there was no doubt about the Government's European commitment, and that staying out of the ERM did not cast any doubt on that. Here is the Community with apparently strong British Government support, trying to create a truly free trade area in the Community, with a genuinely free flow of goods and services across the frontiers inside the Community. How can that become a reality if a leading member of the Community persists in reserving to itself alone the right to clip its coinage, while the rest of the Community play according to the rules? Our European commitment is damaged by this vague and unsatisfactory attitude to the exchange rate mechanism.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who began by carefully preserving the possibility of the Labour party's coming to terms with some kind of European monetary system, nevertheless failed to appreciate or to acknowledge that the strength of the whole of the EMS and its exchange rate mechanism is substantially greater than the sum of its parts. The confidence that the EMS generates and bestows on each of the currencies involved is greatly enhanced by the fact that it is a corporate body with what is now an established record of sucess, and with large currency reserves.

Again, he showed the defeatist attitude which also affects the Government, that in any discussions with the Bundesbank, which, of course, would have to become very close and continuous once we joined, in any such confrontation, we would be bound to lose out at every turn. It would not be so much a dialogue as being underneath a steamroller. There is no justification for that attitude. Over the years, the Bundesbank has taken a civilised attitude, and there is no reason to suppose that we cannot keep our end up in negotiations with the Federal Republic.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) may have been justified in congratulating the Bank of England on its success so far in avoiding a further rise in interest rates, but he did nothing to dispel the widespread public and acknowledged confusion about the aims of the Government's exchange rate policies. The Government are at last admitting—they had it dragged out of them—that they have an exchange rate policy, but they refuse to tell us what the policy is or how they intend to carry it out.

A further trend in the debate which I should like briefly to mention is to try to set up—

Mr. John Browne *rose*——

Mr. Wainwright: I am sorry, but I am pressed for time.

—to try to set up G5 meetings, which I am sure are welcome on both sides of the House, as in some way an alternative to British membership of the exchange rate mechanism. G5 is nothing of the sort. The two things are not mutually exclusive. Some would say that full British membership of the EMS would enhance the opportunities of G5. I could not understand the speeches which tried to create that exclusivity, especially the interesting speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder).

We are in great danger of being landed with not only very high interest rates—even if they go no higher—and the phenomenally high real interest rate, which is a great burden on our industry, costing British business, according to the CBI, about £250 million a year for every one point by which interest rates advance, but, in addition to that burden, having a rapidly falling sterling exchange rate as well. It is the twin danger which threatens us. It seems to us that an explanation of current Government policy by the Chancellor of the Exchequer is long overdue. Such an explanation must take into the account the fact that the British Government alone — and equally the Government of the Federal Republic alone or the French Government alone—cannot properly take on the forces of global foreign exchange speculation.

Our reserves are far too small. At the end of last year our published reserves were even smaller than those of Switzerland and our own economic strength in general is too slight to take on this massive worldwide speculation with the huge flows of investment money which now threaten the order of the foreign exchanges.

It is only within a wider framework of currency support that we can hope to get rid of at any rate some of the gross misalignments which are such a hindrance to trade and to get rid of some of the volatility which is particularly inimical to British exports.

We hope that this curtain raiser of a debate will be only the first of discussions in the House on how an urgent situation — much more urgent than either Front-Bench spokesman implied this afternoon — can be tackled resolutely so that our hard-pressed traders may have a chance.

7.20 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: With the leave of the House I should like to add a few words at the conclusion of the debate. I do not want to be accused by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) or anybody else of lecturing the House, let alone of doing so twice in one evening, and I shall endeavour not to open myself to that criticism.

Let me take one point by example. I referred to bi-polarity. That is a strange word but one with important meaning. If sterling was in the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS there would be two major international trading currencies within it, which would be a change from the present system. I referred to this partly because it was a point only fleetingly touched on by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) and it is a practical consideration. I do so also to show that one needs to take into account a wide number of practical considerations relating to the operation of domestic monetary system and international monetary markets.

I need not apologise for raising the issue, nor at this hour should I repeat the statement of the Government's stance on the matter which I made in my opening remarks. All I would say is that in response to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) I said something about the impossibility of setting out in advance some sort of shopping list—I do not know

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

whether he was still using the metaphor of being in a lift in a store. But to go into a store with a shopping list, regardless of what might be found on the different floors, is a rather confusing exercise.

Mr. Wainwright: Is it good enough for the Government, year after year now for six and a half years, to be saying that there may come a time when we should join but that this is not the right time? Should not the Government by now tell us what, broadly speaking, would constitute the right time and conditions for British membership?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like a cut and dried list of factors and the relative weight to put on them. That is not the way in which we approach the matter. We have said—I have tried to explain why this afternoon—that a number of different matters have to be taken into account and it is impossible to set out in advance the way in which those would have to interact in order to make a decision to enter the exchange rate mechanism. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman but that is the position. That is a perfectly reasonable position for a responsible Government to take in this difficult matter.

The debate has done a number of valuable things. It has given us a useful insight into the thinking of the Opposition. I commend the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on his vigorous contribution to the debate. But the debate has also shown that there are strong countervailing arguments on this difficult question. The very fact that views have been so different from various speakers, regardless of from which side of the House they have spoken, shows that underneath the arguments there are real considerations of difficulty which work in opposite directions. It is because of that that it is not and would not be a simple decision.

One of the main questions has been about the convergence of economic policies and on that I am glad to say that there has been considerable progress. Our success in reducing inflation and bringing it closer to the rate of our partners in the EEC has been an important advance and was not present five or six years ago.

Equally, difficulties remain. There are difficulties with the dollar problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) drew attention to the questions which those raised for domestic American policy. But more particularly — this has been a trend throughout the debate—the position of oil and oil prices in relation to money markets generally and sterling in particular, particularly against the background of what has happened in the past week or two in the market, are central considerations. I commend the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), which will repay study.

The conjunction of the oil factor with the international position of sterling as a much more widely traded and widely held currency than any other of the European countries apart from the deutschmark creates different circumstances for sterling as distinct from the currencies of other member states that have been called in aid of various arguments this evening.

The right hon. Member for Hillhead referred to Britain's semi-offshore status in relation to the EEC——

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Semi-offshore mentality.

Mr. Stewart: I got part of the phrase right.

It is not a question of that sort of mentality. The right hon. Gentleman also referred to the last great European initiative of the Community. That was the last in time and therefore it was a pity that we could not follow it. Those are not the sort of arguments that should guide us in considering a question such as this. I hope that there will be an opening of the internal market of the EC—an area in which the United Kingdom has been one of the prime movers. But, again, that is not a matter which should be considered for symbolic reasons or as a gesture. Like every other question of this kind, the decision should be taken on its merits. It is a complex financial question with practical arguments on both sides and that is the spirit in which the Government regard it.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 22, Noes 397.

Division No. 55] **[7.29 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy	Maclennan, Robert
Beith, A. J.	Meadowcroft, Michael
Bruce, Malcolm	Meyer, Sir Anthony
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Freud, Clement	Penhaligon, David
Hancock, Michael	Steel, Rt Hon David
Howells, Geraint	Wainwright, R.
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Wallace, James
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Johnston, Sir Russell	
Kennedy, Charles	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. David Alton and
Livsey, Richard	Mr. John Cartwright.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bryan, Sir Paul
Aitken, Jonathan	Buchan, Norman
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Ancram, Michael	Buck, Sir Antony
Arnold, Tom	Budgen, Nick
Ashby, David	Bulmer, Esmond
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Burt, Alistair
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Butcher, John
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Baldry, Tony	Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Carttiss, Michael
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Barnett, Guy	Chapman, Sydney
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Chope, Christopher
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Churchill, W. S.
Bell, Stuart	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Bellingham, Henry	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Bendall, Vivian	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clarke, Thomas
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Clay, Robert
Best, Keith	Clegg, Sir Walter
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cockeram, Eric
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Blackburn, John	Cohen, Harry
Blair, Anthony	Conway, Derek
Body, Sir Richard	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Coombs, Simon
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Cope, John
Boyes, Roland	Corbett, Robin
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Corbyn, Jeremy
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Cormack, Patrick
Bright, Graham	Couchman, James
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Craigen, J. M.
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Cranborne, Viscount
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Critchley, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Crouch, David
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Crowther, Stan
Browne, John	Cunliffe, Lawrence

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Edward
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mather, Carol
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nellist, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, J. W.
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tinn, James
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Francis Maude

Question accordingly negatived.

Rural Areas (Government Policy)

7.41 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I beg to move,

That this House is concerned that the recent cuts in rate support grant to the rural areas will lead to unacceptable rate increases in areas which are already facing severe cuts in jobs and services resulting from the diminution of regional aid and the closure of rural schools, hospitals, bus routes and post offices; furthermore endorses the warnings from the National Farmers' Union to the Government about the collapse of British farm income revealed in the White Paper Annual Review of Agriculture 1986, Cmnd. 9708; and calls upon the Government to halt this trend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Penhaligon: I am sure that my hon. Friends will forgive me if, before coming to the main thrust of my speech, I refer to today's lobby of Parliament by the tin miners from my part of the world. In a way, their problem typifies the kind of problem that we wish to raise today. It is a long way away, but it is desperately important to the community that it affects. Yet it seems virtually impossible to raise any real interest among Ministers and civil servants and to persuade them to apply their minds to finding a solution to the problem. Indeed, that is the paradox at the heart of today's debate. The Government rely heavily on the rural areas for electoral support, but the Cabinet is amazingly urban, or at any rate suburban. The rural areas—those green and pleasant lands somewhat remote from London—have real problems that deserve discussion in the House. Today's debate provides a rare opportunity to debate them.

To quantify the problem one need go no further than the basic statistics made available by successive Governments. For instance, despite the emphasis of this Parliament on urban problems, out of the 20 travel-to-work areas in Britain with the highest unemployment 15 are rural on some definitions and 14 on any definition. In other words, three quarters of the areas of highest unemployment are rural areas. The top five prove the case. Newquay, Forres, Cardigan, Skegness and Lampeter are all rural areas and unemployment in those areas ranges from 25·8 per cent. in Lampeter to 29·5 per cent. in Newquay. Moreover, all those unemployment levels have doubled since 1979.

Anyone who is not convinced by that absolute proof of the case has only to consult the regularly produced new earnings survey. Although the latest available statistics are for April 1985, the relative nature of the statistics does not change. Gross average weekly earnings for the male population in Britain are £192·40. The figure for Greater London is £213·80. The figures for the shire counties, which make up our nation, pale into insignificance by comparison. Bottom of the league is my county of Cornwall where the figure is £159. In Shropshire it is £162, in Clwyd, West £164, in Devon £165, in Lincolnshire £165 and in Dumfries £167. Those wage levels are up to 30 per cent. below those obtaining in the metropolitan area. In London, just 4 per cent. of male earners earn less than £100 per week. In Hereford, Northampton, Durham, East Sussex, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Clwyd west, Gwynedd, Tayside and Dumfries

and Galloway more than 10 per cent. of male earners earn less than £100 per week, the highest figure being in Wales at 15·8 per cent.

One does not need a PhD in economics or to study any area in enormous detail to appreciate that in areas with endemic unemployment and low wage structures a whole series of problems will follow as surely as night follows day, especially with a Government who believe that every problem can be solved by free market forces with as little central involvement as possible.

Added to all that, there is the situation in agriculture — that time bomb ticking away in our rural communities. A massive erosion of farm incomes is currently taking place. That is not just bad for the farmers. It is far more significant than that because in many communities the biggest single value added is farm income, spreading way beyond the personal income experience of the farmers. The annual review published just a few days ago shows that the latest figure for farm incomes is 78 per cent. of the 1980 figure in real terms. If one studies the figures with a little more enthusiasm, rather than just taking a brief look, one discovers that the base year of 1980 was the worst year for agricultural incomes, excluding this year, and that incomes are half what they were just last year.

The Government's handling of the milk quota saga so long ago produced a general feeling of no confidence. The Government have already paid part of the penalty for that. I have no doubt that it was their handling of that issue which cost them the Brecon and Radnor by-election.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Will the hon. Gentleman concentrate his mind on specifics? His hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) told me on 18 July that he would do away with quotas. He also made it clear in reply to me that the Liberal party either did not know or would not say for four years whether it would bring in price restraint. On 18 March the hon. Member for Caithness and Sunderland (Mr. Maclennan) said that he was against quotas. What is the attitude of the alliance? Do alliance Members favour quotas, are they against them, or do they not know? Are they in favour of price restraint? Or are they all things to all men in this as in everything else?

Mr. Penhaligon: The hon. Gentleman has saved you the trouble of calling him later in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The number of questions that he put amount to a speech in themselves. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) will deal with those matters in detail if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members dislike any reference to Brecon and Radnor because they know that if the result there is extrapolated to the rest of the country they will be joining the dole queues that they have created in the rural areas. Ironically, Brecon and Radnor was not even a milk farming constituency. Yet there was a total breakdown of confidence in the Government. The inadequate preparation and thought in the Government's handling of the undoubted crisis eroded their support and they got a bloody nose.

The irony is that our farmers have been asked to produce more and more and they have done so. The success of their response to that request has created the present problem. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may protest, but I remember a meeting of the National Farmers Union in my county not so long ago at which the then Minister of Agriculture, now Secretary of State for Energy, told farmers that he wanted them to produce, produce, produce. That reverberated around the meeting then and has reverberated around the farming communities of the south-west ever since.

If the Government allow the farming community to fall apart and the farming economy to collapse, many of the remoter areas will be left with no real economy at all. That is the broad background to the situation. The Government have also allowed other problems to be created, acting as though Members representing those areas had no understanding of or feeling for the problems that they must see being created there. Housing is just one example. In areas of high unemployment and low wages young marrieds must inevitably look to local authority and community housing projects. For people without jobs or on low incomes the mortgages that we can just about manage are clearly out of reach. The problem is especially acute in tourist areas or areas which are attractive for second homes. House prices are higher than average while incomes are dramatically below average. One does not need to examine why so many people look to the local authority. The irony is that those areas have the lowest percentage of Government-owned housing stock.

The Government introduced their policy to sell council houses and it has been a great success. The irony is that it has been the greatest success in areas where there are the fewest council houses. I am sure that that is one of the consequences that not many of us thought of at the time. I have no objections to that. My reasons for supporting the general sale of council houses were originally based on two thoughts. First, I believe in owner-occupation. I believe, as many Conservative Members do, that it creates a series of knock-on effects which are good for the community. I do not expect the Labour party to accept that.

My second thought was that it would release, produce and create significant sums of money, which could then be applied to building the further local authority houses that were obviously required. The Government have allowed the first of my thoughts to happen but not the second. They have refused permission for the local authorities, particularly in areas where houses are most needed, to spend their own money. The problem is there to be seen in bed and breakfast accommodation, unsatisfactory temporary housing for families, and a blunt refusal of local authorities to house anybody under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 who cannot produce a court eviction notice. No matter what the circumstances, no matter what the reasons or background, if they do not have a court eviction notice they are told to go and find their own house, to go away because nobody wants to know. I do not blame the local authorities, because they have no choice given the circumstances that have been created.

The Government are supposed to understand rural areas and the remoter parts of Britain but there is precious little evidence of that. The condition of many of the houses that do exist is far from satisfactory. The discretionary grants system has virtually been abolished. Nobody admits that, but it has virtually ceased to exist. However, properties look pretty. They have trees growing around them, the fields are green and they have picturesque little lanes leading to them but I sometimes look at them and think that

[Mr. Penhaligon]

the only thing keeping them up is the preservation order that has been served on them. There are many properties in my constituency, and in the constituencies of my hon. Friends, that have no water, gas, electric or sewerage systems. All the infrastructure is missing. Yet people argue that all the problems in our nation are in urban centres. I do not deny urban problems but I would argue that many problems exist in our rural areas, picturesque though they may look, which are every bit as bad. In addition to that there are many other threats facing our rural communities — involving the closure of post offices, schools and hospitals, and our transport system.

We have all fought for our rural post office and have all used a piece of House of Commons notepaper to write to the Minister pleading with him to intervene. We received a fairly standard letter back saying that it is nothing to do with him. He says that he is not the one telling the Post Office to close its rural offices but it is that same Minister who has set the financial targets for the Post Office that give it no choice.

We have all written to the Minister about our schools. Again he says that it is nothing to do with him and that it is the proposal of the shire county, but he is the one who sets financial targets which give that shire county no alternative but to come up with such terrible and unacceptable policies.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Gentleman has grumbled about housing, agriculture, post offices and schools. Will he tell us how the Liberal party wants to reverse what it calls the collapse of British farm income and how that will tie in with its policy on conservation?

Mr. Penhaligon: I have already said that the few hon. Members who do bother to attend do not listen to what I have to say. I have also explained that my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor will deal with the agricultural points in the motion. I am prepared to deal with them myself but I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends might suggest that I sit down before I have the chance to deal with them in detail.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman had to say about rural schools. He may know that I come fom the Border region of Scotland which is represented by two Liberal Members of Parliament. Indeed, he is sitting between the two of them now — the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). Would he be interested to know that it was a Liberal committee chairman on the local authority who spent most of 1985 trying to close village schools in various parts of that local authority, including the one my own son attends? Happily, we have saved that school, but it was no thanks to the Liberal party.

Mr. Penhaligon: That is a good example of the pressures we are talking about. I recognise that we are achieving one of those great miracles of political activity — the Conservative and Labour parties are uniting against the alliance, which they all fear. The truth is that financial pressures are placed on such local authorities and they are given little choice. Rural hospitals—

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Gentleman is obviously concerned about schools in the shires. Will he let us know whether he approves of the fact that the alliance is in control of Devon county council only because of a deal with the Labour party and that the price that the Labour party is extracting for that support is Liberal party commitment to destroy what remains of the grammar school system? Is not that the sort of thing he should be telling us about?

Mr. Penhaligon: I do not think that anybody would be under any illusion that the Liberal party, like many other progressive parties in the country, has long argued against selective education. That is a well-known position. The fact that that belief may be introduced in Devon is, I suspect, to be welcomed.

I understand why the interruption has taken place. It is because I was just about to mention hospitals. In fact, I did say the word hospital once but hon. Members want to discuss anything else but that saga. In many constituencies, particularly those of my hon. Friends, small, rural cottage hospitals are being closed. I know that nobody in the community wants that to happen but when it is mentioned to the appropriate Minister he replies to the effect that it is nothing to do with him and that it is the proposal of the regional health authority. That Minister has, of course, given the health authority criteria that force it to take those actions.

I love the tremendous optimism behind the Government's amendment. The amendment says that an Act has been introduced that will check the decline in bus services and initiate new services. In many areas there are no services at all and it is difficult to believe that the Act could make that problem any worse. I accept that in totality. *[Interruption.]* I am obviously touching on many points of contention tonight.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): The hon. Gentleman has said that in some areas there are no local bus services. Is he aware that those areas are not the areas where the legislation passed by the House has been in existence for four years and where the level of service has not declined at all in those four years?

Mr. Penhaligon: I do not quite understand that point, to be honest. I am not trying to be awkward. It is certainly true that where there were no buses four years ago the service has not declined over the past four years.

Mr. Shepherd: I can understand why the hon. Gentleman wants to be deliberately opaque. Is he aware that in the Herefordshire trial area the level of rural bus services, which is the same as that before the existence of the trial in rural areas, is the same now as it was at the start of the experiment?

Mr. Penhaligon: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. That is conceivably so. I have spoken to some people from his part of the country who believe that the experiment has not been a success. I would have liked it to be successful because that is a major problem in rural areas, but even the hon. Member is not claiming that any improvement has taken place. He is simply claiming that it is no worse than it was before.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I wonder whether I could have a little clarification. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the trial areas were a success

and that he wishes he had seen them in areas such as his own? If that is the position he is taking he should make it clear to the House.

Mr. Penhaligon: I think that I made a speech when the original proposal was made. I was willing to see a trial take place. In principle, I have nothing against a trial. We all have to learn by trial. However, I have not seen any in-depth analysis from the trial that leads me to believe that its extension to the rest of the country will improve the situation in net terms.

There is a semblance of a service in some of the rural areas, run mainly by private operators. If people are allowed to compete against those operators on the few routes that they provide, and manage to make them pay when the service is threadbare, it is inconceivable that such competition will result in an improved service. However, the measure is now the law of the land and the die is cast. We shall see what happens.

The latest example of the anti-rural phenomenon is the rate support grant settlement. It has hit the low spenders hardest — outrageously so. That view is held not by Liberal, Social Democratic or Labour Members who are in opposition and wish to cause trouble for the Government, but by Conservative Members — at least those who have had the courage to express their views in public. In the Tea Room and on the train coming to London, one can hear more candid expressions of opinion than in the House.

The hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) says:

"If there had been no increases in expenditure, that figure would have been about 22 per cent."

That is, the rate increase for his area. He continues:

"I am not prepared to support proposals that can only bring about cuts in public services or huge rate increases, or both."

The hon. Member for Devizes is a Government supporter. The hon. Member for Tiverton, (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) expressed similar views, and his area is nearer to mine. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said:

"But it is unfair that the shift should be wholly at the expense of the shire counties, with the result that there will have to be substantial rate increases if the present level of our services is not to be reduced."

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) was even stronger in saying:

"there is a widespread feeling of betrayal in the shire counties following the rate support grant settlement." — [*Official Report*, 20 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 81-99.]

Those are not Opposition Members but Government supporters who have had the courage to put their head over the parapet. The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) expressed similar views, but I sometimes wonder whether he supports the Government at all these days. However, at least he had the courage to express his views.

The Government's proposals move money away from the lowest spending authorities in our land. They are low spenders on education and social services. It is certain that rates will rise by 20 to 30 per cent. if present services are to be maintained. I suspect that, except for the brave counties, some cuts will take place. There will be cuts in work in the rural communities by the Development Commission, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, English Industrial Estates, the Manpower Services Commission and the EC. We have already experienced cuts because of the reduction in regional development aid from £700 million to £400 million. Those who are in areas of endemic unemployment are attempting to solve their own problems with the limited resources available to them, but they have been cut and cut again. Our rural areas are being thwarted by the Government whom they elected to run this country. I warn Conservative Members that if there are not some changes, the repercussions will not be long in coming and will be felt in the place that hurts politicians most of all—the ballot box.

I look forward to Conservative Members supporting the motion in the Lobby. I am sure that, if we had a secret ballot as opposed to the public ballot that we have in the House, deep down there would be a clear majority for the general ideas and arguments that I have outlined.

8.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"notes that the rate support grant settlement is a recognition of the undoubted needs of inner cities but involves a shift of only 2 per cent. overall in the grant paid to shire areas; welcomes the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 which are designed to check the decline in rural bus services and to stimulate new services; welcomes the Government's initiatives on conservation and the rural economy; notes the extra public spending of £500 million this year on agriculture; and welcomes, in particular, the special payments to livestock farmers in those areas worst affected by adverse weather and the recent increases in hill livestock compensatory payments."

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) has been inspired to move his motion with great enthusiasm, and to encourage us all to think that the world in the rural areas as we knew it in the past has disappeared, and that if we drive into the country we will see total dereliction. However, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman wanted partly to capitalise on the strongly expressed views of hon. Members about the relatively small switch of financial support from the shire counties and districts outlined during the debate on the rate support grant last week. I do not blame the alliance for trying that on. However, alliance Members' hopes of great support from Conservative Members may be misplaced. I believe that not because I doubt the strong feelings of my right hon. Friends about the rate support grant settlement for the coming financial year, but because the motion and the hon. Gentleman's arguments do not stand up to scrutiny.

In the context of the overall settlement, the loss of grant to the shire areas amounted to less than a 2 per cent. overall reduction. I agree with my right hon. and hon. Friends that any reduction is unwelcome, but I do not agree that in consequence the hon. Member's dire predictions will ensue. There is no doubt that last week my hon. Friends gave universal backing to the positive decision to give more resources to the inner city areas, the needs of which are not in question. The cause of upset is that, as a result of less money in the shires, there may be larger rate increases than many authorities were planning.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Lady says that it is a small transfer of 2 per cent. However, it is incontrovertible that that means that there will be rate rises of 20 per cent. in counties such as Somerset, without an extra penny being spent. Will the Minister tell the House, the public or those who will have to bear the burden of the rates that the Government have imposed upon them why the problems of the inner cities have to be loaded on the rural ratepayers? Why should they not be paid for by the population as a whole?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am coming to that point. The rate increases in the shire counties may come if they do not look at their expenditure carefully. Very often, when one examines what is happening in local authorities, one sees that the problem is not necessarily that services are being cut, but that the councils' plans and expectations are being cut. I have been on local authorities and know that members have a natural desire for their plans for the future to come to fruition. The fact that they cannot in the coming year is not a matter of great misery, but merely a matter of waiting, replanning and coming forward eventually with proposals.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister confirm or deny that the Association of County Councils and people who chair counties run by her party say that their services are now cut to the bone and that the rate increases will be in double figures, sometimes more than 20 per cent.? That will happen after necessary spending — not spending on luxuries or additional spending—to do the job that her Government are asking them to do.

Mrs. Rumbold: The fact is that in all but a very few shire counties there has been about 5 per cent. real growth in the past five years. Few counties have reduced or cut expenditure.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: I should prefer to carry on with my speech.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State drew attention to a couple of points in his speech introducing the rate support grant that it is important to reiterate. First, at the request of the local authority associations themselves, such as the Association of County Councils, he has abolished expenditure targets and penalties, which will help low-spending authorities, most of which are the rural authorities. Secondly, he said — this is an important point — that the final sum that many counties will receive will be increased as a result of money that will flow back to authorities due to adjustments after budgets have been made.

The context for that is the Government's overall expenditure proposals, which are clearly set out in the autumn White Paper on expenditure. It is not a secret what those proposals are. We know that the overall final results of this year's settlement are unlikely to produce the dismal results that some of the shire counties are predicting.

I should like to turn to the problem of life in our rural areas. The inevitable consequence of change on the basis and structure of the rural economy and the general drift away from the land to our towns and cities has had a dramatic effect in rural life. However, change and development have been taking place. New job opportunities have opened up. Efforts are being made to improve services and facilities and the migration from rural areas has been reversed.

While employment in agriculture has declined, employment in the service industries has increased, so that these industries now account for over 50 per cent. of rural employment. As for opportunities in manufacturing, rural areas have fared better than our towns and cities. Rural areas are particularly suited to the production of high-tech, high added value goods and services, whilst communications improvements are reducing the disadvantages of remoteness. And, of course, rural areas are ideal for the establishment of small firms which can be accommodated without detriment to the landscape.

Much is due to the work of the Development Commission in England and the comparable rural development agencies in Scotland and Wales.

It is obvious that the best people to create jobs in the countryside are the people living there already, on or off the farms. So the Development Commission helps local people to make good. Throughout rural England, there are now many thousands of inconspicuously sited, well-designed, small new workshops and conversions, buildings in which thousands of jobs have been developed and through which communities have been sustained.

The Development Commission provides technical, managerial and financial advice and assistance, including loans, to small businesses through its agency, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas. It also encourages or organises training in rural crafts and skills ranging from the technical, such as general engineering and agricultural machinery repair, to the more traditional such as thatching, farriery and wheelwrighting.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I do not find it easy to reconcile what the hon. Lady is saying with the situation in my rural constituency. We have lost jobs in agriculture in the last 10 years in Cheshire. Indeed, less than 3 per cent. of the population are now involved in agriculture and related industries. COSIRA has had difficulty in finding one site within my constituency borders to provide a base for a small agricultural engineering firm or for a small builder. At present the number of jobs being created by COSIRA, excellent though its work is, is infinitesimal compared to the number of jobs we are losing.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady may be interested in what I shall have to say in a moment about the increase in the money that will be available to the Development Commission through the good offices of the Government.

The numbers of client firms on COSIRA's books has been steadily increasing—in 1985, 18,800—as has the number of people these firms employ—88,800, in 1985. The approved programme amounts to over 2,000 units totalling more than 3·25 million sq ft. The occupation rate is very high—84 per cent. for the units completed so far, the vacant 16 per cent. providing a most useful "float" of readily available units of various types. The units provided by the Development Commission alone already accommodate some 10,000 jobs. Additional space for craft and light industrial use has also been created by giving grants for the conversion of redundant buildings —a cost-effective way of providing new jobs, and one which is sensitive to the need for development to harmonise with its rural surroundings.

As a recognition of the valuable work which the Development Commission undertakes, my Department has been able to increase substantially the resources for its work by over £4 million which brings the total up to some £28 million this year, with a similar amount for next year. This will be spent particularly on providing additional workshop facilities which I hope the hon. Lady's area will be able to take up in order to meet the strong demand for the small facility units of which she was speaking.

If I may take the hon. Gentleman's own area, the south-west region is a good example of the scale of the

Development Commission's input. As he will know, over the past two years in Cornwall it has spent over £180,000 building craft homes — houses with small craft workshops attached—and provided £110,000 in topping up grants across the whole of the region to support housing association shared equity schemes.

On job creation activities, since 1975 in the south-west, it has approved a programme to provide over 800,000 sq. ft. of advance factories, of which 570,000 sq. ft. is built. A further 30,000 sq. ft. of factories has been constructed in partnership with local authorities since 1981. On grants to help the conversion of redundant rural buildings, so far 145 projects have been approved, of which 94 are completed, providing functional and sympathetic work space for hundreds of jobs.

The motion refers to the annual review White Paper on agriculture which was presented to Parliament earlier this month. It is a very full analysis of the state of agriculture, and the picture it presents is not one of an industry in decline. Of course it is true that the calculation of farming income shows that it fell by a substantial amount—43 per cent. — in 1985 compared with 1984. But we all know that the major reason for this large decline was the weather. First, the exceptionally good weather in 1984 boosted farming income by 35 per cent. to an all-time record; then the miserable weather in 1985 cut farming income significantly.

It is in the nature of farming that incomes are sharply affected by the weather, and the decline in 1985 must be kept in perspective. Farmers have good years and bad years: 1985 was a bad year following a good year and it is totally misleading to present the results of this exceptional pair of years as showing that agriculture is in a state of collapse. Indeed, apart from 1984, the gross output of the industry in 1985 was at an all-time high.

Nor could I accept any suggestion that the Government are unconcerned about farm incomes. The White Paper demonstrates how carefully the various measures of income are monitored. It shows also how the government are ready to take national action to support farm incomes where appropriate. Because of the exceptional effects of the bad weather in some parts of the country, we decided to provide weather aid totalling £16·9 million to livestock farmers in the worst-affected areas. This will be of considerable help to them during the winter months in improving their cash flow.

More generally, the Government's concern is also demonstrated by two major initiatives in the aid to hill livestock producers. First, at the start of 1985 we extended the scheme to include additional marginal areas so that many more farmers now benefit. Secondly, we have increased the rates of payment by 11 per cent. and total payments in the present financial year are expected to be £110 million.

Looking at total expenditure on agriculture, including expenditure under the common agricultural policy as well as national grants and subsidies, the White Paper shows that it has more than doubled since 1981-82 and it is forecast in 1985-86 to be £2·2 billion — a massive commitment to agriculture in terms of public expenditure.

In addition, to the substantial measures which are applied in order to support farm incomes and secure the prosperity of the industry, the Government have taken a whole range of initiatives which are important for conservation and the rural economy.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) touched on transportation.

Mr. Latham: Does my hon. Friend agree that any hon. Member who tables a motion referring to the "collapse" of farm incomes and calling on the Government "to halt this trend" should say something about his policy on the disposal of surpluses and how he thinks farm income should be maintained rather than just grumble generally?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that my hon. Friend accepts, as I do, that it is difficult to ask the alliance parties to give us any idea of their policies on any subject.

One of the problems in the provision of bus services in rural areas, to young and old people alike, is that the present system of regulation has limited the number of bus operators. The hon. Member for Truro made a great point of saying that there were no services; but this has been part of the problem. Over the past 50 years, the present system of regulation has managed to stifle the flexible approach that is necessary to cope with falling demand resulting from increasing car ownership. That is why the Transport Act 1985 removes the straitjacket of regulation so that the operators can be set free to use their initiative. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has clearly pointed out how successful this can be. In a free, competitive market operators, especially small local operators, will be able to offer a greater variety of services tailored to the needs of the area. These will provide new scope for the use of minibuses and taxis, which will be able to boost local bus services.

The free market will not cope with all the problems of rural areas, so local authorities will continue to be able to support services which are not commercially viable but which elected local representatives judge to be socially necessary. A requirement to put subsidised services out to competitive tender will ensure value for money. In most cases, this will mean that subsidy from the ratepayers will go much further.

In recognition of the particular problems of rural areas, the Government are introducing two further measures. The first is a new grant to encourage new services. In England up to £1 million will be available each year to be administered by the Development Commission. This will complement the practical and financial help already given by many local authorities to local transport projects, and the commission will work closely with local authorities at all levels

A second measure, tailored specially to meet rural needs, is to make available up to £20 million in the first year to help lower the cost of operators of running rural services in the important transitional period following deregulation when the full effects of competition on costs may not have worked through, and to help stimulate new services. We believe that these proposals offer the way forward to improved transport services which will be of real benefit to rural communities.

It is important to draw attention to rural services which have been mentioned, such as post offices, hospitals and schools. I shall deal first with the post offices. The Government are committed to maintaining a network of post offices throughout the country. The current policy of the Post Office is to rationalise the urban post office network, but there is no programme of closures in rural areas.

I draw attention to the valuable work of COSIRA in giving support and advice to village shops which often

[Mrs. Rumbold]

combine as the local post office [illegible]s ensuring that this vital service to rural communities is maintained wherever possible.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the hon. Lady recognise that there is a great fear in rural areas about post office closures — it has been expressed in hundreds of letters which I have received — that the Government's mounting pressure on pensioners and benefit receivers to have benefits paid through a bank, and paid less frequently, will deprive village post offices of an essential income without which both the village post office and the village shop will go?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not necessarily mounting pressure. It is much more related to the difficulty involved in getting people in rural areas to take on the responsibility of running a post office.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Will my hon. Friend comment on the contrary pressure which came from the Department of Transport insisting that an extra 500 rural post offices should issue driver and vehicle licences? Will that not help to improve the services of rural post offices and to prolong their life?

Mrs. Rumbold: That will certainly encourage more people to come forward to run post offices. One hopes that that will happen.

Mr. Ashdown *rose——*

Mrs. Rumbold: I should like to continue.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Lady give way on this point?

Mrs. Rumbold: I have given way quite a lot. I want to leave time for hon. Members to make their speeches.

I should like to take up some of the points that have been made about the Health Service. Some hospitals have been closed. This has been done in the interests of ensuring that there is a maximum level of modern medicine available for patient care throughout Britain. The Government hope that all the health authorities in planning their total service for a district will take fully into account the benefits and services that a community hospital can produce in the context of the best available medical care for patients.

On the provision of education, a number of village schools have been closed in recent years, and no doubt local education authorities will continue to bring forward proposals to close small schools where they judge that to be in the interest of the pupils at the school concerned and those attending other schools in the area. It should be remembered that children in very small primary schools miss the stimulus that can be provided from working with a sizeable group of their peers. The Government recognise that many small village schools have to be retained because of the geographical isolation of the communities they serve.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): The Oxfordshire county council—now under Labour and alliance control — proposes to close three village schools in my constituency — Childrey, Ardington and Letcombe Regis. Does my hon. Friend agree that the county council needs to be reminded that schools in the villages are not simply educational units but also the focal points of rural life?

Mrs. Rumbold: I certainly agree that there are occasionally very good reasons for having village schools. It is absolutely within the purview of the local authority to make decisions on its priorities. If the priorities are to keep the schools open for the communities, that should weigh heavily with those authorities. They are at liberty to look at where alternative schools are available and whether closure of some schools would necessitate unacceptably long journeys to school for very young children.

I should draw attention to the work that has gone into demonstrating our commitment to the countryside and to ensuring that developments in agriculture and the environment go hand in hand. For example, this year we hope that, subject to parliamentary approval, grant in aid to the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council for 1986-87 should total not far short of £50 million. This compares with less than £23 million five years ago, immediately after passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. There has also been an increase of about 30 per cent. in national park supplementary grants over the same period. These increases, well above the rate of inflation, demonstrate the Government's determined commitment to conservation and our resolution to make the Act work.

I again stress that my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have proceeded in close harmony on this matter. The press, ever eager to promote friction where none exists, has tried to make out that there are significant conflicts of interests between the two Departments. The fact that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I are here together to respond jointly to the motion shows how wrong that is. If only the press and our opponents would stop for a moment to read the contents of our announcements and ministerial speeches and to consider the content of our policies they would see how wrong they are. Unlike the Opposition, we have a living and creative policy which is continually developing in a positive and constructive manner.

The Agriculture Bill now before Parliament is the latest product of our positive approach. Its provisions emphasise the growing partnership that we seek between Government, agriculture and environmentalists. Far from the devastation presented by the hon. Member for Truro, there is considerable evidence to support the view that the Government are addressing the needs of the rural areas positively. The population migration has stabilised. Jobs in small businesses and the service industries are beginning to regenerate the rural economy. Firm action to prevent damage to the countryside and wildlife is paying dividends. New measures to check the decline in transport and mobility have been enacted. Money to support livestock farmers and agriculture has been paid out.

The Government are firmly of the belief that their policies in the rural areas are correct in targeting aid to where it is needed, providing a stimulus to those areas of services at risk and putting in place a framework within which the future for the rural areas is secure.

8.32 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): First, may I thank the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment for her

discourse on rural affairs. I suspect it was a bit of reciprocity on the part of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to pay for its interest in environmental matters, which we will debate again tomorrow morning.

May I deal with two or three aspects of the amendment which I suspect the Government does not want the House to scrutinise too carefully. If Members look at the second half of the amendment they will see a statement noting with approval the expenditure of an extra £500 million on agriculture last year. I leave aside the unworthy thought that to boast of extra spending not so long ago was used in Government circles as evidence that the spender was not, in the prime ministerial phrase, "one of us". I state categorically that no part of that £500 million has been used for the benefit of or for innovation in agriculture. It has been used to support the further and unwanted surpluses that have been spawned. The hon. Lady spoke of the structure of farming and said that it was not at the point of collapse. That may be so, but it is a considerable paradox that although farm incomes have gone down by 43 per cent. it still costs the rest of us £500 million more to support such a system.

The hon. Lady also paraded the raising of the hill livestock compensatory amounts. I apologise for dealing with this in detail but I thought that a Minister from another Department would deal with it. I am grateful for the restoration of some of the value of those amounts. Even in their restored form they are still, in real terms, for hardy ewes, £1·65 short of the 1981 value and, for non-hardy ewes, £1·80 short. When this matter was raised previously the Government have said that the Labour Government did not secure a rise in the allowance and so the allowance is better than it was. On hardy and less hardy ewes, the allowance is still 75p and 70p, respectively, less in real terms than on 1 January 1979. I hope that when the Minister replies we shall hear the last of that argument.

The hon. Lady raised the prospect of wet weather aid. I thought that it was a complacent statement and obviously not influenced by the sulphurous words of the NFU in Wales. I advise her to read those words before she becomes too sunk in complacency. The exclusion of both animals and areas in Wales has totally bewildered and caused a great deal of resentment and dissatisfaction. The Government did not match the needs of the hour.

The central point of this debate is the need to take an integrated look at the policies fashioned for rural areas, both in terms of their effectiveness and of the money available. Too often unco-ordinated approaches to problems—hindered by departmental isolation under all parties; I make no political point—has meant patchy and random results. This is not successful and I believe it should be changed. I had understood that an Agriculture Minister was to open the debate and I saw that as a harbinger of future Government change — that the Ministry was to take a lead in co-ordinating a strategy for rural areas.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Selwyn Gummer): I certainly owe an apology to the hon. Gentleman because we understood that this debate would be about agriculture. It was only yesterday afternoon that the whole matter of the rate support grant was raised by the Liberals when they put down their motion. As the first half related to the rate support grant it seemed sensible that that should be dealt with by an Environment Minister. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman because I did give him the wrong information when I thought this debate was about agriculture. I apologise for any inconvenience.

Mr. John : I accept that apology. The point I was making is that the one role that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ought to seek—even at the risk of heightening the blood pressure of the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government—is to co-ordinate a strategy towards rural areas. I thought that it was the Ministry's aversion in the past couple of years to making pronouncements on agriculture policy that led it to back off at the last moment.

Agriculture is growing in importance. The hon. Lady is quite right. The figures for rural population show a growth in the last 10 years of 29 per cent., whereas urban population has grown by only 1 per cent. There is an internal change of emphasis and balance within the United Kingdom and I believe that the machinery of government should reflect the change. The Government should reflect a more co-ordinated approach to the problem.

Because of the lack of time there are only two aspects of the problem with which I can deal tonight, although I must say that both the motion and the amendment contain a great deal on agriculture. However, I will deal with the two aspects which I believe are most needed to retain the vitality of the rural areas.

Agriculture is mentioned, rightly, because, both directly and indirectly, it is a key provider of employment in the small towns and villages of rural Britain. Such employment — I take issue with the hon. Lady — is narrow in its choice. The range of jobs available is not great and is often seasonal. Thus, unemployment in the industry generally, although not as large as in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), is often masked by the fact that there is seasonal, low-paid employment. When I listened to the hon. Lady's encomiums about the rate support grant I wondered where the proposal about a poll tax would leave the low paid in rural areas. I suspect rather worse off than they are at the moment.

Agriculture — left in a vacuum by the absence of ministerial advice — is entering a period of momentous change. Unless the voracious appetite of the CAP is curbed, its budgetary collapse is, in my view, probable. We may differ on how to avoid this, by reforming it in time, but there must be a united view from this House that surpluses will be eliminated. The theory of maximising return has meant the amalgamation of holdings, the elimination of smaller ones and consequently a drop in the numbers of people employed in agriculture. In the last 20 years to 1980 employment has dropped by 35 per cent. and it is not over yet. Cash flow problems have hit farmers in the last year or so. Mr. Lloyd Addison, the prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Norfolk, South, has published some figures showing that in the county of Norfolk, 1,000 agricultural workers have been discharged in the last year—15 per cent. of that sector of the work force in the last year. Is this confirmed? Is it, as I suspect, an indicator that as times get harder the general trend will be to shed labour on farms first and thus increase the problems of rural employment.

If we squarely face the issues of cereal surpluses we should be able to suggest to the farming community some of the alternative uses to which unwanted cereal land could be put. The first is the growth of protein crops. I estimate

[Mr. John]

that we have room to switch a quarter of a million hectares in the next few years. I believe we should expand forestry. At present we produce only 10 per cent. of our requirements. I do not mean the conifer continents of the past. I mean woodlands on farms with conifers, deciduous and broad-leaved trees, which together would enable us to meet the full range of our timber needs. The Government have recognised this principle but in their recent discussion document talked only of 200,000 hectares. I believe we could manage five times that amount in the next 20 years, and by concentrating on grade 3 and 4 land substitute for marginal quality unwanted cereals, crops which will be economically useful and environmentally pleasing.

The problem is what to do while the trees are growing, especially for the person who plants them. Farmers must be paid as conservators of the timber. Grants for planting are not enough. I propose that they should be paid annually by the Government for each hectare while the crop is maturing. In return, the Government should share in the profits of sale. Such a scheme would benefit the economy and provide farmers with a cash flow which would percolate down to farm labourers and thus increase employment in rural areas. If the objection is cost, I can only say that the cost of agriculture, mostly in unwanted surpluses, is £2·2 billion a year at present. If we devoted just a tiny part of that to forestry, or other useful crops, we could increase employment and greatly benefit the economy.

The restoration of public services to rural areas is a paramount need. We had a battle in which the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) was rather engagingly said to represent Worcester as well, much to the consternation of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), I am sure. The amendment refers to the Hereford experiment. The Transport Act 1985 abolished cross-subsidisation and led to the National Bus Company saying that it would have to cut local bus services by 30 per cent. It estimates that the effect on public transport in rural areas is a cut of 25 per cent. The Government maintain that somewhere, somehow, there is a breed of tax cut, short cut or entrepreneur who will make that cut good —but how, when and to what extent?

Rural education is vital for the welfare of families. In 1983, the last year for which statistics are available, 127 primary schools in England and four rural secondary schools closed. As the hon. Lady said, a judgment must be made by local authorities, but the Government cannot escape all liability because their denial of funds to local authorities has made choices invidious. The report of the joint working party established by the Departments of the Environment and of Education and Science talked of the closure of rural schools thus:

> "Ultimately the policy debate about rural school reorganisation cannot avoid a range of social judgments about lifestyles which we want in Britain into the next century. What is clear however is that school closures are not easily reversed. It therefore behoves all decision-makers to err on the side of caution and to weigh every conceivable short and long term effect before irrevocable action is taken."

It is essential that the Government do just that when weighing up how to devote money to the education service.

The Minister mentioned medical facilities and hospital closures. Of course we want first-class medical facilities —acute conditions demand them—but there are other demands, such as those made by social problems. People now live longer and rural hospitals could be kept open to help families support the elderly. We must pursue excellence in surgery and medicine, but hospitals also have a social role. Hospital closures condemn families to long and expensive journeys if they are to keep in touch with sick relatives.

If such public services decline, many jobs will be lost. However, that is not the most important consideration. The improvement of services in rural areas would greatly enhance the quality of rural life. These two strands are intertwined. If there was the same standard of provision in rural and metropolitan areas, there would be more home helps, more meals on wheels, better library services and tens of thousands more jobs in rural areas. The key to more employment and a better quality of life in rural areas is public expenditure. We should not avoid that. In view of their blind ideological hatred of public expnditure, the Government cannot stomach that. That is why they have damaged rural areas and why their amendment avoids the real challenge of the future.

8.46 pm

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): I should like to speak about some of the Government's foolish policies for rural areas, about the implementation of some of the more helpful and promising policies and about the absence of any hint of policy for a key matter that affects Cornwall today.

Many of us were lobbied today about Cornish tin mines. The Government's inability to say anything to that industry at its time of distress, even a decent, "Farewell, and look after yourself," is utterly unacceptable to those who are associated with any pretence of a social conscience and a desire for development of industry in rural areas. Anybody who attended the miners' visit today will be haunted by the recollection of Mrs. Oates from Pendeen who said how she had grown to hate Friday. She said that she loved Fridays because there was one pay packet coming in through the door, but immediately she wondered whether there would be another next Friday. That is the hand-to-mouth existence being experienced by those involved in the Cornish tin industry, and they have had not a twitter of support from the Government.

If the industry is allowed to collapse, we shall instantly have £30 million or £40 million added to our imports bill, representing imported tin, and a region of 1,500 people will be added to the already obscenely long dole queues through west Cornwall. Even in the main towns of west Cornwall, unemployment is now running at one man in four. In rural areas, it is probable that one person in three has no job.

Successive Governments have responded to the problems of Cornwall and tried to do various things with special development area status and the normal panaceas. A couple of years ago, when Redruth was still in a special development area, Carrick district council made a courageous decision to develop a piece of land. It was a project to reclaim old industrial wasteland to provide the basis for an industrial estate which would serve that area of chronic unemployment. The Department of the Environment got terribly excited and poured in pounds and pounds. Even the much maligned Europeans said, "We want a piece of this action as well." As a result, a beautiful industrial estate was created. On the day before it came on stream, somebody at the Department of Employment,

doodling with his pencil, transferred the area from the Redruth travel-to-work area to the Truro travel-to-work area. We now have a beautiful industrial estate laid out, but not a single factory upon it. There is not one penny of regional development assistance eligible for anything that goes on that estate. There is no eligibility for any help from the European regional development fund either.

That is one example of the nonsense that is perpetuated by some aspects of our regional policy towards the rural areas. The Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas has been mentioned. It is woefully under-funded. With an average cost in west Cornwall of about £50,000 per acre to develop and service industrial land, but a going rate of only £25,000 per acre for land that has been serviced and developed, it is small surprise that even entrepreneurs are not terribly excited. The only hope for factory building must lie with English Industrial Estates, but it, too, has had its finances restricted. In my constituency, five projects that would have led to new jobs for rural areas are now solemnly and faithfully entombed in a moratorium that will not be lifted this side of April 1987.

In addition to criticising what I believe to be the weaknesses and stupidities of some forms of existing regional policy, I shall try to consider constructively and hopefully some simple cost-effective policies that could be introduced. There could and should be a crash programme for the conversion of disused industrial buildings in rural areas into modern units, especially as managed workshops. We should remove entirely the anomaly whereby regional development grants are available for new industrial buildings, but not for those people who want to acquire and upgrade a redundant building. Our local authorities should be given greater autonomy to accelerate the development of industrial development in rural areas, either as single units or on the beehive principle.

Planning is the real bugbear of all. One aspect above all others inhibits industrialisation in rural areas — planning. Even now, on a small scale, when one or two people are willing to spend their own money to help create and stimulate jobs in rural areas, they are held up by planning officers and planning committees over a string of nonsenses that, nine times out of ten, will be rejected on appeal.

The sooner that our planners face up to the fact that one cannot eat the environment, the better. There should be greater flexibility and consideration, greater opportunities for conversions and more industrial developments in rural areas.

Like my unemployed constituents—I am still talking about one man in four in most of Cornwall, and one man in three in some of the Cornish villages being unemployed —I hope that we can look to an acceleration of the implementation of the Government's promises and utterances in recent months. I hope that the promised simplified planning zones, the further relaxation of general development orders and the use classes order will become a reality very quickly. I hope that those measures will be used positively to encourage rather than actively to discourage the regeneration of jobs and prosperity in our rural areas.

If that nettle is not grasped now and if the potential that is being wasted is not realised, if the cruelty to the unemployed in rural areas is not recognised, there will be a hollowness on the part of any politician who proclaims concern for the fate of the countryside.

8.54 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The subject for debate is partly the breakdown of the rural infrastructure. I shall concentrate my remarks mainly on agriculture, but before speaking on that subject I shall mention five areas that have broken down. We are seeing a breakdown in education and in our rural shops and post offices. Another aspect is low pay.

Many people in my constituency earn an average of 80 per cent. of the national pay average and cannot afford to travel round the constituency, even to an evening meeting. Under the Transport Act 1985, transport services are being broken up. There is immense pressure, too, on our health services.

Last week in my constituency we were successful in stemming the closure of 13 schools. Even the Conservative chairman of the local association, whose school is under threat, supported the campaign. There is tremendous pressure on the education budget of our county. A sparse population over a wide geographical area is not taken into account in Government estimates to work out the rate support grant formula.

In agriculture in 1985 we have seen a 43 per cent. drop in farm incomes, a 62 per cent. drop in cereal farm incomes, a 43 per cent. drop in less favoured beef and sheep farms and an 8 per cent. drop in dairy farm incomes. Obviously, one factor has been the weather. I congratulate the Government on the increased hill farm compensatory allowances.

However, the administration of weather aid follows parish boundaries, for which there is no rhyme or reason. It has been just as wet in one parish as it has been in another, but, for some reason, those on one side of the river receive aid and those on the other do not. Some farmers who have not been able to make hay are not receiving aid.

Mr. Gummer: I carefully considered the way in which weather aid was formulated. There is no recorded time in history when divisions between different parts of the country have not caused difficulty in drawing a line. How would the hon. Gentleman draw the line?

Mr. Livsey: The Minister should accept that there are already well-known lines. Everyone recognises the less favoured area A line. Weather aid should be based on it. It is exactly within that line that the National Farmers Union required action.

We have seen the follow-on from milk quotas and the effect on the rural economy.

Mr. Leigh: What is the hon. Gentleman's quota policy?

Mr. Livsey: We have no quota policy, if that is what the hon. Gentleman wishes to know.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Livsey: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman; I have given him an answer. I shall outline our policies in a moment. I am analysing the current position.

We have seen the closure of the Johnstown creamery in Carmarthen, with the loss of 450 jobs. That is a consequence of the overnight introduction of milk quotas. With the closure of creameries, a vital part of the rural employment structure has disappeared.

[Mr. Livsey]

I believe that agriculture has reached a turning point, bringing great changes in our industry. We need a long-term policy for agriculture. At present, farmers lack confidence. I have been in the industry for the past 30 years and I have never seen a time when the industry has shown such a lack of confidence.

Mr. Nicholls *rose——*

Mr. Livsey: No, I will not give way. I do not have much time. If I give way, more time will be lost.

Farming is looking for a comprehensive policy and an injection of confidence. That will be provided only by a policy which sets out objectives for at least the next 10 years. The Government's policy has been piecemeal—there are good and bad parts, much like the curate's egg.

Mr. Nicholls *rose——*

Mr. Livsey: The Agriculture Bill has some good parts and some poorer parts, which I shall discuss.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on the "poorer" parts?

Mr. Livsey: The poorer parts relate to the serious cuts in research and development. The Government should vigorously defend our system of variable beef and sheepmeat premiums. Those variable premiums are essential to buttress our beef and sheepmeat production. I hope that, in their negotiations with the European Community, the Government will stand firm on variable beef premiums which are under threat at present.

An agricultural policy should be based on the sanctity of the family farm. In those farms more than 50 per cent. of the income comes from farming. The aim should be to ensure that those farms have a net income which will provide a living for the farmer and his family. It should also provide sufficient income to service interest rates and capital repayments. High interest rates are a serious problem. They affect and penalise every small business. The family farm should also provide sufficient income to give an adequate return on tenants' capital. Those are the three facets which are essential to any agricultural policy.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the hon. Gentleman's party continue to support the common agricultural policy, with its effects on marginal farms?

Mr. Livsey: Of course my party supports the common agricultural policy, although not in its entirety, because we are the first to admit that it needs reforming.

We must monitor farm incomes more carefully.

Mr. Leigh *rose——*

Mr. Livsey: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman is trying to disrupt my speech.

We have the technology to enable us to have much more up-to-date information on farm incomes. We should be able to respond much more quickly to the downward drift of farm incomes and bring in support where it is necessary. We also need an agricultural policy which will provide opportunities for young farmers and those who wish to enter the industry. More tenancies should be made available. There are two ways in which that can be done. First, we should put our faith in county council smallholdings and the provision of more starter farms on those smallholdings. Secondly, we should encourage landlords to let more land to farmers. That could be done through the taxation system and would be a constructive way of creating more farm tenancies.

Mr. Nicholls *rose——*

Mr. Livsey: We must look at the vexed matter of farm credit. Interest rates are far too high at present for farming. The Liberal party believes in an agricultural land bank which would provide capital at low rates of interest, especially to entrants into the industry.

We must also provide more opportunities in marketing. It is a grave weakness that the Food from Britain campaign has only a paltry £3 million a year for the next three years. That is inadequate when the New Zealanders and the Danes spend millions and millions of pounds on bolstering their marketing.

We must create jobs in rural areas. Co-operatives would produce acceptable meat products and add value to the basic farm product. A great deal can be done in that direction, but it requires a partnership between the farming community and the Government.

The question of surpluses must occupy us greatly. We must protect our family farms in any policy to control surpluses. That can be achieved through direct support to small and medium-sized farms through many of the mechanisms that already exist in less favoured areas—for example, compensatory allowances.

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Gentleman deal with surpluses?

Mr. Livsey: We would not adopt quotas. The Conservative party adopted them at the twelth hour and introduced them the following morning. The farming community knew nothing about it and suffered greviously as a result.

Mr. Leigh *rose——*

Mr. Livsey: I commend what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said about forestry, which is a constructive method of taking land from production for non-agricultural purposes. It will provide an annual income, and we should all consider that policy carefully.

We should also consider new crops, and especially the conversion of existing crops into industrial products, such as alcohol. However, we shall not achieve those new directions without more research and development. At present research and development and advisory services are being run down. That is both serious and regrettable at a time when farming faces a great crisis. Indeed, the French are increasing their research and development budget by 10 per cent. It is clear from that from where future competition will come.

I have sought to be constructive and to describe what the country needs. It is a constructive policy for family farming units. If we can provide that, we shall be successful.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): For a long time Conservative Members have been shouting at my hon. Friend while he has been making his constructive speech. Many hon. Members may not be aware why they do so. The only reason is that the Minister lost his job as chairman of the Conservative party, as a result of my hon. Friend's win in Brecon and Radnor, and, as he has been demoted, many of his hon. Friends like to shout at my hon. Friend.

Mr. Livsey *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have the impression that a second debate is taking place on both sides of the House below the Gangway. The hon. Member is entitled to be heard.

Mr. Livsey: I was about to finish my speech. I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention.

We need an agricultural policy which will give confidence to the industry and family farming units. If we can provide a forward-looking policy which will ensure adequate net incomes, we shall have achieved a great deal. At present small family farms need protection and aid. If a policy is based on those principles, we shall protect our agriculture and go forward.

9.10 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I thought we had seen the last of humbug motions on Monday, but obviously not. I hope that when my right hon. Friend replies to the debate he will be able to elaborate on the stories going the rounds in this place that the alliance felt so strongly about this motion on rural areas that it decided not to put the motion down last Thursday or Friday, but decided to put it down only yesterday after the Opposition parties had lost the Westland debate and the Government came out of it with distinction. That proves the alliance's deep commitment to this.

Mr. Gummer: Has my hon. Friend noticed that, as usual, as soon as the alliance spokesman has finished, half the party leaves and takes no further interest in the debate?

Mr. Maclean: That has not escaped my notice or the notice of my hon. Friends. This is a horrific, catch-all motion. Practically the only thing left out is rural telephone boxes. What has happened to the cause of rural telephone boxes? They were espoused last year and the year before, but rural telephone boxes are now safe and no longer of any interest to the opposition parties. On Friday, at a presentation by British Telecom in Cumbria, I discovered that, far from removing telephone boxes, British Telecom is spending millions on replacing them and putting up additional boxes. The Opposition parties now have no interest in that subject.

The motion refers to rates and the rate support grant in rural areas. It seems the Opposition parties are worried about the amount of money going to rural areas. I hope that one of their spokesmen will tell us tonight how much money they intend to take from the rural areas. The hon. Members for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) in March 1984 on Standing Committee G supported an Opposition clause to reintroduce rating of agricultural land. Then on 21 May 1985, only two years later, they both voted against re-rating of agricultural land. That is interesting.

There is in existence an SDP discussion paper which says:

"There is also one exclusion from the rating system which can no longer be justified; the derating of agricultural land and buildings. The re-rating of agriculture would strengthen the rate base of many local authorities with low resources".

The three opposition parties must answer an important question. Will the Liberal party introduce rating of farmland? Will the SDP introduce rating of farmland? Will the alliance introduce rating of farmland? I hope the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) will answer that question when he is winding up and I promise I will give ample time by finishing my speech at an opportune time. *[Interruption.]* If my speech contains material inaccuracies on the policies of the Opposition parties on the rating of agricultural land, I guarantee the hon. Gentleman that I and my hon. Friends will not utter a cheep while he elucidates those policies.

We know what the problems of agriculture are. For the first time in its history, agriculture has reached a watershed. The land is producing more than enough food to feed all our people. Our opponents must not pretend that they suddenly have a policy to deal with this. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) deserves credit for his speech, because he said for the first time in many years that "they" have a policy. They, I presume, are the Liberals, and that policy is against quotas. I am taking that as official Liberal policy rather than the statement from the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) who said:

"the way forward for the industry"—

that is, the dairy industry—

"is not by means of a quota system for milk or any other product that comes from land . . . the milk quota system must be rejected."

That is fair enough, but it is not the way forward. I hope that in winding up the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland will say whether that is SDP policy, because on 1 December 1983, he said:

"We must move to a system of quotas".

So we have found Liberal policy. There are two more questions for the Opposition parties. Does the SDP believe in a system of quotas? Does the alliance believe in a system of quotas?

The problem in agriculture and in rural areas is not money or expenditure, but people. If more people were living and working in the countryside, all the other things —such as buses, rural post offices and schools—would fall into place. I make no criticism of doctors in my constituency, but the only time the closure of a small cottage hospital was proposed, the doctors, for valid reasons, were the people who strongly opposed its staying open because they wanted all the benefits which a bigger and plusher health centre could offer.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House fight to maintain rural schools. The problem that we come up against is not the politicians of national Government or local government but the so-called educational experts who say, "Small rural schools are not on; they are not viable. Little Johnnie has not got a peer group that he can interreact with."

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman's view that rural schools in some areas are driven to closure because of the interference of so-called experts. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the Welsh Office — one of whose Ministers is on the Treasury Bench at the moment—has done absolutely nothing about telling local authorities that the experts are wrong and is encouraging them to close village schools? Will he demand that his Government change their policy so that village schools are maintained?

Mr. Maclean: I do not think that there is any need to change policy so that rural schools can be maintained. If any Government are ever successful in ridding their Civil Service departments of experts and educational psychologists, I shall happily come back and bow to the hon. and learned Gentleman because, if he can manage that, he will be more successful than any Government in history.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Spending per pupil in Wales is at its highest in the county that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) represents.

Mr. Maclean: I shall not comment further on Wales. There is sufficient ethnic representation from the Celtic regions. I shall get back to the main stream.

I intended to talk about what the National Farmers Union and Rural Voice have suggested as the solution for rural areas. As time is pressing I shall concentrate on two points. The NFU has estimated that, within a decade, 11 per cent. of agricultural land currently used for essential food production will be surplus to requirements. It says that in a tightly overpacked and crowded island like ours we should look upon that not as a disaster but as an opportunity which can be exploited for forestry, tourism and other things.

The Rural Voice document entitled "Agriculture and the Rural Economy" makes some valid points, one of which is that farming is at the core of a healthy rural community. It also says that production of food to a very high standard must remain the prime purpose of a viable rural community. In that regard, the Government's backing of Food from Britain is proof that we are backing the right policy.

The Rural Voice document also says:

> "A growing secondary purpose for farming and farm land, and supplementary justification for financial and other support for the farming industry springs from other aspects of national life which have been rising on the political agenda—namely environment, tourism, forestry, energy, and the strengthening of the rural economy."

The Government have responded. The policy on rural diversification and the provisions of the Agriculture Bill —some of us are privileged to sit in Committee on that Bill—show that we are moving in the right direction. Agricultural improvement scheme grants are available for rural diversification and for forestry. I can go a long way towards agreeing with the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) on the necessity to make forestry a cash crop every year until it matures. This is an avenue that we must explore.

On tourism, we have Lord Young's document, "Lifting the Burden", and "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs: the business of tourism", where we are shifting the restrictions which hold back the development of tourism — easier signposting in the countryside, for example—and if we can do something about some of the planning boards, we will go a long way towards getting more people back into rural areas. The broad-leaved woodland policy for forestry is another example. All these are moves in the right direction.

What does not help the rural debate is this attempt at a catch-all motion, which seeks to touch on all the nice little things. Party members have obviously done an exercise as the Americans do: they have tried to calculate where there is a little bit for the green vote and the yuppy vote—the SDP no doubt has an analysis of the typical SDP vote — and the Sloane ranger vote. They have identified all these votes and tried to encapsulate them in the motion, so that they can say in their magazines, in *Liberal Focus* and so on, that they have tonight pressed the Government on all aspects of the rural debate. There is only one thing that the Opposition parties need to do if they want to be credible on agriculture and rural areas: they should tell us their agricultural policy on quotas, how they would deal with surpluses, whether they would rate farmland. If they fail to do that, this motion is a humbug, and I suspected it all the time.

9.21 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The fact that this is an important debate has been reflected in the speeches from all sides of the House and in the deep concern that Members feel about the present condition of the rural economy. The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) enlarged upon the concern which has been expressed in Cornwall about the impending collapse of the tin industry, and he elaborated on points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) in opening the debate. The Government's failure to save the international tin agreement and to bring about the regulation of the London Metal Exchange, which is having such a catastrophic consequence in Cornwall, is a serious reflection on it.

The debate has properly ranged widely over the provision of services, housing, schools and many matters that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Truro on behalf of the alliance; but I propose to concentrate on the condition of agriculture. It is widely recognised that agriculture plays the major part in the rural economy, so it is important to focus on it at the moment.

On the general rural economy, although I believe that the public is sharply aware of the malign consequences of the Government's policies for the industrial areas and our urban scene, the concern in many parts of the country about the rural economy is increasingly making itself felt. It has come as an unpleasant shock to many former Conservative voters that Conservative policies can wreak as much havoc in the countryside as they do in the beleaguered inner cities. The impact of these policies on the rural areas may be less obvious than in the cities — that I grant — but, like the winter wind, the Government's tooth is not less keen because it is not seen.

I focus on agriculture because its present condition has been starkly revealed in the Government's own recently published annual review. The prospects for farming could be further harmed if the wrong decisions were taken in the forthcoming price-fixing negotiations in Brussels. Although we shall have an opportunity at a later date to consider in detail the recommendations which are being made, it is appropriate tonight to look at the general and overriding issue which must inform the mind of the Minister when he goes to Brussels—the condition of Britain's farming industry, whose well-being has not been at the forefront of the Minister's mind in past negotiations in Brussels.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No. My time is limited, and there are many points of substance to be made.

The collapse of farm incomes in 1985, to which our motion refers, and the huge increase in the level of indebtedness of Britain's farmers can be attributed in part to the appalling weather which we suffered this summer. But it is important to note that the annual review draws attention to the decline in producer prices as well as in the output which has marked this year. Producer prices, even at a time of relative decline, have fallen by 2·5 per cent., compared with an increase in the cost of goods and services to farmers of about 1 per cent.

What worries Britain's farmers is that one bad harvest cannot be withstood because of the weakness of the industry induced by the Government's policies. More disturbing than the 43 per cent. drop in income this year — in Scotland it was a 75 per cent. drop — is the underlying downward trend of farm incomes which the Minister failed to acknowledge. It is an underlying downward trend in real terms revealed by the Government's White Paper. Table 26B sets out the position commodity by commodity.

There is an index of average net farm incomes per farm in the United Kingdom. For dairy farmers, taking 1982-83 as the index year — the year of pre-election induced boom—as 100, farm incomes have dropped to 50. They have been halved and there has been a steady decline year by year. The same is true of the less-favoured area—cattle and sheep. There has been a drop to 50 since 1982-83. Lowland cattle and sheep have gone from 100 to 25 in five years, going down consistently every year. Those drops are not weather-induced; they have been going on year in, year out, under the Government. The same is true of other cropping. It has been cut from 100 to 30 according to the index. Pigs and poultry, as always, fluctuate around the same level.

In cereals alone has there been any difference from the general trend, but there too it is as well to remember that today incomes stand at 45 compared with 100 in 1982. They are below what they were when the Government took office.

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, I will not. Questions have been asked, which must be answered.

The undeniable fact is that real farming income is now some 22 per cent. below its pre-war low in 1980.

Agriculture's indebtedness has been increased not only by the drop in incomes but by the sharp rise in the cost of servicing the debt in the last year of 2·5 per cent., pushing farming interest charges up by £100 million to £696 million.

The president of the Scottish National Farmers Union said:

"A measure of the threat to Scottish agriculture is that interest charges cost Scottish farmers £109 million in 1985, a figure 2½ times as much as the industry's £43 million net income in that year. Every 1 per cent. increase in interest rates cost Scottish farmers around £10 million on a whole year basis—more than the aid which the Government made available to help cope with the £150 million loss caused by last year's exceptionally adverse weather."

Those are not my words; they are the words of Mr. Ian Grant.

Land values around the country which were hitherto sustained by the Government's induced optimism about the prospects for farmers, are now under pressure and there is clear evidence that they will fall this autumn.

That undoubtedly must be a source of considerable anxiety to the lenders of money, who are supporting many near-bankrupt enterprises up and down the country. It is a sign of the times that some institutional investors in agriculture are being brought under pressure to withdraw from agriculture altogether.

Mr. Maclean: Quite right: get the institutions out. They have caused the problems.

Mr. Maclennan: The overall volume of farm investment, which was down 12 per cent. last year, has dropped by £100 million. The impact of that on the construction industry in rural areas which are already hard pressed because of cuts in local authority spending, is particularly sharp. Farmers' expenditure on building and works last year has been cut by no less than 23 per cent., the largest post-war cut.

The impact of these figures on the rural economy goes far beyond the 620,000 people directly employed in the industry. It hits even harder the large number of people who supply the industry and the larger number who supply the industry and process its products.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) said, unemployment is already high in many rural areas, and that will increase if these trends are not halted. There are, however, other trends that are giving cause for alarm.

Farming is being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. More and more farms are simply being vacated. That is leaving large and important areas of the country bereft of life. As an example of that trend, more than half the wheat currently produced in this country is grown by less than 10 per cent. of those who produce it.

The Government must have in mind three factors which account for the deepening agricultural recession. The first is the yo-yoing level of interest rates. These are insupportable by an industry that is over-geared in response to the foolish pre-election promptings of the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker). That undirected expansionism amounted to nothing less than cynical irresponsibility.

The single most important step open to the Government which the alliance advocates to help stabilise interest rates, is entry of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, to which we devoted an earlier debate today. That is supported by the NFU generally and by the NFU in the Minister's own constituency — I was informed of that on Monday night — and the NFU in Scotland has publicly gone on record as advocating entry of the exchange rate mechanism. It is time that the Minister of Agriculture listened to the case being made for the benefit of the industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"]

The second factor that is influencing and deepening the recession in the industry is the Government's approach to the reform of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: Although British budgetary expenditure on CAP support schemes appears to have increased by over £400 million in the past year, little of that has found its way into the farmers' pockets. The time has come for the Minister to recognise that the present policies of open-ended price support by means of expensive intervention and export restitution are plainly failing. There is no difference between Liberal Members and SDP Members or between agriculture and the alliance on that issue. The present methods of support are not only failing to exert effective financial control—the Minster seems more concerned about that than about the welfare of farmers—but failing to ensure the fair standard of living for farmers set out as an objective in article 39 of the treaty of Rome.

The Government amendment to the alliance motion draws attention to the additional £500 million of public

[Mr. Maclennan]

expenditure on agriculture this year, but it is notably silent about the £879 million drop in British farm incomes. The present system of setting a single inflexible support price for an open-ended output is a direct inducement to increase production by all possible means. It exacerbates the imbalance between supply and demand and if it is set at a level to guarantee a fair return only for larger units it penalises smaller units and those in less-favoured areas.

I put forward a preferable alternative. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Conservative Members who have been calling for statements of policy would have heard a great deal already if they had not been behaving like the usual rabble. If, instead of an open-ended system of support, limits are placed on the amount of farm produce qualifying for the full guaranteed price and that amount is geared to what can be produced by an efficient family farm, anything produced above that limit can be allowed to find a price level on the open market.

The House should note the difference between what I am proposing and the old milk quota concept introduced by the Government overnight, without forethought or consideration of the consequences. We are not saying that we will put a ceiling on production. We are saying that we will limit the amount of production eligible for support. Such entitlement to guaranteed support is a valuable asset which should be tradeable to avoid freezing production patterns, but subject to a small proportion of that asset being acquired by national Government for reallocation where required.

The third factor inducing the continuing and deepening recession is the shocking misdirection of Government public expenditure cuts, notably in capital grants and those which are in the pipeline in research, education and advice services. This has already taken its toll on businesses which supply the industry with plant, machinery and vehicles and is forcing many building contractors in rural areas to the wall.

Ministers sometimes portray themselves as bound hand and foot by Community decisions over which they claim to have little influence. Many initiatives are not merely permitted but positively encouraged by Community regulations, but the Government have largely failed to respond to them. That is why, while there has been stability of agricultural incomes for the past 10 years in the Community as a whole, in the United Kingdom there have been fluctuations of 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. from year to year since the Conservatives came to office in 1979.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): What about the weather?

Mr. Maclennan: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that other Community countries have not been subject to changes in the weather since 1979?

Furthermore, agricultural incomes in Britain have tended to lag behind European Community averages. The less-favoured area and structure directives offer scope for the Government to help farming in the hills and uplands and other marginal areas far beyond the opportunities that they have grasped. Those directives reflect an awareness that farming in disadvantaged areas ought to be supported as a means of conserving the environment and rural populations and services.

The alliance commends to the Government further specific proposals. We urge the Government to make annual payments for the upkeep and construction of environmentally desirable amenities such as dry stone dykes, meadows and footpaths. The Government's new policy, designed to maintain and enhance broadleaved woodlands, on which the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) spoke, largely ignores the inability of woodland to produce regular income. An annual management income will be necessary if that policy is to succeed.

In an age of surplus production, it is blind folly to reduce the funding of research into agricultural commodities. It is needed not only to lower the cost of farmers' input which eats into their profits — by, for example, finding less expensive means of drying crops and eradicating pest and disease — but to find new, biotechnical, markets for agricultural products, particularly cereals. It is needed to encourage the development of new crops which are not in surplus. The introduction of changes of economic activity on agricultural land, including the development of tourism and other rural industries, requires advice and flexibly directed financial assistance.

The Scottish agricultural colleges have provided invaluable practical help; should be a model to be followed, not a service to be dismantled. Farmers throughout Britain are baffled by the evident lack of a Government strategy for land. Above all, the Minister needs to tell the farming community what he and his colleagues in the Government expect of the industry. The industry will adapt if it is given a lead. The evident lack of concern for the catastrophic fall in farm incomes, exemplified by the Minister's opening speech, and the continuing downward trend of those incomes, suggests that the Government do not accept the challenge. The Social Democratic party and the Liberal party stand ready to take it up.

Mr. Maclean: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman castigated members from the Government Benches for not listening. I listened intently to everything he had to say and did not attempt to interrupt him once. Is it in order for him to refuse to answer the simple question on rates that I put to him?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is up to the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether he gives way.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): When a motion of such importance is put before the House, even though it was not put down until the last moment yesterday, it is necessary, if it is to be treated seriously, for it to be accompanied by some explanation of what the Opposition parties would put in place of the difficulties and dangers that they see. Therefore, Government Members sought an explanation from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) about what he would do if he were able to change the situation. He said that that could not be done because it was not for him to tell us and it was to be left to his hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey).

Therefore, I listened with great attentiveness to the remarks of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor. It was a revealing speech, particularly when compared with

the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It was another attempt to explain alliance policy.

I listened with great care to what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland said he would do. It is worth the House remembering that he said that we should join the EMS, review the common agricultural policy and do many things, most of which the Government are already doing.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will not give way. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) had the arrogance not to give way to anybody and I have no intention of giving way.

The fact of the matter is that we have had a debate by two parties which have shown themselves totally unfit to do anything as they have been unable to present any policy. Therefore, for five minutes of my speech I felt it right to acquaint the House with the policy that they actually have.

I begin with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who is in favour of quotas. He did not mention quotas throughout the whole of his speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I am sorry. I withdraw the statement that the hon. Gentleman did not mention quotas. He did not tell us that he was in favour of them during the speech. As his hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) told us in a curious intervention that he was against quotas, we start by suggesting that there is some doubt about the unity in the alliance, which was paraded so much by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland at the end of his speech.

Let me continue along that line, for it is not only quotas that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is in favour of——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: I told the hon. and learned Gentleman that already much of my time has been taken up by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, so I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has put forward his policies. He is in favour not only of quotas but of tying down agricultural enterprise in a number of other ways. First, let us see the Social Democratic party's policy, as announced in *The Field* last week, in which there is an elegant photograph of the hon. Gentleman. The article says:

"On hill farms there should be stocking limits".

So no doubt every hill farm in the country will have a stocking limit laid on it by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): What kind of stocking?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of agriculture would go as far as distinguishing between the kinds of stocking.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland goes further. None of us should miss the Social Democratic party document called "Farming in the rural economy", published in December 1985. There we discover another kernel of SDP agriculture policy, in that it supports "the introduction of a statutory minimum weaning age for pigs". *[Interruption.]* In case there is incredulity, I shall continue the quotation:

"There should be a requirement that pigs are not weaned until they are at least three weeks old."

I do not know how often you have considered the farrowing of pigs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, as you may know, there is more than one pig per sow. What happens if the farrowing begins before midnight but ends after midnight? Are the pigs which farrow early to be weaned before those which farrow later on? Is there to be a police force to stamp the piglets as they come out? What about the sows that have fewer teats? I apologise to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, but I must say that some pigs have fewer teats than they have piglets. Would they be given special derogation from the SDP policy, if the SDP were to take power? That is only a small part of the SDP's policy. I would not have laid emphasis upon it if the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland had given us some other part of his party's policy upon which to concentrate.

The hon. Gentleman said that we must have a special arrangement for small firms, which was to be a Community arrangement. How would the hon. Gentleman organise that in the Community? The small farm in Britain is, on average, four times as large as the small farm in the rest of the Community. His policy would help every small farm in every country in the Community except Britain. He has not done his homework. That is what happened on the last occasion when we debated an agricultural matter, although we did not have the pleasure of his presence in the Chamber on that occasion, except when he wished to hear the words of his own hon. Friends.

If only the members of the alliance parties would do the House the courtesy of coming in for the whole debate, but then the alliance parties find it embarrassing. An amendment to motion No. 175 which they put down was signed by 87 of my hon. Friends which pointed out that on the last occasion we heard three totally separate alliance policies on agriculture. We were able to quote for the benefit of the House one or two statements made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He was kind enough to tell us what the Liberal policy was. He said:

"The House knows my view that agricultural land should also be subject to planning consent and planning control, in the way that all other land should be."

So there is the freedom in the countryside to find new jobs. When the hon. Gentleman was criticised for this and it was suggested that it was not the policy of his hon. Friends, either in the SDP or the Liberals, he replied, *"That is Liberal policy."* Then he said:

"I know that we have to win the argument with some of the vested interests."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 1138-40.]

The first two people he has to win are the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). They are the two vested interests with whom he has to win his argument.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor has made it clear to us that he was elected by a farming constituency. We will look with great care at his farming pronouncements. He said that the Government's Bill that is before the House at the moment was good in parts. It is odd that it should be good in parts when he and his hon. Friends voted against it on Second Reading, because it was bad in all parts on that occasion, and, indeed, it was bad

[Mr. Gummer]

in all parts when he was speaking in Wales recently, when he said, "The Government should scrap its new legislation and its new Agriculture Bill."

We disagree with some of the comments of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), but he put forward a policy. At least we heard a policy from the hon. Gentleman, and in that respect he stood in stark difference — and it explains why his party is the official Opposition party—from the rabble responsible for the policies on the alliance Benches.

The debate began with a speech from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). He was not able to be drawn on the question whether he believed in quotas. He said that he was concerned about the broad sweep backcloth. Would it not be lovely to govern a country on the broad sweep backcloth concept? One does not have to be particular about anything or provide an answer to any question. All one needs to do is to assemble a series of special interests and promise them that they are sequentially closer to one's heart. Whoever one has in one's surgery today becomes the subject of a motion before the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) raised the question in its starkest form—"Where are the rural telephone boxes of yesteryear?" They are being installed increasingly in the country, but, surprisingly enough, there is no word about them in this motion. For the Opposition parties which put this motion——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has not been with us today and he is in no position to intervene.

The hon. Member for Truro went on to deal with rural post offices. I am sure that he has the same experience as I have in my constituency.

One major difficulty lies in getting people to take on a rural post office——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Not in my constituency.

Mr. Gummer: That may not be true in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency, but it is profoundly true in my constituency and in the constituencies of a large number of my colleagues. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) has had exactly the same problem as I have had. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has not looked at his constituency closely enough if he thinks that that is not the case.

We have to face the issue of rural schools. It is all very well to talk about rural schools, but we all know that in many areas, such as mine, there are small schools because there are fewer children in the villages. *[Interruption.]* It is not because of the rural population. In many parts of the country, the rural population is increasing. It is a small matter of the birth of babies. I am doing my best about that as my fourth baby is about to arrive, but I cannot do it all and nor can alliance Members.

It is not right to say that, inevitably, a school of 26 children should be kept in old buildings, meeting a rural need only, with an education that is much less good than that which could be provided in other circumstances.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The right hon. Gentleman is against village schools.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. and learned Gentleman should look at my record in my constituency. I am in favour of good village schools. I have supported the closure of those that do not meet needs. The hon. and learned Member is trying to get a few extra selective votes. He is in favour of any village school—good, bad or indifferent; large, small or unimportant. It is a matter of votes, not a matter of caring for the countryside.

How could the hon. Member for Truro talk about transport when he was clearly unfamiliar with the results of the trials in Norfolk and Hereford? He could not have made that speech if he had known the facts. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) interrupted the hon. Member for Truro but the hon. Gentleman, either purposely or accidentally, misunderstood him. The result was perfectly clear. There had been a slight increase in the number of miles covered by rural buses. In surrounding areas where that freedom did not exist, there had been a marked diminution in rural bus services. That is the basis of our policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) made some tough and clear points about his constituency. He will not expect me to answer those with which I have not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Unlike the members of the Liberal party, I answer on those matters in which I have competence and not on those matters that concern other Ministers. Therefore, I shall not answer my hon. Friend's points, but I shall ensure that he receives an answer from the Ministers concerned. My hon. Friend's suggestions are in line with those that we have put forward, especially with respect to planning. Circulars on rural planning issued by the Department of the Environment have been saying that we want local authorities—Liberal local authorities as well as others—to be more sensible and understanding about jobs in rural communities. That is why we have issued those circulars. We hope that we can press local authorities to do that.

We shall not get anywhere by listening to the answers put forward by the alliance parties. They have asked the House to believe that to give a general catalogue of the woes and problems that can be found at any time under any Government in any section of the community is sufficient. That is sufficient only if the alliance parties can add to that catalogue a positive programme of improvements. They have failed to talk about this. Our policies assist the environment. Alliance Members voted against the conservation legislation and all the improvements put forward by the Government. They voted against the improvements we proposed in the broad-leaf woodland measures that we put before the industry and that are now being debated——

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 146, Noes 262.

Division No. 56] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Alton, David	Barnett, Guy
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Ashdown, Paddy	Beith, A. J.
Ashton, Joe	Benn, Rt Hon Tony

Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael

Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes that the rate support grant settlement is a recognition of the undoubted needs of inner cities but involves a shift of only 2 per cent. overall in the grant paid to shire areas; welcomes the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 which are designed to check the decline in rural bus services and to stimulate new services; welcomes the Government's initiatives on conservation and the rural economy; notes the extra public spending of £500 million this year on agriculture; and welcomes, in particular, the special payments to livestock farmers in those areas worst affected by adverse weather and the recent increases in hill livestock compensatory payments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Local Loans

That the draft Local Loans (Increase of Limit) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th January, be approved. —*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SHORT SPEECHES)

Question proposed,

That—

(1) For the remainder of the present Session Mr. Speaker may announce at the commencement of public business that, because of the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate on one of the matters specified in paragraph (2) of this Order, he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock, on Monday to Thursday sittings, and between half-past eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Friday sittings, to speak for not more than ten minutes; and whenever Mr. Speaker has made such an announcement he may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith;

(2) This Order shall apply to debates on:

(a) the second reading of public bills;

(b) matters selected under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) for consideration on allotted Opposition days; and

(c) motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown.

Hon. Members: Object.

Members' Secretaries and Research Assistants

10.15 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the recommendations contained in paragraph 24 of the Second Report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 195) be approved; and that no Member shall at any one time be entitled to more than one pass for a temporary research assistant from overseas.

We last discussed the role and numbers of research assistants on 12 July. It was on a motion for the Adjournment, and I undertook to come back to the House with a view to taking decisions. Since our previous debate, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), has looked again at the way in which its recommendations might be implemented. The motion before us not only reflects its report, but the resolution of the Services Committee of 16 December, which addressed a point raised by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). I speak for the whole House in expressing gratitude to the right hon. Member for Deptford and the Members of his Sub-Committee for their careful and considered work.

Hon. Members may find it helpful if I remind them of what the Sub-Committee recommended. The Committee's view was that no more than 150 passes per calendar year and no more than 50 at any one time should be issued to temporary researchers from overseas who would be here for less than four months. Otherwise, temporary research assistant passes should be issued only if the Member undertook that the individual in question would be employed for more than four months. Those who did not qualify under either of those provisions should be issued with a temporary secretary's pass only, and should no longer be able to use the Branch Library either in person or by telephone. The Sub-Committee further recommended that no Member should at any one time be entitled to more than one pass out of the 50 for a temporary research assistant from overseas.

The right hon. Member for Deptford will be able to set out more fully and more eloquently than I why those recommendations would benefit the House. I believe that they represent a measured and reasonably practical response to the problems arising from the pressure on our facilities caused by the numbers of research assistants.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Leader of the House agree that the pressure does not come because we want more research assistants but because the present accommodation is completely inadequate? Compared with any legislature in any civilised country, this legislature is appalling. When will he address his mind to the real problem of providing proper facilities, not so that we can be comfortable but so that our staff can work in proper accommodation and we can provide reasonable services for our constituents?

Mr. Biffen: Never has so brief a speech accommodated so weighty an intervention. I completely disagree with the hon. Gentleman's premise; the more accommodation we have the more pressure there will be for more and more research assistants.

The concern which prompted the Sub-Committee's investigation, that the number of passes issued to Members' staff had risen by 23 per cent. over the past 10 years or so to more than 1,000, is still there. Restricting the number of passes available to the temporary research assistants from overseas is, of course, a limitation on only one class of staff, but it would have an immediate effect. At present, there are 77 such passes; acceptance of this motion would reduce that to 50 at the most.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Why is that proposal restricted to overseas research assistants? Surely it would be fairer to have a limitation on temporary research assistants and not to discriminate against overseas research assistants?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Member for Deptford will comment more authoritatively than I on that point. I believe that that problem originally arose in the Services Committee in the context of overseas research assistants.

The House will have noted also the more wide-ranging substantive amendment to the motion, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). This suggests a more rigorous line in seeking to curtail access to the Palace, and its terms are self-explanatory. Without distinguishing between the types of passes available to different categories of staff, it would mean that, of the assistants and secretaries that an hon. Member had working for him, only two would be able to use facilities within the Palace of Westminster. I believe there is general merit in that proposal. It does not interfere with an hon. Member's right to employ as many staff as he wishes, but it prevents a large number of research assistants from being a disproportionate burden on the Library and the other services available in the House.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): With all respect, that is not the case. We are talking about temporary passes which already prohibit their holders from entering the Library. Surely it is wrong in principle that hon. Members should be restricted in the number of people they can use or hire?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend asserts a point of view which I understand, but my hon. Friend the Member for Woking will make his speech and defend his proposal. However, I wish to make it clear that he is talking not about temporary passes but about passes both temporary and permanent.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Since the best way to reduce the number of temporary passes is to increase the number of full-time passes for full-time research assistants, will the Leader of the House tell us what improvement he proposes in the allocation of money to hon. Members to employ full-time research assistants, in recompense for the reduction in temporary assistants?

Mr. Biffen: It is not a question of reducing the number of research assistants that an hon. Member may employ, but of reducing the number who have access to the full facilities of the Palace. I do not wish to anticipate my hon. Friend's speech. There will always be endless excuses for raising the emoluments to hon. Members for the conduct of their business, and I understand why the hon. Gentleman wishes to trailer that proposition now. However, we have sufficient within our ambit to take a judgment on the terms before us, leaving aside the question of the secretarial research allowance. So that we

[Mr. Biffen]

can have the matter authoritatively recorded, there are provisions for that allowance to be reconsidered, and that will be undertaken in the terms that I have already announced to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Biffen: I shall give way, but may I crave the indulgence of the House? This is a 90-minute debate, I have a short speech, and I can guarantee that the interruptions now exceed the length of my speech. I shall give way to my hon. Friends and other hon. Gentlemen, but I hope that after that I may conclude, so that all hon. Members who wish to participate can do so.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the great benefits of limiting the number of assistants is that that will limit the dry rot that goes through this place? Every week questions grow; for example 256 questions were tabled on education. The fewer assistants we have, the fewer questions will be tabled, and the more we shall get the real benefit of the House.

Mr. Biffen: I am anxious to play my part in contributing to the calm and measured consideration of these matters. I note that my hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. Many of the most experienced parliamentarians have operated in the House without any particular and obvious assistance.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a physical limit to the number of people who can occupy the Palace of Westminster? Therefore, there must be a limit to the number of research assistants who can use the Library and other facilities.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. It is perfectly pertinent to observe that the argument is not merely about the number of research assistants that may be employed, but the number who may have access to the full facilities of the Palace.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The Leader of the House suggested that, because of the pressure on facilities such as the Library, we should withdraw passes from some people who may have access to those facilities. If he found that in Shropshire, for example, there was pressure on the public library system, would he be in favour of withdrawing facilities from the users of those libraries?

Mr. Biffen: I would certainly have to consider how one would cope, given the limited facilities available and the considerable pressure upon them. We are in a totally non-market situation and cannot use the price mechanism in any way to regulate the use of facilities. *[Interruption.]* It is not a matter of being paid up. We have to consider some of the factors that weighed with the right hon. Member for Deptford when he was considering the matter of overseas research assistants and whether that involved access to our facilities which we thought to be most appropriate. In the conduct of our affairs we, like any other institution, should be ruled by some sense of priority.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The right hon. Gentleman must accept that this is the least resourced Parliament in the western world. Hon. Members do not want to use quill pens, and if the physical facilities limit the work we can do, why is it not possible for the House to rent some of the perfectly good offices that are available opposite this Palace?

Mr. Biffen: Once again, it comes down to consideration of resources. This House should not be ashamed to face the challenge of resource allocation in respect of its own administration and its own activities. That applies to society elsewhere.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North) *rose——*

Mr. Biffen: No, I have given way generously and I have an obligation to the House to bring my remarks to a conclusion. I hope that we shall hear from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) during this debate, because he has unique experience of the matter.

This restriction will not be an intolerable restraint on Members. More than 250 Members presently manage without any research assistants having access to the Palace.

I realise that some hon. Members may find the terms of the amendment draconian. While it may seem that if any limit is imposed it should be imposed on all Members alike, I see some difficulties inherent in this approach. For example, it does not recognise the responsibilities of those who shadow Government Ministers. Their duties could well require greater secretarial and research support than those of Members who do not have that role. Indeed, the special position of Opposition spokesmen is already recognised by the provision of Short money. If the amendment is accepted by the House, we should find some means of tempering its rigour for those in the posts I have described.

Having set out my own views on this matter, I do not propose to detain the House further. Because this is a House matter which relates solely to the way in which we decide to regulate our methods of work, there will be a free vote. I shall vote for the motion and for the amendment, should it be pressed. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the two amendments in the name of the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow).

10.28 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): The Leader of the House at least deserves credit, and I propose to give it to him, for bringing this subject back to the House. It was after all, only in March last year that the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and I recommended it to the Services Committee and a delay of 15 months or so before this is likely to come into operation is really fast going for the Leader of the House.

I must apologise to the Leader of the House, because on 12 July when we debated this matter in full I thought he would never bring it back again, but he has brought it back within seven months. Again, he deserves to be congratulated. Before dealing with the matter, I should like to comment on a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and by other hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is the lack of accommodation for hon. Members in this House. It is a crying scandal, which apparently the Leader of the House thinks is a perfectly reasonable way of conducting our operations. That is what he said. Of

course, the Leader of the House is in contact with the right hon. Member for Oswestry, who charged me with the chairmanship of the committee to expedite new buildings for Members of Parliament so that they might have more accommodation. That is exactly what we are trying to do. I hope hon. Members have read the report on Cannon row, because we hope to make that available to the House, with the consent, I think, of both the right hon. Member for Oswestry and the Leader of the House, and of the Services Committee. We hope to make that available to the House at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Biffen: A very fair point. To bring the right hon. Gentleman up to date it is, alas, Shropshire, North.

Mr. Silkin: At least the right hon. Gentleman is up to date on that, if on nothing else. Is it not the position that hon. Gentlemen throughout the House are cramped for resources and for the help that can be given to them? I am not going into the question of finance or how that should be overcome. That is a different matter, which should form part of another debate which will, no doubt, take place later in the Session. There is a shortage of accommodation for hon. Members, for their secretaries and for their assistants.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I accept that what the right hon. Gentleman says is generally true. Does he not agree that there is, nevertheless, a considerable differential between the facilities that some right hon. and hon. Gentlemen enjoy and those that others have? For example, some years ago my right hon. Friend occupied a desk in the Cloisters which I later occupied. To think of having research assistants there was intolerable. Now I am fortunate to have a room where a research assistant can work and I have no need to call on other House facilities. I may not be able to get one of the passes, in which case the position would be nonsensical.

Mr. Silkin: The hon. Gentleman is saying two things. The first is that the Leader of the House now has splendid accommodation. Indeed he has, because I have visited him there. The Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee also, as is proper, has very good accommodation. So he should have, or he would be a bad Chairman of that Sub-Committee. However, many hon. Gentlemen do not have good accommodation.

There are two priorities. We must get on with providing accommodation. That is what the New Building Sub-Committee is doing reasonably well, I hope. It is also what the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee is trying to do by making Cannon row police station, which has been vacated by the police, available to the House for as much accommodation as possible.

We are faced with a dilemma and the Services Committee asked the hon. Member for Hereford and me, as joint chairmen of an ad hoc committee, to examine the pressure on resources caused by temporary overseas research assistants. I agree with those hon. Gentlemen who say they have a perfect right to be assisted by whatever people they wish. They know how they want to do their job. Why the Leader of the House or anybody else in the House should think he has the right to interfere, I cannot see.

Difficulty arises because of pressure. When there is pressure, one must seek a balance between the two opposing rights — the right of hon. Gentlemen to be assisted in the work they do and the right of other hon. Gentlemen to be able to do their task without facilities being unavailable to them because of overcrowding.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I recognise the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making, which is the right of hon. Members to have assistants to help them in the House. Surely, the most important right of all is that Members of Parliament are elected here to do their work here. If they wish to have assistants, let them be outside the House. Why should the House be trammelled with assistants? The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) has managed to make a most wonderful contribution to the House without even an office, let alone an assistant.

Mr. Silkin The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) is the right hon. Member for Down, South. He is someone entirely on his own. I do not possess his intellectual ability or his quickness of mind; and I do not think that most hon. Gentlemen possess that quickness of mind either. We all need some assistance. The fact of the matter is that hon. Members have secretaries in the House. The point that the hon. Gentleman made applies equally to secretaries. On that basis, why have them here? Yet it is accepted and we believe it to be right. The hon. Gentleman is making a false point. Furthermore, if he listened he would see that what we are really talking about is striking the right balance. I do not know whether the hon. Member for——

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Silkin: If the hon. Gentleman will just let me finish — I do not know whether the hon. Member for Hereford and I struck the right balance, but I think that we did. If we did not, it is extraordinary that in all these months there have been no objections whatsoever to the report that we made to the House or following the debate of 12 July 1985.

Dr. Hampson: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. There is no real difference between many Members on both sides of the House that a balance ought to be struck, bur there is a physical problem in the accommodation. There is also a matter of principle, and that is confused by the element of security. I speak as one who has, at the most, one research assistant a year, so it does not bother me practically if this is passed. However, it bothers me in principle. The whole issue must be about security because, with the present security measures, unless people have a pass they cannot be used here. It is not a matter of whether they have access to the Library or whether there is too much pressure on it, it is a question of access to the buildings of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Silkin: That is absolutely right, but the fact remains that, having got in here, they will be using certain facilities.

When we came to consider those facilities, the hon. Member for Hereford and I, and those members of our Sub-Committee who were present, found a very interesting situation. In a couple of cases there were sponsoring organisations of research students from the United States, in particular, who disciplined their students extremely well — we were very impressed with the measures that they took—and who were prepared to go on doing so, and to teach them what was necessary about the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that even with these organisations the research assistants that they provide are often here for two or, at most, three days a week, not for the full week? In other words, in passing this motion, we shall be depriving ourselves of research assistants for the rest of the week not covered by those part-timers.

When it comes to the definition of overseas, it is clear that overseas students cannot be Common Market students because that would be to discriminate against the Common Market, in a way in which I am sure that both my right hon. Friend and I would want but which would not be legally tenable. So it is, strictly speaking, discrimination against American students. How can that be justified?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: How many research assistants have you got?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Five.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Silkin: There are two points to be answered here, although I would have preferred to reach them in my own time. My hon. Friend has rather anticipated the way in which I was going to conduct this.

My hon. Friend is asking about those research assistants whom he employs for perhaps two or three days a week. He says that the rest of the time they are students, and so on. If it is essential for him to have research work done the whole of the week, there is no reason on earth why he should not so organise his time that he employs one research assistant for two or three days. If he wishes, he can have a temporary secretary who cannot use the Library facilities for the rest of the time. It is all a matter of organising one's work.

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will the hon. Gentleman please adjust his clothes before leaving?

Mr. McNamara: I always give up my seat to a lady on a public convenience.

My right hon. Friend's point is at issue. If the problem is one of access to and pressure on the Library, we all understand and accept that an hon. Member can have only one full-time research assistant for five days a week who has access to the Library. That is sensible and understandable. But much of the work that is done is done on the telephone without the need to go outside an hon. Member's office. That is now being restricted and that is what we find most reprehensible. Those who have private means can get the work done by private companies or interests and in that way the independence of Members is impinged upon. That is what we object to.

Mr. Silkin: What my hon. Friend is objecting to is reading the recommendations because were he to read them he would see that it is possible to get what is called a temporary secretary pass and, as I think my hon. Friend knows, some research workers do have such passes. The only difference is that they will not be able to use the Library. They can work in my hon. Friend's room perfectly well. The problem arises because of the overuse of public facilities. *[Interruption.]* I would hate to deprive the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont Dark) of the use of the Library. I am sure it would be a very good thing for him to have.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It cannot conceivably be possible for any hon. Member to have five assistants using the facilities. Some have seven or even eight. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that only last night somebody mentioned to me that he had been approached by an American who did not want any money for his services? All he wanted to be able to do was to go back to America and put on his curriculum vitae that he had worked in the House of Commons. For that privilege, we are to be crowded out.

Mr. Silkin: I do not think that that is a question for me. I plead guilty to not having five research assistants. Furthermore, I do know that there are people who are quite pleased to have the initials "MP" after their name whom I would not vote for in any circumstances.

The House had a good round at the reasons for limitation before. I look forward to the days when we will not have to limit any research assistants or secretaries. But that day will come when we have enough accommodation, not when we are overcrowded as we are at the moment.

Let me on this cold January day remind hon. Members what it is like in midsummer when the Terrace is full or overfull. We all know about that. We have all experienced it. Of course, something must be done. At the moment, we have to strike a balance.

Mr. McNamara: They do not have the right to go on the Terrace.

Mr. Silkin: I am talking about the use of facilities, which is a matter of great importance to hon. Members.

The one difference between the recommendations put before the House on 12 July and those before it today is the proposal that only one pass at a time shall be available for an overseas student.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: What does that mean?

Mr. Silkin: It means a temporary overseas student who will be here for less than four months. My hon. Friend can look up the recommendation for himself. I do not want to waste time going over what went on in July when my hon. Friend was abed and I was awake.

Mr. Mitchell: I was here.

Mr. Silkin: In that case, why did my hon. Friend not intervene then? Why has it taken him seven months? He is as bad as the Leader of the House.

In July we said that there should be no more than 50 such students at any one time and 150 in any calendar year. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a very valid point, reported at columns 1392-93 of *Hansard*. He said that we might be in danger of leaving the decision-making, as it were, to Back Benchers, and that that would be invidious — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—in the sense that one hon. Member might get five research assistants while another got none. My right hon. Friend did not regard that as a particularly fair way to arrange things. By limiting the availability of temporary overseas student research assistants to one per Member we are being as fair as we possibly can.

In our Sub-Committee the hon. Member for Hereford and I found that 50 at any one time and 150 in any calendar year was about right. Hon. Members can read the evidence and see the justification for themselves. That was the basis that we took and the House did not object to it at that time. Some hon. Members want to go much further and abolish research assistants altogether—we have heard from one

or two of them—but no one from that time to this suggested that the steps that we were taking were bad in themselves.

Mr. Sheerman: Many of us took part in the debate seven months ago and although we did not like all the recommendations we accepted that they were fair enough, but the Select Committee then changed this recommendation to one pass. That fundamental change in the recommendations was not debated in the House.

Mr. Silkin: My hon. Friend misjudges us a little. We were asked to consider what had been said in the debate. Because my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West and others had suggested that it might be unfair to allow one Member to have a large number of research assistants out of the 50 while others had none, we decided—it is for the House to judge that decision—that the best thing to do was to ration them to one at a time. That is how we reached our decision. I do not think that it is a particularly vital decision or a particularly bad one. There must be some form of rationing and I think that this is a fairly reasonable one.

What I think is totally unreasonable is the amendment put down by the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). Here I find myself declaring an interest. The House will be delighted to hear that I shall preserve my record of being totally biased. As it happens, I have two secretaries and one research assistant, all of them permanent. I have no temporaries. If the hon. Gentleman's amendment were accepted, I should be disqualified from having more than two of them in the House. I therefore have an interest. I am not atypical in that. Many hon. Members have more than two assistants and I think that we should understand that the difference between a secretary and a research assistant is a very narrow one. Most of us use our secretaries to help prepare our speeches. The difference is often one of semantics. I hope that the House will throw that amendment out, despite what the Leader of the House said.

Obviously, the problem needs to be kept under review. It could be that an increase in numbers might make the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) come back to the House and say that it has not worked as well as was hoped. On the other hand, it may be that matters will get better, particularly as new accommodation becomes available. I think that this is a matter that should be kept under review.

The Sub-Committee worked extremely hard to achieve what it believed to be a fair answer to the problem. I think that this is a fair answer. It may not be an answer that pleases every hon. Member; it would be absurd if it did. However, I think it will please and represent the view of the majority of hon. Members and in that spirit I commend it to the House.

10.51 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I do not want to repeat much of what I said when we debated the subject on 12 July. Therefore, I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not follow all the attractive lines of argument which are deployed and if I leave them to make their own speeches rather than let them seek to intervene in mine. We will get on better that way.

I thought it right to table my amendment because during the debate on 12 July, and subsequently, I have found that some of my colleagues support the view that my amendment seeks to advance. I think that it is right that they should have an opportunity to carry their opinions into the Lobby if they wish to do so. I am mightily fortified to know that the Leader of the House evidently feels the same way. However, I must say that I immediately accept his comment that the amendment, if passed, would bear harshly upon people who undoubtedly need additional support from secretaries or research assistants because of their shadow responsibilities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: I said that I was not going to give way. I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to keep my promise to the House. If I may continue with my argument I think that I will deal with some of the admirable points that my hon. Friend is looking forward to making in his own speech.

It is agreed that there is not enough space to go round; whether that is the Government's fault or the fault of past Governments we need not argue about. We know that there is enormous pressure upon the space available to the House of Commons in the Palace of Westminster. It seems to me that the task of the Select Committee should be to see that that space is shared out as fairly as possible amongst all those who have to work here and among those permanent staff who serve Parliament as well as the staff who serve Members of Parliament. We ordinary Members of Parliament have a right to expect that there should be a fair and equitable division and to complain when we find, as we have found, that the catering facilities, the photocopiers, the Library facilities, the Terrace or the demand for questions in the Table Office is exceeding the capacity of the House's establishment to cope.

As I sought to say in my speech on 12 July we must bear in mind the considerations of security, because that is a reflection of pressure on facilities. Those arguments should be addressed by the House, whether or not hon. Members are disposed to be persuaded by them. That is a perfectly respectable point of view. I believe that as long as accommodation is restricted hon. Members should accept the self-discipline of not demanding more than their share. That is the limiting factor upon the assistance that they can fairly claim to have within the Palace of Westminster. That is all we are talking about. We are not talking about restricting their right to employ whomsoever they wish, and how many they wish, in their constituencies—

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Onslow: I am very sorry——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: If I give way once, I shall have to give way again. The hon. Gentleman knows that. Therefore, I hope that he will allow me to continue.

I know that many of the facilities of the House are inadequate. I know that many hon. Members find it desirable to employ research assistants to get their mail from the Post Office to where they work. The answer to that is to have a sub-post office nearer to where those hon. Members work. The mail can be taken to them by the carriers of the mail so that they do not have to employ gentleman with cleft sticks to do the job for them. We are under pressure, and we should seek to discipline ourselves within its limits.

[Mr. Onslow]

Instead of that, the motion addresses a different and subsidiary problem — how to control the excessive supply of overseas research assistants; not the excessive demand for them, not the excessive parliamentary need for them, but the excessive supply of them. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has five research assistants. I do not want to know what nationality they are. There are four separate bodies currently holding themselves out as able to supply American research assistants to hon. Members. I understand that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) has a connection with one such body — Beaver college. I understand that the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) has a connection with another such body, Education Programmes Abroad. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has a connection with a putative body, the Catholic university of Washington. We have three colleagues in our midst who have undertaken, for whatever reason, to help participants in those different schemes to come here and work as temporary research assistants for Members of Parliament.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Onslow: I am sorry.

Mr. Foulkes: It is very important.

Mr. Onslow: We have a fourth such body, the Hansard Society. I mention it with diffidence because, Mr. Speaker, you are the president of the Hansard Society. It has distinguished vice-presidents and vice-chairmen. It has put out a leaflet, in association with Birkbeck college, in which it says:

> "The Hansard Scholars Programme . . . aims are to bring future leaders of American society into sustained and active contact with the political process in Britain and, by means of carefully selected and supervised internship placements, to enable them to work with some of its leading figures . . .
>
> The cost of the programme for one semester is £3,300 (pounds sterling), which covers housing in Central London as well as tuition, credits and evaluations, and other aspects of the formal programme.

There are thus four organisations seeking to supply American research assistants, to be taken on by hon. Members. The numbers would be limited if the motion, which I do not oppose, is passed. However, it is reasonable to assess that that might mean between 300 and 500 American students passing through the Palace of Westminster in a year.

Mr. Neale: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Onslow: I am sorry.

If I am wrong, I am much encouraged, but on anecdotal evidence I am not prepared to take that risk.

What I believe should happen is that the House should pass the amendments in my name this evening and that the Services Committee should come before us with a properly thought through and organised scheme to deal with this problem. The question of unfair dismissal does not arise with overseas students. *[Interruption.]* It is self-evident that we have more time to debate all these matters, but I feel we should address the questions before us as briefly as we can, and if my hon. Friend wants to make a speech on this I am sure that he will try and catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. All I am seeking to do is not to dismiss anyone but merely to limit the number of passes to this building that any hon. Member may have in his own name.

I have to ask one final question of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin). If I am right in assessing the supply as being so greatly in excess of the limits which he assesses in his motion, how is this to be allocated? How does he see the scarce number of passes being farmed out among the numerous commanders? Is this to be on a first-come first-served basis? Is it to be rationed very strictly? If hon. Members have had one pass in a year, may they not have another for another 12 months? How does he see this scheme working in practice? I will give way if he will tell us that, because I think there is a gap in the justification he has given us.

Mr. Silkin: I wish the hon. Gentleman would read the third recommendation. He will see exactly what the basis of it is. There are a number of stipulaions that bind the sponsoring organisations. The rules are very clearly set out. Where he gets his 500 from I do not know because the recommendation talks about 150 in a calendar year, and 50 at any one time.

Mr. Onslow: That figure is not one that I have formed, but one that I obtained from someone who is in a better position than me. I would be interested to know whether the right hon. Gentleman has been in correspondence with the Hansard Society, whether he discussed recommendations with it, and whether its brochure is framed in the light of the recommendations he seeks to bring to the House. There seems to be a need for a body as august as the Hansard Society to address us in more depth, and bring into its own consideration the desirability of doing this sort of thing for European students.

Why does it have to be something aimed only at students from across the Atlantic? It may well be that there are reasons for that, and perhaps in the existing arrangements for research assistants there are serious flaws. Perhaps there are organisations as respectable as the United Nations which have to trade on getting a research assistant with access to this building. That is something that is wrong and that can be put right simply. For the rest, I think the House would do well to protect itself against the approaching tide of supernumerary workers here by supporting my amendment.

11.3 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): At best I was disappointed at what the Leader of the House had to say, and at worst I found some of the attitudes which he struck positively antedeluvian, and it demonstrates that the constituency which he represents in Shropshire is so different from the kind of constituencies which many of us on this side of the House represent. His case load, with his role as a Member of Parliament, is distinctly different from the role which many Back Benchers on this side of the House have to deal with.

I invite the Leader of the House to come to one of my regular surgeries. Last Saturday morning I began at a school in Liverpool at 10 am and finished late in the afternoon, having dealt with dozens of cases and meeting more than 70 constituents with problems which all need to be followed up. Frankly, I do not have the time to deal with all of those matters myself and I desperately need some help.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) asked me how many American research assistants I have. I have one who gives me some personal help and two who work with me in the Whips Office for two days each per week. I would happily exchange them for some permanent researchers if the Leader of the House and hon. Members were prepared to make available such facilities.

The hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) attacked those of us who use these methods. Those who do not want to use the service do not necessarily have to use it. It is wrong for some hon. Members to try to circumscribe what other Members do and to dictate how they should employ their staff.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): The hon. Gentleman is making an earnest case on his need for research assistants. How much assistance does he receive from one of his research assistants who, I believe, is the parliamentary candidate opposing me in Hampshire? The hon. Gentleman represents a Liverpool constituency.

Mr. Alton: The research assistant who helps me and is a parliamentary candidate in Hampshire is not an American. He does a lot of work, assisting me in trying to change the present Government so that, at the next general election, people elect a party that will deal adequately with Members of Parliament and provide them with the type of facilities that will enable them properly to represent their constituents.

Hon. Members are trying to suggest that this is a mushrooming and unstoppable problem. That is not the case. In May 1984, 1,061 temporary research assistants were employed here. It is true that that is 10 per cent. above the 1983 level and 23 per cent. above the 1974 level, but it is still a relatively small number. Yesterday I checked with the Serjeant at Arms' office to ascertain the present position. There are now only 1,042 research assistants employed here, and 51 of them were spouses of Members. Members are using research assistant passes to enable their spouses and members of their families to gain admission to the House. These figures are deceptive.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: I shall give way in a moment, if the hon. Lady can contain herself.

The real average increase since 1974 in the number of temporary research assistants has been only 15 per cent. It is a downward trend.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman has made a ridiculous point. Spouses can gain admission to the House without getting research assistant passes.

Mr. Alton: That shows incredible ignorance of how people get their passes. Passes are obtained through hon. Members. Few Members have research assistants. The average is less than two research assistants per Member.

The Leader of the House said that the Library's facilities were over-exploited. I took the trouble to check the number of inquiries made to the Library. In 1984, there were 17,304 inquiries by temporary research assistants on behalf of their Member. In 1985, the number was down to 15,495. I said to the Leader of the House during an intervention that, if we were talking about a public library in Oswestry which was being oversubscribed, the Leader of the House or any other hon. Member would not be demanding that the service should be restricted. They would be demanding that the service should be expanded so that people could use the facilities. They would not be demanding that the facility should be closed and restricted.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Did the hon. Gentleman understand at the time of his inquiry that he should bear in mind two factors? First, he should have borne in mind that the number of temporary research assistants in May, June and July was at the lowest ebb it had been for a long time, because of the adverse publicity and the slight uncertainty about this issue? Secondly, he should have borne in mind that, during September and October—the important time for activity in this respect — accommodation changes were being made to the Library which meant that a large number of temporary research assistants were not able to find accommodation in the Library? Overall demand was down at that time for that reason. It does not necessarily imply the trend that the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman admits that it is a downward trend. Now he is trying to suggest that there are reasons for that.

Mr. Shepherd: No.

Mr. Alton: I am sorry; I must have misunderstood the hon. Gentleman. He admitted that there were fewer inquiries and tried to suggest that the reason was the adverse publicity surrounding those temporary research assistants. I do not understand that point.

Mr. Shepherd: The underlying trend in usage of the Library's research and inquiry services is upwards. In 1983, the firgure was 12,699; in 1984, it was 17,304; and, in 1985, for the reasons I surmise, it is less. The overall research load on the Library from Members' inquiries is up 5 per cent. Part of that demand may have come from research assistants. The overall demand for the Library's services continues to increase each year from record level to record level.

Mr. Alton: We are not asking whether hon. Members are asking more questions. Perhaps we intend to circumscribe Members as well. It would not surprise me if that were in the motion. The point at issue is whether American research assistants, who are being attacked in the motion and in the amendment, are overusing the facilities. The figures that I have given show that the trend of use is down from 17,304 in 1984 to 15,400 in 1985.

Mr. Silkin: I want to impress on the hon. Gentleman that there is no attack in the motion on overseas students. On the contrary, I thought that I said that we were very impressed with the students and the sponsoring organisations.

Mr. Alton: I listened to the right hon. Gentleman's speech. I wish that Conservative Members had spoken in similar terms. The motion suggests restricting the number of passes. Many of us regard that as an attack.

Unlike Australian senators, we do not get the benefit of two appointed researchers. We are not as fortunate as Greek deputies, who have a research assistant paid for by public funds. Nor are we like American Representatives who each received a staff allowance of £207,373 in 1981. Tact almost forbids me to say that, in 1981, one United States senator received more than £700,000 for his research staff. I am not suggesting that we need something

[Mr. Alton]

similar. Far too many resources might be being used in the United States and some hon. Members could be cosseted from their constituents if surrounded by too many staff but, for goodness sake, the idea that we must subsist, after paying for our secretaries, on £4,000 to £5,000 with which to take on research staff is ludicrous.

If the motion is carried, the number of American interns who could work here would be greatly reduced. The effectiveness of hon. Members will be reduced as a result. We will have to spend more time answering telephones, photocopying and sealing envelopes — all the trivial things which the Leader of the House on other occasions says probably prevent us from getting into the Chamber.

The report fails to address itself to the sheer inadequacy of facilities that we have made available for ourselves. We are told that we will get nothing until the 1990s. How that contrasts with our ability to build a Channel tunnel in just five years. Meanwhile, hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) have to share a room measuring 9 ft by 6 ft with a research assistant. That is a ludicrous way in which to run a Parliament.

Only this afternoon we debated a Ten minute Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on Crown immunity. My secretary was poisoned a few months ago because of the appalling water supply in these buildings. Because they are not covered by shops, offices and factories legislation, we have appalling primeval facilities. But just consider the facilities we provide for barristers in the robing rooms downstairs and compare them with those of hon. Members. The motion will not solve that and nor will it address another issue which the Leader of the House promised to bring to the House—lobbyists. A far more serious problem than Americans are people who are paid for by lobbying firms outside the House. The motion signally fails to deal with that.

If the motion and the amendment are passed, they will leave the House in the 19th century. We talk grandly about this being the mother of Parliaments. As long as we fail to improve facilities in the House, it will continue to be a grandmother of Parliaments. I hope that the House will oppose the motion and the amendment.

11.14 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I have given much thought to the report since the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) and I put it to the Services Committee and we debated it in the summer of last year. I can find no reason for altering my thoughts on any of the points in the report. It is a good and sound report that should be adopted on a proper basis. That is the choice before the House tonight.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for bringing the matter to the attention of the House. The right hon. Member for Deptford said that he was surprised that my right hon. Friend had done so. I was confident that he would address his mind to the matter and I am delighted that he has shown my confidence to be well founded. I express a note of thanks on behalf of the Librarian and his staff, especially those who work in the Branch Library, to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—he can be referred to as Mr. Moneybags—who was as good as his word in July. He provided the resources to carry out the necessary changes, which paragraph 26 of the report requested, at an early date.

There have been significant improvements in working conditions in the Branch Library on the fifth and sixth floors of Norman Shaw north. We shall see the benefit in terms of less strain in the future. Those improvements are important, but they are secondary to the main operation. We must underline the fact that in the Library, we are engaged in a holding operation. I mentioned this matter in July. The new Library is under design and construction on the Parliament street site. The earliest possible date that we can reasonably expect for occupation is 1990.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Deptford for the way that he has driven the Building Sub-Committee towards an early completion. We are dealing with sensitive matters in sensitive areas, such as conservation. The issue is fraught with difficulties about how the construction can be handled and in what order. It is to the right hon. Gentleman's great credit that, under his able chairmanship, the game has advanced as far as it has and is on schedule. Further consideration of additional space for Member's use is similarly being driven forward at a like pace. That is encouraging, but it does not get us away from the fact that we are engaged in a holding operation.

Dr. Hampson: That is the heart of the matter. There has been much confusion between the main motion and the amendment. Most of us accept that in the short term there is pressure on our facilities. The main motion may be acceptable when it suggests that overseas students should be limited to one, but there is illogicality in that because they are not allowed in to the main Library on a temporary pass. The amendment infringes on the basic principles of Members of Parliament at to how many people they can have on their staff. My hon. Friend must address himself to that point.

Mr. Shepherd: I have been addressing myself to that matter. It forms part of the main motion, because we have been considering the load placed on the Branch Library and its staff as a consequence of the temporary research assistants who are here under the auspices of the various programmes. We cannot consider the one without the other.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is correct to draw attention to the circumstances that arise, but nevertheless we must consider the overall load that we are placing on the Library. As Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee I cannot ignore that fact.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will my hon. Friend explain a little more about the amendment? If only two passes are to be granted and an hon. Member employs more than three members of staff, he will have to dismiss one of them. Is that my hon. Friend's interpretation of the amendment?

Mr. Shepherd: I have not given any agreement to the amendment. I hope that I have not been interpreted as doing so. I am talking about that part of paragraph 24 which relates to the problem created, and I hope solved by the report, by the temporary research assistants from abroad who are offered to Members free and of whom Members make abundant use. We said that there should be a limit of 50 research assistants at any one time operating and using the Branch Library.

Mr. Neale: I am worried that some inaccuracies have been promoted, I am sure unwittingly, by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). He referred to the Hansard Society. Hansard Society students are here for a year, and they do not qualify under these provisions. The Hansard Society and one other organisation that promotes students here have outside library facilities available to those students. They do not use the facilities here. He bases his argument and that of the Committees on the fact that they use the facilities here when they do not.

Mr. Shepherd: I am sorry that I gave way to my hon. Friend. He was not on the point that I was trying to make.

Mr. Onslow: The leaflet that I read out makes it clear that the semester is a 14-week semester. There is no question of those people being here for a year.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because in mentioning the Hansard Society scholarship programme he has drawn attention to some of the circumstances which were drawn to our notice during the taking of evidence. The Library was informed on the last day before we adjourned for the Christmas recess that 21 students would be presented to the House of Commons for use by Members of Parliament. They asked whether they could have a Library briefing on 13 January. The Library briefing was arranged on 13 January for 21 students and 21 turned up, but at that stage only nine knew who their Members of Parliament were. Not one of them had a photo-identity card.

That underlines the significance of our strictures on organised groups bringing parties to the House to offer their services as temporary research assistants and thereby placing a load on the Library. I know that I am not addressing the amendment, but I am putting the Library's position. The numbers are affected——

Mr. Sheerman: This is a short debate.

Mr. Shepherd: I recognise that, but this is an important matter. The number of 50 was proposed and someone earlier asked why that number. That number was based on the loading that the Branch Library could take, with its present staffing and accommodation. We had 55 during May to July and the loading on the Library was such that it could be contained, but the Library staff are nervous —I think that that is the best way to put it—that they cannot cope with the additional loading when the numbers go, as they are at the moment, into the 70s. The Serjeant at Arms is worried that they will go to 100 by Easter. We must address ourselves to that point.

I hope that the House does not accept the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). It is a precipitate line. There has been inadequate time for discussion of a point so fundamental. We put down a marker in paragraph 22 of the report that at some stage we should have to impose a limit if we could not arrange accommodation. As I said, this is a holding operation.

In paragraph 27 of the report, we said that it would be desirable for a joint committee of the Sub-Committee on Accommodation and Administration and the Library Sub-Committee to review the position from time to time. That is the way that the House should progress—through the Services Committee and by steady monitoring of the position. It would be precipitate to support my hon. Friend's amendment. We should accept the motion without quibble.

11.24 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I start by declaring an interest and explaining how it came about. Before I came to the House in 1979 I was a university teacher who ran an American studies programme. When I found the appalling lack of help, facilities and back-up, I vigorously and strenuously tried to find a British university which would supply a late-undergraduate or post-graduate student to help me do a better job. I could not find any university with a programme which gave British students the unique advantage of working for a British Member of Parliament. The City of London Polytechnic came up with the idea that American students attending it would be happy to work as unpaid interns, and I jumped at that opportunity. Since 1980 I have had working for me an American student from the Beaver college programme, based at the City of London polytechnic. To make those students better equipped to work here, to conform to the rules and atmosphere, to blend in and not to cause problems, I have acted as an adviser to that programme and given lectures to them.

I must deal with the demand-led or supply-led question. I now arrange for 12 to 15 students to join Members of Parliament every year. It is never more than that number, but about that number. I do so not because some American programme asked me to find places for Americans to work for Members of Parliament. It was the other way. Members of Parliament from every side of the House asked me to supply an intern—a free worker who works efficiently—for them. Anyone who is familiar with the programme knows that it works exceedingly well. It exists only because hon. Members asked for it because they wanted that type of help. Let us get it straight from the start; it is demand-led by Members of Parliament.

I do not want to impose research help on the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) or on any Member of Parliament.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East) *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not give way for the moment.

Members of Parliament should work in the way that suits them best. Many hon. Members have no researchers and no secretarial help. At the other end of the spectrum, some hon. Members have more researchers than the average. It is a fact — the Leader of the House mentioned this number — that there are only 77 temporary research assistants for 650 hon. Members. That is not a scandalous number. Younger hon. Members, in particular, see the need for research help more than those who are a little longer in the tooth.

I shall vote against both the motion and the amendment, because, although I accepted with some demur the original debate, the Select Committee changed its recommendations substantially. For that reason and because this sort of rule will prohibit hon. Members from making their arrangements in their own way, we should stand up for hon. Members. I thought that the Services Committee was appointed not for the interests of the Library staff, the administrative staff or the Serjeant at Arms, but for hon. Members. I also thought that the Leader of the House stood for the interests of hon. Members and their right to do the job effectively and as they want to do it.

I object to the fact that one programme has been singled out for preferential treatment. I can see no reason for that. If programmes are monitored, hon. Members will choose

[Mr. Sheerman]

quality programmes—students who stay longer and are better prepared and equipped. That is true of all staff, but hon. Members should make that decision, and the House should not make rules and regulations about it.

We shall oppose both the motion and the amendment.

11.30 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) was far too inflammatory. I declare an interest in that I was a member of the Sevices Committee. That Committee went into this matter with enormous care and the report is a balanced one. It it based on evidence, and that is a point which has not been made sufficiently. That evidence was from people such as the Librarian and the Serjeant at Arms—people who have to administer this place and who have a difficult job in so doing.

The Committee made recommendations which are balanced and which bear in mind the interests of Members. I say with great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) that the recommendations are not mischievous. His amendment is mischievous and it cuts across the absolute right of a Member to decide whom he will employ.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It does not.

Mr. Cormack: Yes it does, and if my honourable, excitable and intemperate Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) would calm down it would allow me to make two or three points.

First of all, the American students who come here and who seem to be at the centre of the controversy are, for the most part, exceptionally well behaved and helpful. There have been few substantial complaints about them and although both Committees sought to investigate, they found it difficult to come up with hard evidence.

These young people—this is not an insubstantial point—help to foster relations between two close and great countries. Many of them are not doing terribly detailed and important research jobs. They are learning about the system and helping Members, very often with menial chores, which in America would be done by paid lackeys in Congress.

There is a simple solution that would meet the objections which hon. Members still have in their minds and to which our Committees have turned their attention from time to time, although they have not yet made a recommendation to the House. It is this. In Congress, one finds that most or all of the people who work there wear badges or passes on their lapels. It would be simple for us to introduce a colour code system whereby the young assistants were allowed only into essential places, such as the post office, without going anywhere near the Library or the dining rooms or the other refreshment facilities.

It would be simple—I hope that the Committee will look at it again—to have visible colour-coded passes that would ensure that the system could be monitored by the authorities of the House, the police and the custodians, and would not be abused. I suggest that the amendment before the House, moved, I think, slightly mischievously by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking, will cut across a fundamental right of Members and will prevent us from giving the matter detailed consideration.

11.34 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I hope the House will excuse my Celtic croak, but at least it will have the effect of keeping me uncharacteristically brief. I feel for the Leader of the House, who must have thought that his major problems were over when he sat down on Monday evening. I had not anticipated the fractiousness of this debate.

We have two completely separate debates running together. We should be debating as one issue what we want to do about students, and not just American or other overseas students, but all students, British as well. We should be deciding whether we are willing to let them have access as an educational facility, and setting the scale at which we are willing to make that facility available to them. We could have had a perfectly sensible, structured and constructive discussion on that.

The trouble is that that discussion has been superimposed on the problem that underlies the emotion in the debate—the sheer paucity of facilities in the House of Commons. So there is an unseemly scramble for scarce resources which has not done credit to the House. Hon. Members are scrabbling for the facility of untrained young academic helpers of limited capability—I do not say that disparagingly—to make up for the facilities that they should have as of right as Members. Therefore, the question of the rights of Members has also been superimposed on the debate.

On the issue of students, we must recognise reality. The most rapid expansion in numbers applies to overseas students. I accept entirely the point that has been made, that many of the researchers are only part-time. That tends to be obscured by the fact that each one has a full pass although they are here on only one or two days a week. They still put pressure on research resources, photocopiers and so on. Whether we like it or not, the pressure is there and is increasing, but the resource of accommodation is not.

Are we to try to ration the numbers we load into the machine so as to ensure that the machine is able to accommodate them? We may all deplore the fact that the machine is not as efficient or as well resourced as it should be, but we have to deal with the position as it is. Unless we take action we shall soon find that the employment of extra researchers will become counter-productive because the machine will be so overloaded that they will not be able to do the limited work for which we are taking them on.

It is my view—a personal view, and it is right that there should be a free vote—that the proposition put forward in the motion should be accepted. In that context perhaps we may consider what else we can do to make sure that British students, who do not have the financial back-up of American students, have an equal opportunity of spending time in the House of Commons.

Mr. McNamara: What is the definition of overseas?

Mr. Williams: I know what it means; my hon. Friend should know what it means; the report knows what it means. I advise my hon. Friend to go back to the report.

I listened to the Chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), moving the amendment. I have come across no more convincing case to demonstrate the need for researchers. I do not wish to be unkind to him but I suspect that much of the report had not been read by him nor by anyone on his behalf.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I agree that British students should have more than equal access, but it is just the restriction that the Services Committee is trying to impose through the motion that will militate against British students. Often they have only a month in the summer or at Easter to spend with us. If we are restricted to one or two passes, we may not be able to give experience to British students.

Mr. Williams: If we were to do that, my suggestion would be to think in terms of a sabbatical year from a course, or a sandwich type of course in which a year here was a module. It could be spent here as part of a student's course. That could be accommodated within the numbers envisaged.

Mr. McNamara: How many universities do that?

Mr. Williams: It is not my fault if the British universities do not do this. As I pointed out in the last debate——

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Williams: If I may get on with the debate in a rational way, the reality is that the hon. Gentleman has tabled an amendment that all Members realise is a breach of the principle that most of us would accept, that as Members we have a right to decide how many supporters we need and who they will be. It is no good his saying that if we want extra numbers we should have them outside. How many people can afford to have offices outside the House? We cannot afford the researchers, let alone the offices to put them in. I have never heard such a nonsensical suggestion.

The reality is that tonight the House has made a bit of a fool of itself. We have not faced up to the real issue: as a Parliament, we lack the accommodation that we need or that should be available, and we lack the resources that we should have to employ full-time members of staff to support us, whose numbers we should be free to decide. Instead, we have had an unseemly debate about how we ration out the 50 passes for each quarter for a limited number of overseas students. The correct thing this evening would be to accept the proposition of the Leader of the House and reject the amendment.

11.41 pm

Mr. Biffen: I think that we have had a rather jolly debate. These has been quite a lot of vigour, quite a lot of deep, sound prejudice and quite a lot of well-researched nonsense. I have no sense of shame about having this debate some months after we last discussed the matter, because it is a subject that does not go away or get stale; and in some senses the debate is the better for the period of reflection since we discussed it last summer.

The right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) very kindly rubbished my gentle and moderate remarks. If I did not know that he had lifted the burden of reselection from his shoulders, I might have doubted his motive.

There will, of course, always be argument about accommodation, but let it be quite clear: the Bridge street site is now part of the ambitions for the future accommodation of the House of Commons, and it will in due course have a material impact on the kind of problems that we have been discussing. That is not seriously at issue.

We now have secretarial and research allowances. The House has always been anxious to consolidate the secretarial and research allowance as one and the same——

Mr. McNamara: No.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has tried to shout down everyone who has spoken in the debate so far; he is not going to shout me down.

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Biffen: That in itself indicates all the problems of definition that come into these matters. At the heart of it all is the question of what constitutes the kind of full-time commitment to research that necessitates the use of the facilities of the House, and the gradations which fall short of that and which are certainly encompassed within the arrangements considered by the right hon. Member for Deptford, whose recommendations now stand in my name this evening.

The arguments put for them by hon. Friends the Members for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) are such that I hope that they will convey their good sense and moderation, and that they will be enforced by the House this evening.

That takes us to the much more general issue of freedom of access to the House for staff of Members of Parliament. The great exponent of laissez faire in these matters is the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). He is an entrepreneur in these matters as well, so he is bound to be arguing from such a point.

The amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) has been seriously considered. I realise that it sets out the most formidable difficulties, but let us be quite clear: it does not restrict the number of staff a Member might employ. What it does is to restrict the full use of the facilities. I quite understand when I am told that an hon. Member must have research for his constituency surgery. I do not disparage that. But that is not the same as requiring research here in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) wish to move his amendment formally?

Mr. Onslow: No, Mr. Speaker. So that the House may be spared an extra Division, I shall not press it.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to order [24 January].*

The House divided: Ayes, 75, Noes 54.

Division No. 57] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Ancram, Michael	Clay, Robert
Arnold, Tom	Clegg, Sir Walter
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Cohen, Harry
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Cope, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Corbett, Robin
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Bryan, Sir Paul	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Buck, Sir Antony	Dixon, Donald
Butcher, John	Durant, Tony
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Forth, Eric
Chope, Christopher	Fox, Marcus

Gale, Roger
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Alan
Grant, Sir Anthony
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Home Robertson, John
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Leadbitter, Ted
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McWilliam, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Michie, William
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Moate, Roger
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rogers, Allan
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steen, Anthony
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Colin Shepherd and
Mr. Patrick Cormack.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Burt, Alistair
Caborn, Richard
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coombs, Simon
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Neale, Gerrard
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Robertson, George
Sheerman, Barry
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Geoff Lawler.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the recommendations contained in paragraph 24 of the Second Report of the Select Commitee on House of Commons (Services) in Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 195) be approved; and that no Member shall at any one time be entitled to more than one pass for a temporary research assistant from overseas.

Mrs. Pamela Megginson

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

11.56 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In 1982 Mrs. Pamela Megginson, a widow over 60 years of age, killed her lover, Mr. Hubbers aged about 79 in southern France by striking him with a champagne bottle. She had been provoked because Mr. Hubbers taunted her with the youth and beauty of the new mistress he had acquired. One might think that he got no more than he deserved, but Mrs. Megginson was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. She is serving that sentence in Durham prison where she is with some of the worst, violent offenders in the land. She is serving in a wing which has already been condemned for male prisoners. With that lady, who has had no previous convictions, are some of the scum of our society.

Mrs. Megginson's only close relative in this country is my constituent — her daughter — Mrs. Bennett. Mrs. Bennett is a mother of three small children and obviously she cannot visit her mother regularly as far away as Durham. I make a plea that Mrs. Megginson be moved to a prison nearer to her daughter, and one more suitable to a person of her record.

My main point is that to keep someone such as Mrs. Megginson who, as I have said, has no previous convictions or record of violence, in prison while perpetrators of the most bestial crimes are released is totally unacceptable and an affront to the values generally held by the public.

It has been my purpose for a long time to have Mrs. Megginson's case reviewed, and I at once acknowledge the most sympathetic care that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has taken. I originally took up the question of an appeal with the Lord Chancellor in January 1984. Then I took up the question of a review with the Home Secretary in August 1984. In September 1984 my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary kindly told me that the case would be referred to the Lord Chief Justice in early 1985.

In November 1984 I asked for this exceptional case to reviewed at the earliest possible moment. In reply, I was pleased to be told in December 1984 that the Home Office had identified Mrs. Megginson's case

"as one which should be brought into the review procedures quickly and it is already receiving wholly exceptional treatment".

Perhaps that happened behind the scenes, but as far as my constituent and I were concerned, nothing happened until 27 September 1985, when she was seen by a member of the local review committee. She understood from that person that she would hear something by Christmas, but she has not heard, and I have not heard. I shall be interested to hear the Minister tell us exactly what is happening. Generally, the injustice of the case contrasts most strongly with recent sentences, and, indeed, releases, for horrible crimes, especially against children.

I have practised law for many years. I appreciate only too well that one cannot judge cases from newspaper reports, and I recognise the old saying that "comparisons are odious". Nevertheless, the disparity in some sentencing in our courts and in some of the charges preferred in criminal cases these days is so stark as to leave the public totally perplexed as to what we are all about.

There is a feeling that some of our courts and some aspects of our criminal law system are divorced from reality. I say in haste that I do not in any way make a criticism of my hon. Friend the Minister or the Home Office. Their task, and the task of Parliament, is merely to provide the necessary sentences and machinery. It is for the courts and the authorities to carry them out.

The case of Mrs. Megginson is just such a case that deserves comparison with others. Her case contrasts remarkably with that of a recent case concerning Mrs. Doris Croft. She too was a middle-aged widow, also from Cambridgeshire, who also discovered that her elderly lover was about to desert her for a younger woman. She killed him, not with a champagne bottle, but with a rolling pin, equally in a fit of jealous rage. She was put on probation for three years, compared with the life sentence imposed on my constituent Mrs. Megginson. In that case, the charge was manslaughter instead of murder. That is why this case is inexplicable. I am sure that members of the public will find inexplicable the different way in which the case was appoached by the prosecution, but there it is.

Equally, one can look at more horrible cases. I cite a recent case which attracted a great deal of publicity in the borough of Brent, when a brute by the name of Beckford slaughtered a little girl in the most disgusting circumstances, and was sentenced to seven years. It is difficult for people to understand the vast disparity between the way in which people are treated in our society. I do not believe that that is good for the law, or the maintenance of a stable society.

I compare the case of Mr. Fenton, who shot his former wife and her second husband with a shotgun. He was also put on probation for three years. In that case, the judge used these words in conclusion:

"neither justice nor public reaction would be advanced 'one jot' by leaving him in prison."

Precisely the same considerations apply to Mrs. Pamela Megginson.

I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend, whom I know has applied himself diligently to the case, and for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. They are both men of reason and compassion. In all sincerity and humanity I ask them to do all that they can to see that this case is properly reviewed at the earliest possible moment in the hope that it will be possible to allow this sad, unhappy lady, in the latter stages of her life, who has suffered so much already, and is no conceivable danger to the public, and really has already paid for her crime, to return to the bosom of her family, and let her live the rest of her life in peace and tranquillity.

12.6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I do understand the very great sense of commitment that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) feels about this sad case, and I am most grateful to him for the acknowledgment he has made of the exceptional treatment this case has received in the Home Office, details of which I shall be happy to put on the record this evening.

As he has indicated, my hon. Friend has taken a personal interest in the case of this unfortunate woman, and he has written to me about it on several occasions. I have also received numerous other representations on Mrs. Megginson's behalf. As my hon. Friend has said, it is an unusual case. In September 1983, some two years and four months ago, at the Central Criminal Court, Mrs. Megginson, who was then aged 62 was convicted of the murder of her 79-year-old co-habitee. Although the offence had taken place in the south of France, it was justiciable here by virtue of the Offences against the Person Act 1861. The relationship between the couple was of long standing but, in 1980 or 1981, Mrs. Megginson's co-habitee started an association with a younger French woman. Matters came to a head in October 1982 and Mrs. Megginson killed him by striking him at least three times with a champagne bottle. She immediately returned to this country and confessed to the killing.

At her trial, Mrs. Megginson invited the jury to convict her of the lesser offence of manslaughter because, first, when she struck her co-habitee she did not intend his death or to cause him grievous bodily harm and, secondly, when she struck him it was because she had been provoked to such a degree as to cause her to lose self-control. That issue went before the jury, as happens in all criminal cases, but after hearing all the evidence presented by the prosecution and the defence, the jury decided—albeit by a majority of 10:2 — that the charge of murder was proved. The law provides that only one penalty may be imposed following a conviction of murder, and that is life imprisonment, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has no authority to vary such a sentence. Mrs. Megginson exercised her right of appeal without success and, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we must proceed on the basis that she was rightly convicted of murder and properly sentenced to life imprisonment.

There is no other basis on which Ministers could exercise the powers given to them by Parliament, which do not include any powers to impose any different views other than those which the courts have taken on these points of conviction and sentence.

The release of a life sentence prisoner is at the discretion of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but, under the provisions of section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, he may authorise release only if he is recommended to do so by the parole board, and after he has consulted the Lord Chief Justice and, if available, the trial judge.

There are two essential ingredients to the decision whether a life sentence prisoner should be released: has he or she been detained for long enough to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence for the offence, and, is the risk to the public acceptable? My right hon. Friend looks to the judiciary for advice on the time to be served to safisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence and to the parole board for advice on risk. He is, however, not bound to accept a recommendation for release made by the parole board; nor is he bound by the views of the judiciary, although, of course, he attaches much weight to them.

There are no fixed times at which the release of a life sentence prisoner must be formally considered by the parole board machinery. It is for my right hon. Friend to decide when this should be done. Under the revised procedure for the review of life sentence cases announced on 30 November 1983 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorkshire (Mr. Brittan) when Home Secretary, the date of the first formal review is decided by the Home Secretary after obtaining an initial view from the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge on the length of detention necessary to meet the requirements of

[Mr. David Mellor]

retribution and deterrence for the offence. The first formal review will normally take place three years before the expiry of that period to give sufficient time for preparation and, where necessary, further testing before release is finally authorised, if the parole board should recommend it.

The decision when to fix the first formal review of a life sentence prisoner's case is not normally taken until after the prisoner has been detained for at least three or four years. However, it was recognised that there were unusual and exceptional features about Mrs. Megginson's case and, in those circumstances, it was decided to ask the judiciary for its views on the retributive and deterrent element of the sentence at a much earlier stage than usual. This was done in May 1985—a little over 18 months after Mrs. Megginson's conviction. In the light of the judiciary's views, I decided that the case should be referred to the local review committee at the prison within weeks after receiving the judicial view. I decided also that the review should take place commencing in September 1985 as the first stage of the formal parole board review mechanism.

It might assist if I make clear the stages that were then followed. When the local review committee considers the case of a life sentence prisoner, it has before it all the information available about the offence for which the life sentence was imposed and the circumstances in which it was committed; the prisoner's history, including any previous offences; the assessments and opinions of doctors who may have examined the prisoner before the trial; and any remarks made by the trial judge. It also has copies of all the reports made previously by the staff at the prisons in which the prisoner has been detained and reports prepared specially for the review, together with any representations which the prisoner may have made to the committee, as he or she is entitled to do. In the light of all this information, the committee makes a recommendation on the prisoner's suitability for release.

All the papers are then sent to the Home Office, with the local review committee's recommendation. The case is very carefully considered in the Home Office, in consultation with the Department's professional advisers. Sometimes, reports from independent doctors, including psychiatrists, are obtained. An assessment is made of all the considerations, including the possible risk to the public if the prisoner were to be released and the case is then referred to the parole board. All this takes time, and prisoners are themselves warned not to expect a decision in their case until at least six months after the local review.

The parole board, which does not necessarily endorse the recommendation made by the local review committee, may recommend either that the prisoner should be given a provisional date for release or that the case should be reviewed again after a specified period. If it does the latter, my right hon. Friend has no power to authorise the prisoner's release and the further review follows the same procedure, starting once again with the local review committee in the prison in which the prisoner is located.

Mrs. Megginson's case was duly reviewed by the local review committee at Durham prison in September last year. The internal procedures to which I have referred have been completed and the papers have been referred to the parole board. The case will be considered by the parole board next month—only five months after the local review committee procedure began.

That is another sign of recognition in the Home Office that the circumstances of the case merit processing faster than we are generally able to achieve, given the pressure of work, in all of the many cases that come before us. I know that my hon. Friend will understand if I cannot speculate on the outcome of the parole board's consideration of Mrs. Megginson's case or when she might be released. I can assure my hon. Friend that the decision will be conveyed to her as soon as possible after the parole board gives its decision to us.

Sir Anthony Grant: I think that my hon. Friend said that the case will be considered by the parole board next month—in February.

Mr. Mellor: The lifer panel of the parole board will consider the matter next month. The decision will be conveyed to me. I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall personally ensure, as I have tried to do throughout the case, that matters are then handled expeditiously.

What happens then will depend very much on what the parole board says. Obviously, I must not say anything that would influence its decision one way or another. Parliament established the parole board procedure to ensure that the public had the additional safeguard, and fetter on the Home Secretary's discretion of independent evaluation by a lifer panel, which consists of a High Court judge, a psychiatrist and two other members.

I understand my hon. Friend's proper concern to ensure that Mrs. Megginson should not be in prison for any longer than is necessary. My right hon. Friend has to act within the statutory framework and he has to give due weight to the views of the judiciary when deciding when it would be right to commence the formal review. We have done that. He then has to await the parole board's deliberations, which will happen next month.

I assure my hon. Friend that we have treated this case exceptionally and given it considerable priority by comparison with the normal run of murder cases, and I hope to be able to give him further advice before too many weeks have elapsed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 January 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LLOYDS BANK (MERGER) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr. Speaker: I have considered the content of the Bill with the greatest care. I am of the opinion that it is so drafted as to conflict with all recent industrial relations legislation. The considerations involved are so much a matter of public policy that the Bill cannot properly proceed as a private Bill and accordingly, I cannot propose to the House the Question for its Second Reading.

Order for Second Reading read and discharged.

Bill withdrawn.

SWANSEA CITY COUNCIL (TAWE BARRAGE) BILL

[Lords] (By Order)

Read a Second time, and committed.

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 6 February.

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

The House, according to order, resumed the adjourned debate on the Question proposed on 21 January.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the provisions of paragraph (4) of Standing Order 243 (Joint committees on petitions) be applied to the Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the House of Lords as the Joint Committee on the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (4) of Standing Order 243 (Joint committees on petitions) be applied to the Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the House of Lords as the Joint Committee on the Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill. — *[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read.

To be considered upon Thursday 6 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

1. **Mr. Gow** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from the majority community about the acceptability of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I have received a number of representations from members of the majority community in letters and in a wide range of meetings. I remain ready to meet representatives of the majority political parties to discuss their concerns about the agreement and their views on matters arising from it.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if the Government had believed that the agreement would be deeply opposed by the minority community in Northern Ireland they would never have entered into the agreement, and will he explain why he thinks it right to proceed with the agreement when the Government know that it is opposed deeply by the majority?

Mr. King: I am certainly aware, and I have never concealed the fact, that there is concern among the majority community, some of whom are instinctively opposed to any closer co-operation with the Government of the Republic and others who are deeply concerned about possible implications or misunderstanding about the agreement. We are determined to ensure that there is a better understanding of the benefits of the agreement. The House will be aware of one recent illustration of the benefit that can come from closer co-operation—cross-border co-operation in security—which I know the House will welcome. The House will also notice the significant changes in the nationalist vote in the recent by-elections.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: If, despite the attempts of the Government, and in the light of the election results, which were geared to the November agreement, the majority of the people in Ulster—not the United Kingdom—were determined to go for independence, what would the Government do?

Mr. King: I hope that no such counsels will prevail. I think the House will recognise what an unfortunate course that would be. I have made clear our belief in the merits of the agreement, but we remain ready, willing and anxious to talk to representatives of the majority community as well. I have to say that one cannot complain, as some leaders of the majority community do, about lack of consultation when they refuse to enter into any dialogue whatsoever.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree, now that the dust is beginning to settle after the by-elections, that this is the time for quiet reflection and discussions, taking into account some of the political realities? Is he not encouraged by the opinion polls, which seem to show that the majority of people in the Province do not accept that the way forward is non-co-operation, either actively or passively?

Mr. King: Non-co-operation will only be damaging to the economy and future of the Province. I think that, increasingly, sensible opinion among the majority community recognises the necessity for talks and discussions to see whether a way out of their present concerns can be found. In the present situation, the refusal even to talk would be inexcusable.

Mr. Alton: Given the reluctance of the majority community to speak directly to the Secretary of State, may I ask whether the Prime Minister has considered inviting the four constitutional parties to Downing street for discussions?

Mr. King: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has always made clear her willingness to meet leaders of any party in the House. If there are points that they wish to put to her, she will always be willing to listen to them.

Mr. Baldry: When considering the wishes of the majority, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Members of the House, who supported the Anglo-Irish agreement in the belief that, if it were approached positively by all people in Northern Ireland, it could do much more than anything else to produce stability in the Province and combat the cancer of terrorism?

Mr. King: The agreement creates a new situation, in which the responsibilities fall on the leaders of both the majority and minority communities. I say in the presence of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that he knows that the Government look to the SDLP to make a positive response in the new situation.

Mr. Flannery: Do not the antics of the Unionists in coming in and walking out of the Chamber, and acting in the way that they are doing, reveal that they have had their way for so long that, when it comes to arguing the case, they refuse to discuss it with us? Is that not a sign that they feel that they are in a defensive and weak position and that events are now overtaking them?

Mr. King: I do not underestimate the strength of genuine feeling in the Province and the genuine concern of a considerable number of Unionists about the Anglo-Irish agreement. That is all the more reason why everybody in the House who is a democrat recognises the importance of discussion and talking now about the situation. Nothing will be achieved by abstention. Parliament is here. That is a role for Parliament. I hope that within this Parliament sensible discussions can take place.

Cross-border Terrorism

2. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in his discussions with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland stemming from the Anglo-Irish agreement in curbing cross-border terrorist activities; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The conference has discussed ways in which the co-ordination of security force activities on both sides of the border might be improved. As a first step, the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner are discussing a programme of work aimed at ensuring that security co-operation is as close and effective as possible. They will report progress to the next meeting of the conference. That work can only benefit the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Taylor: Are not the recent discoveries of arms that would have been used for killing in Northern Ireland a most encouraging development? On the basis of the private security information available to him, is my hon. Friend satisfied that there is now comprehensive co-operation with the representatives of the Irish Republic in the effort to defeat terrorism?

Mr. Scott: The House will not expect me to go into details about the successful operation in Roscommon and Sligo, but I echo the congratulations sent by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Minister for Justice and the Garda Commissioner on the part that they played in that. We have always had good, close co-operation at the border, but the work that is now in hand should, over months and years, improve the strategic approach of both the police forces in the island of Ireland in the battle against terrorism.

Sir Adam Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the keys to popular acceptance of the Anglo-Irish agreement is successful co-operation between the security forces North and South? Therefore, will he ensure that, as far a possible, the maximum publicity is given to co-operation and to its achievements, within our security interests?

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend will be aware that a balance must be drawn in these matters. Many security matters, including cross-border security co-operation, are not suitable for public discussion. When there are such successes — and I believe that they will become increasingly apparent—credit should be given to those who bring them about.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: During the course of discussions, will the Minister raise the question of the purchase of arms by the IRA and the sources of its funding? Will he now answer the question that I have raised on two previous occasions in the House and about which I have tabled written questions: did Associated British Foods give, directly or indirectly, £1·5 million to the IRA?

Mr. Scott: I have no evidence that it did.

Mr. Silvester: Does my hon. Friend agree that top level security force discussions are welcome, but that if there is to be a real effect on security, co-operation must go down through all ranks of those forces? What progress is being made on that?

Mr. Scott: Relationships and co-operation at border level have always been good. The Garda Siochana has deployed extra resources on the border. Its task force has been redeployed on the border, and that can only help co-operation and the battle against terrorism.

Mr. Archer: Since, after the Government's statement, no one knows any more what is a leak and what is a slip of the tongue, can the Minister tell the House anything further about the legal subgroup announced after the 10 January meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference? When will it meet? What matters will it discuss first? Will it invite submissions from outside bodies? Will its report be made public?

Mr. Scott: I hope that there will be an early meeting of that subgroup. It will be for the subgroup to determine its programme of work. By its very nature, that work will be complicated and is bound to take some time to come to fruition.

Security

3. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 12 December three members of the security forces have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province.

The efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield results. During 1985 a total of 522 people were charged with serious offences, including 24 with murder; and 234 weapons, 13,700 rounds of ammunition, and 7,300 lb of explosives were recovered.

The present level of security force activity is high and I am in regular contact with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the General Officer Commanding to ensure that they have the necessary resources.

Mr. Proctor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that sombre statement. In view of the concessions to the SDLP in the Anglo-Irish agreement, will he use his good offices to try to ensure that the SDLP fully and unequivocally supports the RUC, without political strings?

Mr. King: It is vital that all members of the community support the RUC and the security forces at this testing time. I look to the SDLP to support the RUC without equivocation and to encourage all its supporters to do likewise.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State draw the attention of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) to my words in the debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement on the subject that he mentioned, and my words in reply to an intervention on an earlier occasion by the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), which were unequivocal?

Does the Secretary of State agree that in Great Britain, whenever a police officer or a member of the security forces is engaged in a shooting incident in doubtful circumstances, it is normal practice for that officer to be suspended while an investigation takes place? Why has that practice not obtained in the serious shooting incident at Kildress a few nights ago, which involved members of the Ulster Defence Regiment?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that in all shooting incidents involving the security forces, such as the one he mentioned, the facts are investigated by the RUC, whose findings must be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland. I understand that, in accordance with normal practice, the persons involved are not at present on operational duties.

4. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans for the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Scott: The Assembly is not at present carrying out its scrutinising and consultative functions. If this were to continue, it would clearly put a question mark over its future. In the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, I hope that normal activities will now be resumed.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that, in the light of the interesting by-election results, those who have done well should respond positively and make a go of the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Mr. Scott: I have no doubt that the most desirable way forward for Northern Ireland is to return to devolved government on a basis acceptable to both sections of the community there so that the political leaders of Northern Ireland have a real say in the Province's political development.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Minister noticed that during Question Time today many references have been made to the fact that the Government want Ministers and their officials to do a lot of talking to all the various groups in Northern Ireland? Is he aware that the Government could be accused of double standards, in that they want talking in Northern Ireland—they encourage their officials to talk a donkey's hind leg off on that subject—but, in the Select Committee, they tell the Department of Trade and Industry not to talk and they gag Miss Colette Bowe? The Government will talk about Northern Ireland, but they are not prepared to talk about the truth.

Mr. Bellingham: What does the Assembly cost? Does my hon. Friend agree that, at this time of uncertainty, it is far better to have a forum in which views can be expressed than to have no forum at all?

Mr. Scott: The Assembly's running costs for the last financial year were just under £3 million. The Assembly was established with two functions. The first was to make progress towards devolved government, and the second, which it was carrying out until early December, was to scrutinise the work of Northern Ireland Departments. I hope that we shall get back to both those functions as quickly as possible.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister believe that the SDLP leadership has any interest in or intention of returning to the Assembly?

Mr. Scott: My understanding of statements made by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is that he is willing to sit down with representatives of the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland to discuss the basis for devolved government. It is up to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to clarify that with the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), if he wishes to do so.

Tourism

5. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many United Kingdom and overseas tourists visited Northern Ireland in the latest 12-month period for which figures are available.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): The most recent figures are for 1984, when Northern Ireland was visited by 405,000 tourists from Britain and by 503,000 from elsewhere, including the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Could any further steps be taken to encourage tourists to go to Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: The increase in the number of tourists visiting Northern Ireland from 588,000 in 1981 to 908,000 in 1984 shows the attractions of the Province. If right hon. and hon. Members and others in Britain realise how nice the Province is, and how hospitable ordinary people in both communities are, there would be even more visitors.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister agree that one of the reasons why people do not visit Northern Ireland—or, indeed, the Republic—is the high cost of travel? Does he have in mind the possibility of holding discussions with carriers and the Government of the Republic, through the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, on ways to reduce the costs of travel?

Dr. Boyson: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board considers that matter regularly. I am quite prepared to have further discussions with the board. I shall send the hon. Gentleman a letter saying whether anything can be done to help to increase tourism in Northern Ireland in that way.

Mr. Hume: Does the Minister agree that there is a serious shortage of hotel bedrooms in many parts of Northern Ireland? When will the Government reintroduce grants to help build hotels in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: When the grant system was available, so many requests were made that there was a waiting list. That waiting list has now more or less come to an end. I hope that within days we can announce a new scheme, bearing in mind that bookings of hotel rooms have increased by one third in three years. The recent long-range meteorological report for Northern Ireland is that we can expect good weather this summer. I hope that hon. Members will book their holidays there.

Inward Investment

6. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total of inward investment in Northern Ireland in the latest period of 12 months for which statistics are available; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: In 1985 there was a total inward investment of £120 million and the Industrial Development Board promoted over 2,000 new jobs in companies with parentage outside Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: While recognising the skill, energy, dedication, and productivity of the vast majority of the people of Ulster, and regretting the absence of the Ulster Unionists from the Chamber, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that the best way to increase inward investment is for the politicians of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to get together to plan a stable and productive atmosphere in which further investment might be attracted?

Dr. Boyson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Northern Ireland's image of extremism in speeches and of terrorism means that we do not get investment and that the number of tourists is reduced. We hope that the Anglo-Irish agreement will help to bring together the two communities and the two Governments to aid investment and tourism.

Mr. Foulkes: I congratulate the Minister on vigorously rejecting the representations from the Department of Trade and Industry to drop the prosecution against Lotus Cars for its involvement in the De Lorean affair. Will he tell the House what the nature of the representations was and whether the Prime Minister was involved?

Dr. Boyson: The action that is being taken against Lotus Cars was the decision of the official receivers, who believe that that is the right decision.

Mr. Couchman: Has my hon. Friend had any evidence, since the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement, of any fresh initiatives from the other side of the Atlantic, which were much vaunted when the agreement was signed?

Dr. Boyson: There are two factors involved. First, if we get the climate right, ordinary investment and risk capital should come to Northern Ireland and to the Republic.

The second factor is specifically American — the statement by the President of the United States and the resolutions that went through the House of Representatives and the Senate in favour of financial help for Northern Ireland and the Republic. Officials from the British and Irish Governments have recently been discussing those matters in Washington DC with officials of the American Government.

Mr. Archer: Does the Minister agree that there is little point in encouraging inward investment and at the same time permitting existing enterprises to collapse? Is he aware of the prediction of the Ulster Farmers Union that farmers' incomes are likely to be 70 per cent. down on last year and that his Department's decision not to continue the weather aid support may lead to bankruptcy? Will he make one more attempt to persuade the Treasury that the cost would be more than it is trying to save?

Dr. Boyson: I accept that it is no good bringing in new investment if the existing investment collapses. Last year was a difficult year for agriculture, but considerable help has been given to farmers by the British Government, especially with livestock. Negotiations on the continuance of those measures, or any other means to keep agriculture viable in Northern Ireland, will continue.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

7. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the working of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

13. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the work of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: The Intergovernmental Conference has met three times since the Anglo-Irish agreement came into force. The joint statements issued after each meeting give an account of our work in the conference. I have placed them in the Library. I am particularly encouraged by the commitment of both sides to making cross-border co-operation on security as close and effective as possible.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has the European convention on the suppression of terrorism come up? Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that yesterday in Strasbourg the Irish Foreign Minister could give me no hope that at an early date the intention of Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald that the Irish Republic should adhere to that agreement would be fulfilled?

Mr. King: I noted the exchange between my hon. Friend and the Irish Foreign Minister. To be fair to him, he did not so much offer no hope as give no exact date for when that could be done. I share my hon. Friend's determination that the intention, confirmed in the communiqué by the Taoiseach, should be implemented as early as possible, and I am confident that the good faith of the Irish Government will mean that their intention to accede to the convention will be implemented as early as possible.

Mr. Stanbrook: As the main purpose of the conference is to enable the Government of the Irish Republic to represent the interests of the minority in Northern Ireland, and as the United Kingdom Government can hardly represent any sectional interests, what provision is being made for the representation of the majority in Northern Ireland at the conference?

Mr. King: The purpose of the agreement is much more than my hon. Friend suggests. It is, first, to establish clearly, and to have it confirmed by the Irish Government, that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. That is a most important safeguard and should never be ignored.

The second purpose is to further cross-border co-operation on security, and the whole House will understand the importance of that. My hon. Friend rightly said that another purpose of the agreement is to represent the views of the minority. If the majority of people believe that there are no adequate channels for their views to be conveyed, I am anxious to know how they think those channels could be improved. I am anxious to talk to them about that. Only by discussion will we learn what their anxieties are and the ways in which they might be met.

Mr. Home Robertson: How can the Secretary of State hope to have a dialogue with representatives of the majority when they are hanging about in the Members' Lobby instead of entering the Chamber? Does he agree that the most significant verdict on the Anglo-Irish agreement came last week from the electors of Newry and Armagh?

Mr. King: It came not only from the voters of Newry and Armagh, but from all the seats that were contested, in which there was a remarkably uniform swing from those who support terrorism to those who support constitutional nationalism. The whole House will welcome that. I cannot answer the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I very much hope that wiser counsels will prevail and that we can have a sensible discussion about how their worries can best be met.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not true that last week's by-elections did not change the political position in Northern Ireland, except in the instance mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson)? Would it not be wise for the Unionists, instead of staging walkouts, to recognise that the Anglo-Irish agreement will be maintained? Is it not the responsibility of the Government to demonstrate that that will be the position?

Mr. King: I wish to accord to the Unionist Members of Parliament the respect due to Members of this House, but if they are not here it is difficult to do so. I cannot understand the policy of standing for election to the Parliament of the United Kingdom and then declining to play a part in it.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the effective working of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, in conjunction with the Anglo-Irish agreement, has led, in the elections, to a significant decline in the Sinn Fein vote and that, therefore, all the people of Northern Ireland have an opportunity for peace and security in the future?

Mr. King: There is a new and encouraging trend. One anxiety expressed by many unionist critics of the agreement was that it would make no difference to cross-border co-operation on security and that it would not make the slightest difference to the attitude of nationalists and how they voted. In both respects those fears have proved to be not fully justified. I hope that those members of the majority who are prepared to consider the issues fairly will take those points on board.

Ms. Clare Short: Has there been any discussion about the involvement of the Official Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party with paramilitaries during their long march through Northern Ireland? Does the right hon. Gentleman have any comment to make on whether we should continue to consider them as constitutional parties?

Mr. King: I have no comment to make on those matters, questions on which should be directed elsewhere. However, the House will wish us to pursue matters in Northern Ireland through constitutional means. The only parties, from whichever community they come, to which we shall listen with any respect are those that pursue constitutional approaches and eschew completely any paramilitary associations.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Apart from placing communiqués in the Library after meetings of the conference, how else will my right hon. Friend inform and consult the House democratically, without regard to party, about the effectiveness of the Anglo-Irish treaty?

Mr. King: I shall be anxious to respond to the House in any way in which the House thinks is helpful. Considering the number of parliamentary answers that I have already given to my right hon. and hon. Friends, some of them are already effectively using one of the most obvious and immediate channels of parliamentary accountability.

Mr. Alton: Does the Secretary of State agree that the work of the intergovernmental conference would be assisted by the establishment of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier? Is he aware that more than 40 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion asking that it be established? What are the Government doing to expedite that?

Mr. King: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear at the time, that is a matter for the Parliaments concerned. Therefore, it is not directly a matter for me, although the agreement makes it clear that if such a body were established the Government would support it.

Mr. Gow: Has my right hon. Friend read *The Irish Times* of 16 December, in which the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is reported as having said that the Government of the Irish Republic would not accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism unless there were changes in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland? Does my right hon. Friend understand that it is of the utmost importance that the Irish Government should accede, in accordance with the terms of the communiqué, at the earliest possible moment?

Mr. King: I did not see that comment from the hon. Gentleman, but I endorse my hon. Friend's comments absolutely. It is of the greatest importance and of considerable urgency that the Irish Government should accede to the convention. I certainly look to them to honour their undertaking given in the communiqué.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do not the day-to-day workings of the Intergovernmental Conference provide for the exchange of information on criminal activity? In the light of the reply that I received from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the contribution of £1·5 million, either directly or indirectly, from Associated British Foods to the IRA, will the Secretary of State raise this question within the confines of the conference with a view to making a report to Parliament in future?

Mr. King: It would be improper use of the conference to pass such evidence backwards and forwards. There are proper channels for that, and normal policing methods, and that is how that should be done.

Police Stations (Damage)

8. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current repair programme for police stations damaged by terrorist activity.

Mr. Scott: The Provisional IRA's bombing campaign on police stations, and the intimidation of building contractors involved in security works, will not diminish the RUC's commitment to discharging its essential talks. The Government and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland are firmly resolved that police stations which have been damaged or need to be replaced will be repaired or rebuilt as a matter of top priority.

Mr. Bruinvels: While I welcome my hon. Friend's statement that police stations are being properly repaired as speedily as possible after outrageous attacks on them by terrorists, may I ask him to join me in applauding the protection given to the workers repairing the police stations by the Royal Anglian Regiment and, in particular, by the 150 noble men from the county of Leicestershire?

Mr. Scott: I certainly pay the warmest tribute to the Royal Anglians, the additional Royal Engineers who have come to assist in the task of rebuilding and preparing the police stations, and to all the security forces in Northern Ireland for their work.

Lignite Deposits

9. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he makes of the prospective benefits of lignite deposits for the economy of Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The major benefit of lignite in Northern Ireland will be derived from its use in the generation of electricity. It offers the possibility of transforming electricity generation costs in Northern Ireland from their present high level to among the lowest in the United Kingdom and in Europe.

Mr. Leigh: Bearing in mind the high energy costs in the Province, may I ask what progress is being made and what savings are hoped to be made by using lignite for the generation of electricity?

Dr. Boyson: On my hon. Friend's second point, I have seen estimates that the electricity costs in Northern Ireland could be reduced to 40 per cent. of existing costs, if lignite were used for some years. On his first point, early this summer there should be a report from the Northern Ireland Electricity Service about the possibility of building a minemouth lignite generation station at Crumlin, so that lignite will not have to be processed and can be used immediately, whereupon the Government must make a decision with the Northern Ireland Electricity Service about the speed at which we can proceed to build that station.

Foreign Industrial Investment

10. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Labour Relations Agency report on the experience of foreign industrial investors in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: I welcome the Labour Relations Agency's report, which confirms that ouside investors in Northern Ireland consider that the labour force is co-operative, productive, of a high quality and compares favourably with that in other locations.

Mr. Rowe: Given that admirable result, will my hon. Friend tell the House what steps are being taken to make the maximum use of this information to boost the economy of Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: That report, which came out in December, was basically in answer to the MORI report of 1982, which said that outside investors considered Northern Ireland unproductive and dangerous. The December report indicates quite clearly that all the 29 outside firms that invested in Northern Ireland consider that their plants there are at least as viable and productive as plants anywhere in the world. I trust that all the people from the IDB who are selling Northern Ireland around the world will have their cases full of that report and will deposit copies on the seats of every tube train on which they travel.

Mr. Bell: Will the Minister confirm that there has been a cut of £500,000 in the cleaning bill for Belfast schools, colleges, hospitals and libraries, and that that cut will result in a substantial number of redundancies in the Province? Will he further confirm that there is to be another cut of £1 million in the same services, and that that will again add to the number of unemployed people in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: I do not have with me the details of the matters mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but I shall write to him about them. If he looks at the overall budget, he will see that the capital budget in Northern Ireland is up. In education, it is up on the minor works side from £36 million to £40 million. That should mean employment in the construction industry.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

11. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to explain the Anglo-Irish agreement to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The Government have taken and will continue to take every appropriate opportunity, in the House, in the media and elsewhere, to correct misunderstandings about the Anglo-Irish agreement and to explain the advantages that it offers to all sections of the community in the Province.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that one of the tragedies of Northern Ireland is that the unionist leadership has opposed every constitutional proposal since 1972? Does he also agree that it is deeply disturbing that so-called constitutional unionist politicians should parade on the streets of Northern Ireland in the company of masked paramilitaries, and that the real challenge is to say to moderate unionist opinion, "Do not follow your leaders because they are misleading you and acting against your interests"?

Mr. Scott: There are substantial misunderstandings about the Anglo-Irish agreement. The statement issued by the unionist parties, which described the agreement as a joint authority, is manifestly wide of the mark. The arrangements to enshrine the principle of consent, to provide tighter security and cross-border co-operation, and to respect the rights of both traditions in Northern Ireland are all positive points for the future of the Province.

Job Creation

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the measures taken over the last three years to combat unemployment in the Province together with the cost; and if he will state the number of new jobs created.

Dr. Boyson: In the three-year period to March 1985, £310 million was spent in Northern Ireland on job creation through industrial development agencies, community employment schemes and other measures. With the help of the development agencies and other measures, the private sector provided, or agreed to provide, almost 42,000 new jobs, while the community schemes created some 10,700 temporary jobs.

Mr. Pawsey: While thanking my hon. Friend for that typically helpful and complete reply, may I ask what action his Department is taking to encourage investment in Northern Ireland from the United States and Japan? Is he able to say approximately how many jobs have developed in the Province as a result of investment from those two countries?

Dr. Boyson: The first investment by Japan in Northern Ireland for employment purposes came last year. From America we had a Du Pont investment last year of £45 million for plant that will create about 330 new jobs in a high-tech industry.

Cross-border Co-operation

14. **Mr. Lyell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the state of cross-border co-operation on matters of security since the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the answer I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) earlier today.

Mr. Lyell: I greatly welcome the better news on cross-border security in Sligo and Roscommon and on strategic

aspects. Does my hon. Friend agree that we who believe in the Union Parliament, of which we are Members, and who voted for the agreement, also regard highly the constitutional guarantees which are given to the majority in the Province by that agreement?

Mr. Scott: I certainly support every word that my hon. and learned Friend has just said.

Mr. Dubs: Can the Minister tell the House the origin of the arms in the recent finds in the Republic?

Mr. Scott: Certainly not at the moment.

Short Bros. plc

15. **Mr. Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of Short Bros.; and what subjects were diseussed.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend met representatives of Short Brothers plc on 4 November last year. I also meet company representatives frequently. A variety of company matters were discussed at all these meetings, including order prospects, levels of employment and financial performance.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he not think that it is a tribute to Short Bros. that it released the report of the Fair Employment Agency indicating that, despite rumours to the contrary in the United States, equal and fair consideration was being given to the employment of both Roman Catholics and Protestants in that very successful company? Therefore, will he encourage the Americans to exercise their option to take more Sherpas for the United States air force?

Dr. Boyson: I would welcome the American Government taking up more of their option on those planes. I also commend the fact that Short Bros., working with the Fair Employment Agency, has shown a vast improvement in the recruitment into its works of people from the minority community.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the digital clocks are wrong. I shall go by the clock at the end of the Chamber and give one minute injury time.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend utterly condemn the futile and illegal attempts by the Trades Union Congress to stop publication of Mr. Murdoch's newspapers? Does she not think it odd that the Leader of the Opposition should wish to stop talking only to some journalists?

The Prime Minister: I wish those newspapers well in their efforts to print on the latest equipment. Management and everyone else, including trade unions, are entitled to take full advantage of the law.

Mr. Kinnock: Today unemployment reached 3·4 million, the highest ever. When unemployment was 1·1 million in 1979 the Prime Minister confidently promised that she would reduce it. Will she give the same promise now?

The Prime Minister: I am the first to admit that, following several months of falling unemployment, the unemployment figures published today are deeply disappointing. Just as we did not claim that last year's figures meant a reverse of the trend when they were better, so it is too early to say that two months' poor figures indicate that unemployment is rising. The fact remains that the number of people in work has increased by over 700,000 since March 1984.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister must know that that claim about 700,000 is not valid. Even the Bank of England's system of calculation demonstrates that the number of jobs in terms of full-time equivalents has fallen. Is it not the truth that the Prime Minister does not know how to get unemployment down and does not care about it? If she did, she would not let it go on increasing all the time.

The Prime Minister: On the two points that the right hon. Gentleman has raised, we create more wealth and, therefore, more jobs, only by creating more goods which will sell competitively in world markets. That is the only way. With regard to what he said about the growth of jobs, the best indication of that is provided by the Department of Employment's official count every three months. He mentioned the Bank of England's adjustment, which referred to full-time equivalents. *[Interruption.]* Yes, many of the jobs have been part-time, but what is wrong with that? May I point out that the bank's adjustment, based on the assumption of a full-time employee equivalence, is inevitably uncertain. More important, it relates solely to employees and so completely ignores the net increase of over 400,000 in the number of self-employed since March 1983.

Sir Edward Gardner: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Labour leader's boycott of all journalists employed by News International is an outrageous attack on the principle of free speech, which strikes at the very root of democracy?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend.

Q2. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Given that, like unemployment, the view of the country about the credibility of the Prime Minister has today reached an all-time high, with 56 per cent. of people not believing her explanation of Monday, can she give us a full, honest and careful answer to this question? Was she or her Office consulted about the decision to prohibit three senior officials of the Department of Trade and Industry from giving evidence to the Select Committee on Defence? If she authorised that prohibition, does she intend to make sure that no civil servants speak to Officers and Members of the House? Is she going to cover up for what she has done or is she going to let her civil servants tell the truth, even if she cannot?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the two parts of the hon. Gentleman's question, I set out in my speech on Monday the full circumstances of the Solicitor-General's letter, its disclosure and the establishment of the inquiry, and I pointed out that the accuracy of the statement was checked with all concerned. That is what the hon. Gentleman does not like and cannot get over.

With regard to Select Committees, the Government want to co-operate with them. Those officials who advise on policy and who are, therefore, in a position to help the work of the Select Committee on Defence on the defence implications of the Westland affair have co-operated fully and will continue to do so. I am bound to say that the Committee's request for private secretaries and personal staff to give evidence has major implications for the conduct of the Government and for relations between Ministers and their Private Offices, which will need to be thought about very carefully.

We shall be in touch with the Committee and shall give any requests proper consideration. Perhaps right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition will remember the time when the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under their Government refused to appear before a Select Committee.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, despite the GATT, the world's trading nations are effectively engaged in an intensive trade war, in which competition is increasingly exercised by means of the competitive devaluation of currencies and that, in an era of floating exchange rates, to believe in free trade is to believe in pure fantasy? Will she urge our colleagues in the International Monetary Fund to agree that it would be better for world trade and growth if we were to move not towards something like the European monetary system, which is merely a bunch of floating currencies, but towards the restitution of a fixed exchange rate regime?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, competitive devaluation is no long-term substitute for each factory and firm becoming competitive in the sale of its own product. As to fixed exchange rates, unless the underlying economies are also run very similarly to one another, fixed exchange rates do not last long and lead to devaluation.

Mr. Rogers: In view of the actions of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry before the Select Committee this morning, does the Prime Minister agree that it smells rather like the American practice of pleading the fifth amendment?

The Prime Minister: I gave the House a very full account. The particulars were checked and endorsed by a majority of 160 votes.

Mr. St. John-Stevas: With regard to Select Committees, does my right hon. Friend agree that any sanction that may be imposed belongs to the Chamber of the House and not to a Select Committee? Secondly, when she is seeking to avoid a clash between the Select Committee and Whitehall, will she bear in mind that there is a power in Select Committees to receive evidence and to treat it on a confidential basis, and that this might provide a way out of the dilemma?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated in the previous reply, I shall, of course, be in touch with the Committee and shall, of course, give any requests proper consideration.

Mr. Steel: The answer that the Prime Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has very serious implications for the conduct of business in this House. She will recall that in her own two statements on this whole matter she laid great stress on future inquiries by our Select Committees. She has absolutely no right now to place any fetter on anyone they may wish to call.

The Prime Minister: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will look carefully at what I said. Of course the Government want to co-operate with Select Committees. Those officials who advise on policy and are therefore in a position to help the Defence Select Committee's work on the defence implications of the Westland affair have co-operated fully and will continue to do so. Civil servants are responsible either to their Ministers for policy or to the head of the Civil Service.

Q3. **Mr. George Gardiner** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gardiner: Will my right hon. Friend today make arrangements to transport the Leader of the Opposition and his entire Front Bench to join the picket line at Wapping, thereby ensuring that every worker crosses it?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend's point was contained in his most excellent question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must be related to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Q4. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Was it not the Prime Minister herself who asked for the Westland saga to go to a Select Committee of the House? Why is she now openly obstructing the work of that Select Committee by preventing, by diktat almost, Miss Colette Bowe and Mr. Charles Powell, Mr. Ingham possibly and Mr. John Mogg from giving evidence? Does she not realise that one cover-up begets another cover-up and another cover-up ad infinitum? When will she come clean and admit that there is a lot more to come out in that Select Committee and that on Monday she did not give a full report of what happened?

The Prime Minister: I gave a very full account and it was meticulously checked for accuracy, by, among others, the head of the Civil Service, to take into account the report which I had made to the House. I gave that account. It was accurate.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: When my right hon. Friend is looking into the precedents concerning Select Committees and Ministers and public officials, will she refresh her memory of the circumstances in which the then Attorney-General, Mr. Sam Silkin, refused to appear before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry when it was looking into the recovery operation following the crash of Chrysler? That is quite an interesting precedent, which might do with refreshment.

The Prime Minister: I do not have details of that one. I have details of the reply, which I recall on Monday 19 January 1976, when the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had received an invitation from the Trade and Industry Sub-Committee — *[Interruption.]* Yes, the reply. He had received an invitation to attend and give evidence on public expenditure on Chrysler. He went on to say:

"My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Industry, who has direct ministerial responsibility for this, was to give evidence on behalf of the whole Government."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1976; Vol. 903, c. 287.]

He went on to say that evidence had been given on behalf of the Government and that he was declining to give evidence to the Select Committee.

Mr. Heffer: Is the right hon. Lady aware that on this day, when the highest levels of unemployment ever known have been recorded, due to the Government's policies, it will not go unnoticed by the people that, when the printers' unions have taken a stand to protect jobs—6,000 more jobs are at stake—the Tory Benches cheered to the echo the mention of Murdoch, and, of course, the anti-trade union legislation that makes it more—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member come to a conclusion?

Mr. Heffer: I repeat: it will not go unnoticed that the anti-trade union legislation has been fully brought into operation and supported by the Prime Minister and others to create more unemployment, not less. That is the truth of the situation.

The Prime Minister: I totally reject what the hon. Gentleman has said. If industry had not been able to become thoroughly competitive under the policies of this Government we should have lost whole industries, and the unemployment position would have been infinitely worse. Restrictive practices and overmanning do not save jobs. They lead to the loss of more jobs in the end.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY—Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on a motion to approve the Special Supplementary Estimate 1985-86: budget of the European Communities, Class II, Vote 9. Details of relevant EC documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

Second Reading of the Australia Bill *[Lords]*, followed by remaining stages of the Museum of London Bill.

TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Housing and Planning Bill.

There will be a debate on a motion to take note of EC Document No. 8805/85, a proposal for a directive on the disposal of non-radioactive waste at sea.

WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY — Opposition Day (6th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Conduct and Supervision of the City."

There will be a debate on a motion to take note of EC Document No. 9316/85 relating to new Community rules for state aids to the coal industry.

THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the Royal Navy on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Remaining stages of the Australia Bill *[Lords]*.

Debate on Monday 3 February (Debate on Supplementary Estimate)
Relevant Documents:

(a) 10773/85 to 10778/85	*Draft budget (1986) with amendments and proposed modifications*

Relevant report of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 21-vii (1985-86) paragraph 9.

Debate on Tuesday 4 February
Relevant Documents:

(b) 8805/85	*Draft directive on dumping of waste at sea*

Relevant report of European Legislation Committee
(b) HC 5-xxx (1984-85) paragraph 14.

Debate on Wednesday 5 February
Relevant Documents:

(c) 9316/85	*State aids to coal industry*

Relevant report of European Legislation Committee
(c) HC 5-xxxi (1984-85) paragraph 3.

Mr. Kinnock: When will the House have a debate on the public expenditure White Paper? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a statement is made early next week on the current position of the teachers' pay dispute?

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that there is an urgent need for a full debate on the Green Paper on the poll tax. When is that likely to take place?

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why Monday's debate on the White Paper on the Channel fixed link is to begin at 7 pm when that is clearly a matter of public interest and public controversy?

Mr. Biffen: It has changed.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sorry; I was not entirely attuned to what the right hon. Gentleman was saying. I hope that he has good news for me. I shall listen to him the second time round.

Today's unemployment figures, which are the highest on record, warrant a full debate in Government time well before the Budget. We know that the Secretary of State for Employment cannot speak in such a debate because he is in the other place. Will a debate take place, and, if so, will the Prime Minister speak in it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall take the points in reverse order. There is no prospect of a debate on unemployment being held in Government time. The right hon. Gentleman might like to consider that as a topic for an Opposition day debate.

I am anxious that there should be total mutual understanding on the Channel tunnel. I have announced for Monday 10 February business in respect of private Members' motions and the remaining stages of the Australia Bill. If this raises difficulties, perhaps we can consider the matter further through the usual channels.

The Green Paper on the range of proposals to replace our current rating system has only just been presented to the House and, clearly, it will have to be debated by the House. Doubtless this matter can be pursued in due course through the usual channels.

I take account of what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the desirability of a statement being made on the current dispute in education. I very much hope that that can be made early next week.

We shall again consider through the usual channels the question of having a debate on the public expenditure White paper.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service hopes to take evidence on the public expenditure White Paper and complete that next Monday at 4.15 pm with evidence from the Chief Secretary . My right hon. Friend has put down for business on Monday a matter that is also of great interest to the Select Committee——

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): And concern.

Mr. Higgins: —and concern. The Select Committee took evidence on that matter this morning. Because that debate is on Monday, it effectively means that the Select Committee has been told that it must approve by midnight an ex gratia payment to help towards financing an illegal EEC budget for which the Government themselves admit there is no underlying legislative justification. Will my right hon. Friend carefully consider the timing of this business, as members of the Select Committee will obviously wish to ensure that they are present during the debate and are also able to proceed with the White Paper inquiry?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend raised an important point of deep concern to himself and, I am sure, to all members of his Committee——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): And the House.

Mr. Biffen: —and the House and many outside the House. That was merely going to be the preliminary to an emollient comment. Of course I shall ascertain whether anything can be done. Perhaps I could get in touch with my right hon. Friend. I do not want to encourage optimism on this matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 10 minutes next week for the Attorney-General to answer questions is totally inadequate, bearing in mind that, to a large extent, his Department, together with 10 Downing street and the Department of Trade and Industry, is at the centre of what has happened over Westland? Will he accept that he has some responsibility to ensure that witnesses required by the Select Committee on Defence should be in a position to appear before that Committee? Therefore, will he give a promise that he will ensure that officials who have been called by the Select Committee will appear next week?

Mr. Biffen: The summoning of witnesses is a matter for the Select Committee concerned. The hon. Gentleman makes a somewhat contentious series of observations about the amount of time allotted for Attorney-General questions. The time allotted is determined by a roster agreed each Session through the usual channels, and I have received no official representations that it should be altered.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend undertake to ensure that before the House is required to make an illegal payment to the EEC a Government spokesman will explain to the House why it is not necessary to introduce primary legislation before the illegal payment is made?

Mr. Biffen: In general terms, I do not think that I can go beyond the answer which I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I shall draw the specific point raised to the attention of the Minister who will be taking part in the debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House have regard to early-day motion 208?

[That a Select Committee be appointed to give further consideration to the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary body, Article 12 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; That the Committee shall consist of 16 members; that no motion shall be made for the nomination of members of the Committee or their discharge unless: (a) notice of the motion has been given sat least two sitting days previously and (b) the motion is made on behalf of the Committee of Selection by the Chairman or another member of the Committee; that five be the quorum of the Committee; that the Committee have power: (a) to send for persons, papers and records; to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House; to adjourn from place to place; and to report from time to time; and (b) to appoint specialist advisers to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference; and that this be a Standing Order of the House.]

It has received support from all parts of the House. It calls for a Select Committee to be appointed to consider the establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary body in accordance with article 12 of the Anglo-Irish agreement. Is the right hon. Gentleman likely to take any initiative with regard to that?

While I am sure that this House echoes the deep regret and shock at what has happened to the American space shuttle, will the right hon. Gentleman accept that one of the lessons we are tragically learning from that is the difficulties which are involved in any strategic defence initiative? It is time that the House had a debate to discuss all the implications of that and the United Kingdom participation in it.

Mr. Biffen: On the subject of the early-day motion, I appreciate the pertinence of the question put by the hon. Gentleman, but I should like to refer him to the answer I gave to the same question on Monday. I have nothing to add to that.

I take account of what the hon. Gentleman said in his second point. I think that the debates we are now having on the various service Estimates would provide some accommodation for a speech he might like to make in that direction.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Many I press the Leader of the House, following the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins)? Surely there must be something wrong if an illegal budget means that the British taxpayer is asked to make an ex-gratia payment to the EEC and that, if the motion is not passed on Monday, interest is added to the amount by the EEC. There must be something wrong with our control of public expenditure if such things are allowed to happen.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has made a good and powerful trailer of the speech which I have no doubt he will make on Monday when it will be answered with customary authority by the Treasury spokesman.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Has the Leader of the House noticed that, since the tabling of a motion last week in my name on Sadler's Wells theatre, yesterday my worst fears were realised? In view of the pressure on the right hon. Gentleman in arranging parliamentary time and priorities, and his own well-known concern about the cultural heritage of the nation, will he have conversations with the various Ministers concerned to ensure that that famous theatre is not closed?

Mr. Biffen: I truthfully believe that I am the most philistine Member ever to disfigure the Treasury Bench. Notwithstanding that, of course I will undertake the consultations the hon. Gentleman requests.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend think again and scrap Monday's debate on the illegal budget? Would it not be better if we sent in the district auditor and surcharged the European Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: That is the sort of robust contribution that can be made in the debate. I note what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the great disruption which took place at the end of the debate on Tuesday on the London Regional Transport (Levy) Order? We now have one and a half hours a year to discuss the affairs of London transport. When it was previously run by the Greater London council, it was under continual appraisal by democratically elected councillors. In view of the unhappy and unfortunate impending demise of the GLC on 31 March, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the House, London Members in particular, to have ample

opportunity to discuss London affairs which have been taken away from a democratically elected GLC and handed over to a collection of unaccountable quangos?

Mr. Biffen: In no sense could I accept the premise of that question, but if the hon. Gentleman is seeking some reorganisation in government so that, in a parliamentary sense, there is a London presence, that is a campaign that he must pursue. At the moment, I am happy to say, I do not have to deal with that problem.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend will be aware that yesterday the motion on short speeches was blocked by those who are more long-winded, and who have Privy Council status, giving them priority in debates. Will my right hon. Friend consider bringing the matter to a head so that Back-Bench Members have a chance of speaking in debates?

Mr. Biffen: I noted those who blocked the motion. I thought how happy it was that anonymity was cast by *Hansard* over their voices. I believe that there is a widespread desire that the matter should be resolved, and I hope that that can be done, perhaps in a debate a little later on.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the Leader of the House aware that everyone in the country will greet with disbelief his statement that it is not the duty of the Government to provide time for a debate on unemployment when it has reached the record figure of 14 per cent. nationally — and that figure masks regional and sub-regional differences which mean that in some areas, unemployment is as high as 50 or even 60 per cent. Does he not realise that the Government should provide time to debate the unemployment that they have created, especially in the light of the massive youth unemployment in areas such as Merseyside? Unemployment means that young teenagers are easy prey to drug pushers; and the number of young unemployed who are taking heroin has now reached epidemic proportions.

Mr. Biffen: I strongly contest the partisan way in which the hon. Gentleman is seeking to attribute unemployment to the Government and intimating that the Government are indifferent to it. There is no provision for a debate in Government time in the immediate future. That is hardly surprising as shortly we shall move into a period dominated by the debates on the Budget and the Finance Bill. However, if the matter is of such urgency, I should have thought that the Opposition might use some of their time.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the Leader of the House find time on Monday for a debate on the apparent scandalous injustice of the Government's policies towards the Socialist councillors of Camden, in that when they pass an illegal budget they are surcharged, and threatened with bankruptcy and having their assets sold, but when the European Assembly passes an illegal budget the Government seek to rush through an emergency Supplementary Estimate?

Mr. Biffen: That compelling argument and analogy can be contained within the terms of the motion that is already set down for debate on Monday.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): The Leader of the House said that he would consider a debate on the Green Paper on rates. I know that the debate will not be next week, but will the right hon. Gentleman give some idea of the time scale or in which month he will be able to provide time for a debate? Will he make sure that any request to discuss the Scottish or Welsh aspects in the Grand Committees will not be used as an argument for cutting down the time in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I note the hon. Gentleman's point about the Grand Committee's consideration of the Green Paper. However, I think it would be fairest to the House if I left my answer general rather than specific when I am not sure whether I could deliver any promise that I might make.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Last week, when I asked my right hon. Friend about the illegal European budget, he said that he was loth to bracket the European Community with Liverpool. Why are the Government now prepared to bracket themselves with Liverpool by not only condoning but facilitating the illegal budget? Could my right hon. Friend tell the House why he has changed his mind, whether he has consulted the Law Officers, in which case what advice he received, and what would happen if we did not pass the wretched budget on Monday?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly, Monday promises to be a connoisseur's day. In a more general consideration of Monday's debate, I cannot go beyond the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing.

Mr. Budgen: He has become communautaire.

Mr. Biffen: I so enjoy the interventions of my hon. Friend as they give me breathing space just when I need it.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Can the Leader of the House say whether either of the two Cabinet Ministers who have recently resigned have been able to retain their ministerial cars and drivers? If that has happened, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Minister reponsible to make a statement to the House next week showing in what circumstances that is taking place and who is paying for it?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is implying in good faith that a certain situation exists. If he would like to write to me setting out the situation, I will have the matter investigated.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the freedom of the press, particularly taking account of current threats to it from the Labour party and the TUC? Could the motion be drawn wide enough to embrace debates on the vicious efforts made by Labour and Lib-Lab Governments between 1974 and 1979 to gag the press by the imposition of a closed shop? It should be borne in mind that those efforts were pursued strenuously by that so-called great lover of freedom, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend sets out an attractive proposition for the use of Government time, but, as I have explained to the House, the problem at the moment is that little Government time is available for these debates. I shall continue to bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In view of the financial crisis that threatens to close the

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra, Croxteth hall and the Empire theatre in Liverpool and many other arts facilities not only in Merseyside but in the other metropolitan counties and London which are victims of the Tory Government's political bigotry, may we have an urgent debate in the House before those places close?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has put forward the facts with complete dispassion, but I will, of course, draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts to the hon. Gentleman's argument so that my right hon. Friend can consider his request.

Mr. Willian Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm my recollection about the appearance or non-appearance of certain officials before the Select Committee on Defence? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, irrespective of whether or not the officials appear, they cannot under the conventions and practice of the House, as established by the Liaison Committee and by other statements that have been made, be required to give evidence relating to advice that they gave to Ministers while acting in their official capacity?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a thoughtful contribution which does not, strictly speaking, come within the ambit of next week's business. I cannot reaonably add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said on that topic.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Leader of the House will already have heard my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my other hon. Friends express their concern about unemployment and the need for an urgent debate. Is he aware that a job start scheme was put on trial at Billingham only a month ago? When that scheme was introduced, I asked the Minister responsible in another place to debate the matter publicly so that people might know how he thought the scheme would operate. The noble Lord refused to do that. The first month's operation of the scheme has resulted in only one inquiry. If we cannot have a debate in the House, will the right hon. Gentleman ask his noble Friend in another place at least to come to Billingham and explain the circumstances surrounding the scheme?

Mr. Biffen: It is always touching to have such responsibilities or would-be responsibilities thrust upon one. I do not think, however, that I am in the business of requiring anybody up the road to go anywhere. Of course, I will draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment to the point the hon. Gentleman raised about the scheme. I cannot go beyond what I said to the Leader of the Opposition about a debate on unemployment.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Earlier today, Mr. Speaker you properly reaffirmed the ruling that questions to Minister must relate to their responsibilities and not to those of the Opposition. Democracy and constitutional Government depend upon a reasoned choice between alternatives. Will my right hon. Friend open negotiations with the Opposition parties to see whether one day every so often could be made available for Opposition Question Time, because there is a great desire to know the consequences of their unrealistic policies? I extend that to the SDP and the Liberal parties, although they have as yet no policies, because that might afford the House a magical mystery tour.

Mr. Biffen: The question roster is the product of delicate balance and raw horse trading. I should not want to disturb that for the objective that my hon. Friend has in mind.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Leader of the House appreciate that there are thousands of men and women working in the textile and clothing industries who are worried that they may be thrown on the record-long dole queues if the multi-fibre arrangement is not negotiated with Britian's best interests in mind? Has he seen early-day motion 332 which is supported by more than 70 members calling for an urgent debate on that subject?

[That this House, recognising the vital importance of the textile and clothing industry for the United Kingdom's balance of trade and as the employer of one in 10 of all those working in manufacturing industry, emphasises the damage that would be done to the industry by any failure to secure an effective renewal of the Multi Fibre Arrangement; views with alarm the terms of the European Economic Community's draft negotiating mandate which would inevitably permit an increase in imports, including a diversion of imports from better-protected markets to the United Kingdom; urges Her Majesty's Government to insist on a European Economic Community mandate which fully protects the interests of the British industry; and demands that no final decision is reached in Brussels until the matter has been further debated in the House.]

Will the Leader of the House have urgent discussions with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry not just to ask for early agreement on a debate but for him to take an interest in the renegotiation of the MFA and not give the responsibility to a new Minister who possibly knows less about the industry than the Secretary of State?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take a close interest in Britain's contribution to the MFA negotiations. I recognise that there is wide interest in the House that a debate should take place. I am considering that matter now to see when might be a convenient time.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): As it is a great convenience to hon. Members on both sides of the House to be told what the business for the Monday thereafter is when being given the business for next week, will my right hon. Friend make it his practice never to change the business planned for the Monday as we all have to plan busy schedules and make arrangements? Does he accept that some of us are extremely displeased to find that the Second Reading of the Housing and Planning Bill has been shifted from Monday to Tuesday? May we know why it has been shifted?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the interest that there is in the inviolate nature of Monday's business, although I seem to have spent half this afternoon listening to those who claim that next Monday's business should be altered. Of course, one tries to announce business that will be maintained as far as possible, but the more that one announces ahead, the more uncertain becomes the final day or so of business. I believe that there was a time when Monday week's business was not announced.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When will we have a debate on the Select Committee on Privilege's report about the confidentiality of information and material in the possession of Select Committees? Is the Leader of the House aware that a crisis is developing over the operation of Select Committees? Has he noted the dilemma faced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the problem of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), and does he not think that if Select Committees produce reports the House is entitled to debate them? May we now have time for a debate—for the fourth time of asking over the past five months?

Mr. Biffen: It may be the fourth time of asking, but it is also the fourth time of replying, broadly in the same sense as on the three previous occasions. At the moment there is no immediate opportunity for a debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why not?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman may shout as though he were on the terraces of Workington football club—if I have pitched that rather low I apologise. I have to balance all the claims made upon the time of the House, and at the moment there is not exactly a clamour for this topic to be debated.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great concern in my constituency at the proposed closure of an iron foundry at Sterling Metals, with the loss of 700 jobs? This is a major blow to the area when in the past 12 months the unemployment position had improved by about 12 per cent. Can my right hon. Friend provide an opportunity to discuss the matter in the House?

Mr. Biffen: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that he may wish to raise the matter on the Adjournment and underline his already considerable reputation as an active constituency Member? I will, of course, mention the point that he makes to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): In view of the request made by the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and to other of my hon. Friends who asked for an urgent debate, in Government time, on the question of unemployment? Will it not be amazing to the people of Britain to hear the Leader of the House say that it cannot be helped, not because of pressure of business next week, but because it is a matter for the Opposition and not for the Government? Is not the right hon. Gentleman aware that unemployment is a matter for the Government? It is the Government's responsibility. Are they afraid of having such a debate because they have no suggestions for dealing with unemployment? Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his reply so that we may hear what the Government propose to do to bring down unemployment —the highest level we have ever known in Britain?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes a point that has already been made several times by the Opposition. I have nothing to add to my reply to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock).

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. Friend consider giving time next week to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) to explain why the Labour party wishes to ban contact with *The Times* and *The Sun*? Does not this action suggest what life would be like under any future Labour Government, with the state as master and not as servant—a state of increasing restrictions, regulations and controls——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is not as ingenious as his hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley). The question must be related to business for which the Leader of the House is responsible.

Mr. Biffen: I quite understand my hon. Friend's interest in this topic. He has asked for time to be made available, but time is already available. There is an Opposition day next week and we will judge how they wish to use it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made on the collapse of the Tin Council and the 500 jobs that are at stake in the west country? If not, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange a debate? Is he aware that yesterday there was a great opportunity presented to the Liberals and Social Democrats to use half of their day's debate to discuss this important question. Five hundred miners came from the west country to lobby Parliament and wanted to get Members to listen to their plight. When I came into the Chamber, however, I found the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) rabbiting on in his usual fashion—

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Wabbiting on.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, wabbiting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that this is a matter for the Leader of the House.

Mr. Skinner: I am coming round to it. The right hon. Gentleman was rabbiting on about our joining the European monetary system when he should have been debating the important matter of the dole queues. Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman take the opportunity to get rid of next Monday's debate and arrange a debate on the tin Council and unemployment, thus killing three birds with one stone?

Mr. Biffen: It has often been my privilege to listen to the recondite, fastidious arguments of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). I have not hitherto thought of characterising them as rabbiting—and "rabbiting", as those from the west country know, is pronounced with a good, full-throated "r". It is a sad day when the spirit of Trelawny and all that Cornwall has stood for is taken over by social democracies from Glasgow.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the debate on Monday on the Special Supplementary Estimate is likely to highlight two points? The first is the deep feeling held by many of us in Great Britain who are genuinely pro-Europe but are increasingly concerned about the methods of financing, the lack of financial discipline in the Community and the system of European justice to which this country is subject. Secondly, it will also highlight the fact that sovereignty has been, and is being, taken from under the nose of this House, usually in the small hours of the morning. Before such important EEC legislation is introduced, will my right hon. Friend agree to give it much more prime debating time?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says in his most intriguing contribution, which shows the significant movement of opinion in the general debate of these matters. My hon. Friend has as good prime time on Monday as he will ever get for these Community matters. However, I have promised my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing to consider whether any alternative arrangements can be made.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): When will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on the breakdown of law and order and the sickening attacks, both in London and in Leicester, on our defenceless old? Is not my right hon. Friend aware that many people have been mugged in their own homes or robbed on the streets? The public are not receiving adequate protection from the police. Will my right hon. Friend find time to discuss the need for appointing additional police, a review of the judicial system, the need for tougher and stiffer sentences in our courts and the need for protection of all citizens in Britain? The *Leicester Mercury* recently described the situation as "a real crisis".

Mr. Biffen: I know that my hon. Friend and the *Leicester Mercury* have been conducting a campaign for a greater police presence in Leicester, and I should like to think that it might be partnered by a full day's debate in the House of Commons. But time is at a great premium, and all I can offer is to refer his points to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary so that they may be noted.

Foreign Affairs Council

4.9 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council which took place in Brussels on 27 January. I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry represented the United Kingdom. A statement of forthcoming business in the European Community has been deposited in the Vote Office.

Ministers had a further preliminary discussion of the Commission's proposals for a negotiating mandate on renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. They reviewed progress in negotiations to adapt the European Community agreements to take account of enlargement. In response to the imposition by the United States of quotas on imports of EC semi-finished steel, the Council decided to introduce quotas on United States exports of fertiliser, coated paper and bovine fats. These restrictions will not be introduced until 15 February, allowing time for further efforts to achieve an agreed outcome. The President of the Commission reported on his discussion with the Japanese Government on EC-Japan trade relations during his recent visit to Tokyo. I emphasised the importance that we attach to the achievement of a better balance in trade between the European Community and Japan.

In political co-operation, the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve agreed and issued a statement on international terrorism. They announced further measures to strengthen defences against terrorism within the Community and to discourage support from other Governments for terrorist attacks. They agreed to set up a new group within political co-operation to ensure effective follow-up in the areas covered by the statement. They agreed not to undercut measures taken by others against Governments which support terrorism. The Foreign Ministers reviewed briefly the implementation of the measures vis-à-vis South Africa which were agreed at Luxembourg on 10 September.

In the Intergovernmental Conference member states finalised the text of the amendments to the EC treaties and treaty provisions on European political co-operation. On the question of the working environment, we secured inclusion in the treaty text of provisions protecting the position of small and medium-sized undertakings, as proposed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the European Council in Luxembourg last December. This enabled the only outstanding United Kingdom reserve to be lifted. All member states have accepted the agreed text. The Netherlands Presidency hope that the new Act will be signed by all member states on 17 February. If the Danish Government cannot sign on that date, they will aim to do so after the referendum in Denmark.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): We all congratulate the hon. Lady on her apparent promotion. I wish her well in her translation from motorway lighting to runaway surpluses and from flyovers to carryovers. She will have a rough time, as she has seen for herself this afternoon from both sides of the House. We wish her well.

The hon. Lady's statement smoothly skates over the shambles to which the European Community has reduced itself in the past few weeks with regard to reform of the treaty of Rome. The Community has spent nine months

and more on a futile exercise of institutional change, and it has produced a mouse which, thanks to the Danish Parliament, cannot now even squeak.

Is there not something bizarre about this great Community, now 12 nations strong, squirming around, pretending for the benefit of Danish Members of Parliament that their great efforts were of absolutely no consequence? Today, however, Britain has announced record unemployment, a phenomenon that is mirrored throughout the EC. Falling oil prices, rising interest rates and shaky currencies threaten even more job losses all over Europe.

In July, the Prime Minister told the House that all the institutional reforms agreed at the Luxembourg summit could be implemented without treaty changes, so why has the Danish veto meant so much chaos? The Minister referred to discussions about retaliation against American steel import restrictions. She has our complete support for that reaction to unwarranted protectionism, although I wonder what effect it will have on the airbus project, which only two weeks ago was of such paramount importance. Will the hon. Lady explain the effect that the retaliation will have on British Steel's exports and on the contract between BSC and Tuscaloosa Steel of Alabama?

We welcome the British climbdown on resisting better Europe-wide protection legislation for employees, but does that mean that the Government will now allow majority voting on the directives on part-time working and on employee consultation, which they have blocked for the past two years?

On Tuesday, the Foreign Secretary will be in Lusaka with a team of Community Foreign Ministers meeting the Front Line states. They will reiterate their call to South Africa to recognise the African National Congress.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Certainly not.

Mr. Robertson: Community Foreign Ministers have already called on South Africa to recognise the ANC. Will the Foreign Secretary meet the ANC when he is in Lusaka? Will he join Community Foreign Ministers if they choose to meet the ANC?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his congratulations. I think that I shall need more than his congratulations with such a list of questions, but I shall do my best.

The Intergovernmental Conference's reform is not a mouse but a decision of the 12 to bring matters completely up to date. I am aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister thought that changes could be made without a treaty change, as did we. However, not all the other nations were content with that. We therefore worked towards, and reached in December, subject to one reserve, a treaty change that we are now prepared to sign. We have achieved a successful declaration about small and medium-sized enterprises.

The hon. Gentleman asked about steel support. I thank him for what he said. United Kingdom support for the aggressive EC move, which could threaten the Tuscaloosa agreement, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We fully support the EC retaliation. We have argued that no precipitate action should be taken while Community/United States contracts on semi-finished products are still in progress. That is why the implementation date has been deferred to see whether we can make further progress. I do not see, from my knowledge at present, that the joint venture will be threatened. There is no suggestion of that. We shall go on working to prevent it.

The hon. Gentleman talked about our climbing down and thought that there was no need for the Intergovernmental Conference to make treaty reform. As the Community has enlarged, it is far more sensible to agree reforms and have them clearly established. That is exactly what happened in regard to the work concluded on 17 December, which was finally amended with the reserve on small and medium-sized enterprises on Monday.

The hon. Gentleman asked about employment. It is no bad thing to have realism in the Community. Lowering barriers will provide new opportunities for jobs and for better trade.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned, finally, the question of the European Community Meeting with the Front Line states in Lusaka next week. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will indeed be in Lusaka next week. He will be having discussions with those who wish to have discussions with him and will try to set out the dialogue as fairly and as clearly as possible, as we have always stated, that we have no part in apartheid and that we intend to do all we can to ensure that peace is brought to South Africa.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): I too congratulate my hon. Friend on her first appearance at the Dispatch Box for the Foreign Office. Will she not be deterred by the scorn that is routinely poured on these statements by both sides of the House with equal vehemence on what the EC has done and on what it has not done? Is she aware that, although the progress might be modest, it adds up to something quite important? It is good for the country that there are negotiations and steady progress.

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He knows that I am rarely deterred, but I might be a little more tentative when speaking about European matters than when speaking about road lighting. The most important element of the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday was the political co-operation there. A statement against terrorism by all 12 members is a substantial achievement—and it was not a foregone conclusion. It contains a warning to Governments that support terrorism, an agreement not to undercut measures against Governments—which clearly covers United States measures against Libya—and an agreement not to sell arms to Governments that behave like Libya; and it strengthens the Twelve's security against terrorism and contains machinery to ensure follow-up action. We have never before had such a statement from 12 nations. If on no other count, the meeting was a great advance because of that.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I join in congratulating the Minister on her appointment. My hon. Friends and I will miss her courteous and personal response to our questions in her previous capacity, whether on constituency or policy matters. Those qualities will stand her in good stead in her present position, however difficult it may be.

Did any consensus emerge from discussions on the MFA, especially with a view to the question whether this should be the last renegotiation of the MFA? Will she tell the House whether, during the discussions on South Africa, there was a discussion about strengthening the

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

sanctions against South Africa, as the meagre sanctions that currently exist are wholly inadequate to express our disgust at what is happening and our anxiety at the worsening position? Is it not the case that the United Kingdom has dragged its feet? Will she now give some thought to increasing the strength of sanctions?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind comments at the start of his remarks. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was present at the discussion on the MFA. We followed exactly the line set out in the statement of the then Minister for Trade on 9 May. We did not make much progress, but discussions are now clearly seen as part of the further GATT round which is coming. Any renewed MFA will clearly be a transitional measure.

We did not have an extensive discussion about South Africa in the terms in which the hon. Gentleman phrased his question. However, we agreed that no EC partner would export crude oil to South Africa. The United Kingdom has never sold crude oil to South Africa. No further United Kingdom action is necessary and any action will take place within individual countries.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend, whose brief now includes one of the most complex and controversial political areas in the world—South Africa. I welcome the universality of the declaration that was made in Brussels against terrorism, but will the declaration not be shown to be the most appalling sham if an exception should be made for the ANC? Before my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State sets off for Lusaka, will my hon. Friend make sure that he has in his handbag—*[Interruption.]*—the full transcripts of the broadcasts from Addis Ababa by the ANC, which are the most vicious incitement to terrorism that anyone could wish to read?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I shall bring his remarks to the notice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I am well aware, as my hon. Friend must be, that wherever terrorism occurs it must be condemned, whether it comes from the ANC or terrorists in any other part of the world. Terrorism is terrorism from whomsoever it comes.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the hon. Lady accept that, whatever her attitude to the issues, the attitude to her usual high quality answers will be the reverse of scorn?

My hon. Friend referred to the signing of the draft treaty on 17 February, but not by Denmark. Will she confirm that the treaty will be a draft treaty? Will she outline the timing of the treaty's presentation and the method by which it will be presented for endorsement?

In view of the difficulties of next Monday's business, arising from the present powers of the European Assembly, do the Government intend to show further appreciation of the enhanced powers that will be contained in the treaty? Will these powers cause even more difficulties?

Mrs. Chalker: I will answer the hon. Gentleman as well as I can. If I am in error, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall tell him what I believe he was asking for. The treaty is the precursor to a Bill that will come before the House at the earliest practicable opportunity. I am not in a position to say when that will be, but it will be at the earliest possible date. As usual, legislation is required in this country to enforce the agreement. That will be entirely in accordance with normal practice. The House will have a full opportunity to debate the legislation during Second Reading and all its stages.

The debate on Monday takes place following a procedure recommended by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in 1982. That is the reason for the procedure in advance of any further debate.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my hon. Friend aware that some hon. Members representing textile areas will be worried that she took with her only the statement of the Minister of State for Trade last May on the subject of the multi-fibre arrangement? Is she aware that some of us hope for a much stronger attitude from the British Government and that we are concerned about rumours about the British negotiating committee?

Mrs. Chalker: As a Member from the north-west, I am well aware of the sensitivities surrounding the multi-fibre arrangement. Today, I read an article in the *Financial Times* about the matter that must worry some of my hon. Friends. It was only about a week ago that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the House that we believed that the long-term future of the MFA must be decided in the context of the proposed GATT round of international trading talks. The debates and the discussions that we are to have in Europe and in Britain will help us to thrash out a difficult problem, but we must achieve a balance between the home countries and the Third world countries.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): When does the Minister expect the negotiating mandate for the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement to be decided? Will she give a firm assurance that there is no question of controls on the dominant suppliers being relaxed to give preference to low-cost suppliers?

Does she agree that there is an urgent need for a full debate on the industry, which is the fourth largest manufacturing industry in Britain, employing tens of thousands of people in high unemployment areas? Will she add her support to the calls to which the Leader of the House is responding favourably for an urgent debate so that the Government can be advised by hon. Members who have a key concern about the future of that important industry?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the matter. I know that the Leader of the House heard all that the hon. Gentleman said during business questions and I shall draw his comments to my right hon. Friend's attention.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to excuse me from answering his questions in detail, because I was not present for the multi-fibre arrangement discussion. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and I shall place a copy in the Library so that he receives a full and accurate response.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my hon. Friend accept that a major part of her statement was directed to the MFA and to trade arrangements with Japan? Does she accept that the current huge imbalance of trade with Japan is unacceptable? The MFA, which is so critical

to Britain, is already too liberal. Liberalising it further, as will happen unless the Government take a stand, will mean tens of thousands more unemployed people in sensitive areas with already high unemployment. Will she press the Leader of the House for a debate, not only on the MFA, but on the broader principles of trade and the United Kingdom national interest so that the House, rather than Europe, can express a view as to the best interests of the people of our country?

Mrs. Chalker: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Of course we are worried about the mounting trade surplus with Japan, which still imposes a serious strain on an open trading system. My hon. Friend knows that we are at the beginning of a further round of MFA negotiations I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): During the lengthy discussions that took place on a series of subjects, could not sufficient time be found to discuss the most important matter of peace in Europe and the proposals that have been made by Mr. Gorbachev on nuclear disarmament? Is that subject likely to be discussed in the future? If not, why not?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the EC spends much time discussing not only peace, but how we can best work together to prevent terrorism. The wider issues are not a matter for the Foreign Affairs Council or, indeed, for political co-operation. Although Ministers have those matters at the back of their minds and sometimes discuss them privately, they are more a matter for summit discussions. I assure the hon. Gentleman that every offer and every move to create peace in the world will be taken up by the Government and pursued relentlessly.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): In congratulating my hon. Friend on impressively and successfully representing the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council, and welcoming her statement that international co-operation is the only way forward to combat terrorism by individual groups and terrorism sponsored and fostered by Governments, may I ask whether in future Foreign Affairs Councils she will bring a similar spirit to international co-operation in trying to counter other evils, such as the growing distribution of hard drugs?

Mrs. Chalker: I am not sure that that is a matter for the Foreign Affairs Council, but whenever the subject is placed on the agenda for a Council meeting, I and my right hon. Friends will do all we can to ensure that the EC makes every move, individually and collectively, to combat the trading in drugs.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Did the Minister hear business questions earlier today, when many senior Tory Back-Bench Members said that the Common Market was operating on an illegal budget? If that is the case, did she have any pangs of conscience as she and her officials were gallivanting round the Continent spending money which the Common Market legally does not possess? Does she accept that, although she was one of those in the Government who were active in encouraging the surcharging of 80 Lambeth and Liverpool councillors for producing deficit budgets of about £250,000, the Common Market needs £6 million on Monday night and, according to Tory Members, is acting illegally?

Mrs. Chalker: I should have expected that question. To answer the hon. Gentleman's first question, I heard some of business questions. The European Parliament has voted on a budget that is illegal. When that happens, there is a procedure for dealing with it. In the case of Liverpool, there is similarly a procedure for dealing with an illegal budget, and that procedure has been carried out. We shall follow through the legal procedures to deal with the EC matter as we would with any other.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As an honest and objective Minister in an honest and objective Government, would my hon. Friend help the House by laying down the ground rules as to what is and what is not terrorism and what is and what is not state terrorism? Does she agree with me that the raid on Tunis was an act of terrorism carried out by a state, whereas the raids on the airports in Vienna and Rome were definitely acts of terrorism, but that there is as yet no direct connection with any state?

Secondly, will my hon. Friend confirm that there will still be a veto available to the United Kingdom on such things as the fifth directive, Vredeling and the draft directive on parental leave?

Mrs. Chalker: I am sure that the answer to my hon. Friend's last question is yes, but if I am wrong I will write to him.

My hon. Friend asked for a definition of terrorism. In today's world, we would also classify as terrorism the means to deliver terrorism. This is not the time to answer his question, but I shall send him a note later.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call the four hon. Members who have been standing, but I ask them to make their questions brief.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): In joining others in welcoming my hon. Friend to her new responsibilities, may I assure her that she will find the Europe enthusiasists here a tight-lipped and supportive bunch of people when she comes to the Chamber? Did she take the opportunity in the Council to explore the differences of opinion that became apparent among our fellow members of the Community between their enthusiasm for sanctions against South Africa and their reluctance to join calls for sanctions against Libya? Did she get to the bottom of that difference?

Mrs. Chalker: The simple answer is that we did not have time to probe in the way suggested by my hon. Friend. I am sure that many people will not shift from the ground that they presently hold.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend note that in article 6 of the text that has been presented to the House the expression "European Assembly" will be changed, by treaty, to "European Parliament" for the first time, and that the words

"in co-operation with the European Parliament"

are used rather than the present words

"after consulting the European Assembly".

What will the words

"in co-operation with the European Parliament"

mean in practice?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Nothing, just like the European Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: The change in title happened as a result of normal usage in the Community and the practice of successive Governments to use the term "European Parliament", except in legal texts. The texts which were agreed at Luxembourg reflect that exectly. When the agreed changes have been ratified, "European Parliament" will become the correct legal description, too. Unless we are prepared to work in co-operation with the European Parliament and with other European Governments, the whole business of Europe will become nonsense. Co-operation must be a key word in any of the documents that we discuss.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: In the quest to stop international terrorism, what decisions were taken to stop the Libyans pursuing attacks at airports not just in Britain but throughout Europe? Those attacks were extremely offensive, and we must prevent terrorists from entering the country. Will she advise the Foreign Secretary that the African National Congress has announced that two of its representatives plan to come to Leicester to rededicate Nelson Mandela park? Should not all terrorists — especially Libyans—be stopped from entering Britain— or, indeed, Europe?

Mrs. Chalker: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), I set out the five main points of the action that will be taken by the 12 members of the EC against terrorism. I assure my hon. Friend that we are extremely anxious to ensure that the machinery to follow up the decisions that were made at the Foreign Affairs Council is set up. Although Libya was not mentioned directly in the text, it was clear at which country the comments were directed. But since Libya is not the only country that has purveyed terrorism, it was as well to produce a statement that encompassed other countries. Wherever terrorism and violence occur, they must be deterred, and that is what the Twelve are determined to do.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I wish my hon. Friend success in her new job. Does she agree that decisions taken in Brussels will help to create jobs in Britain, not least because of the recognition of the underlying need for a free internal market?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Until we can achieve a free internal market and we can break down the quota system, we shall prevent jobs from being created. Therefore, we shall do our best to ensure that jobs and businesses are created by the Common Market.

Press Conference

4.39 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Chairman of the Employment Select Committee to call a press conference next Tuesday when he has been ordered not to speak to journalists by the party that likes to try to stop the clock?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for the Chairmen of Select Committees. I know nothing about the press conference, but I am sure that it is perfectly in order.

BILL PRESENTED

WAGES

Mr. Kenneth Clarke, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Channon and Mr. David Trippier, presented a Bill to make fresh provision with respect to the protection of workers in relation to the payment of wages; to make further provision with respect to wages councils; to restrict redundancy rebates to employers with less than ten employees and to abolish certain similar payments; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 70.].

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Agriculture and Horticulture Grant (Variation) Scheme 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 57) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

The Army

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

4.40 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): The past year has been one of sustained progress and achievement for the Army both at home and overseas.

In addition to the Army's normal deployments, 1985 saw continuing and effective operations against terrorists in Northern Ireland, the largest home defence exercise we have ever conducted, significant progress in the modernisation of the Army's equipment, the provision of military training to over 70 foreign countries, important contributions to international peacekeeping in Cyprus and the Sinai, and a rapid and highly valued response to the natural disasters in Mexico and Colombia.

Nineteen eighty five also saw no fewer than 12 regiments of the British Army celebrating 300 years of continuous service to the Crown — a record that we believe is unmatched by that of any other army in the world.

I shall start with the main areas of actual or potential Army operations. During the past year, there has been no let-up in the modernisation of the Warsaw pact nuclear and conventional forces facing us on the central front. The Warsaw pact has continued to deploy new self-propelled artillery in eastern Europe, both conventional and nuclear capable. There has been significant additional deployment of its latest main battle tank, the T80, which has a gas turbine engine and a laser range-finder system, and which can fire an anti-tank guided missile as well as normal tank ammunition through its main gun barrel.

The deployment in eastern Europe of Frogfoot aircraft which are designed to provide close air support for Warsaw pact ground forces, and which has been used extensively by the Russians in Afghanistan, has continued. The aircraft has now made its first appearance with Soviet forces in the forward areas of East Germany. The formidable Hind anti-tank helicopter is still being added to the Warsaw pact front line at a fast rate.

The Warsaw pact's logistic support for its forces will shortly be further improved with the deployment of its new heavy lift helicopter, designated, somewhat improbably, by NATO as the Halo. We saw for ourselves in the Falklands what a force multiplier helicopters in the logistic role can be.

The Soviet chemical threat remains as significant as ever. To counter the Warsaw pact threat, important improvements to the Army's equipment programme have been made in the past year. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will refer to these when he comes to reply.

From the operational standpoint, I am glad to say that these improvements will give 1st British Corps larger numbers of modern main battle tanks, much improved protected mobility with new wheeled and tracked armoured personnel carriers, new small arms, improved air defence, an improved targeting capability for the artillery and a quantum jump improvement in its communications and data processing facilities. These all represent very important contributions to NATO's plans for strengthening the Alliance's conventional defences right down the central front.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Regrettably, I must go north tonight to my constituency to face the problem of the redundancies at the royal ordnance factories in my constituency and elsewhere. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the regrettable redundancies at ROF Chorley result from Ministry of Defence war stocks being returned to their requisite high level following the Falklands conflict? Will he further confirm that the contract for 105 mm shells, which will go some way towards alleviating the obvious distress caused by those job losses, has been awarded as a direct result of ROF's improved competitive edge and the sheer quality of product compared with foreign alternatives?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is again forcefully representing the interests of his constituents. As he knows, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has been in correspondence with him about the detailed background to those particular redundancies. I know that my hon. Friend wishes to refer to them when he replies.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): If the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has been in detailed correspondence with his hon. Friend, why has he not yet been in correspondence with me? I have not received a letter.

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend the Minister advises me from a sedentary position that he has.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has kindly been in correspondence with me. He has made it clear that although orders will be placed with royal ordnance factories, and they will go some way towards reducing the size of the announced redundancies, the reduction will be by less than 10 per cent. Will the Minister confirm that?

Mr. Stanley: As I have already said, my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that specific issue when he replies, and in view of the interest shown by three hon. Members I am sure that he will do so.

The past year has also been notable for the adoption of an improved concept of operations by northern army group (NORTHAG) of which C-in-C BAOR is the Army Group commander, and of which 1st British Corps comprises one of the four NORTHAG army corps.

The adoption of this new concept of operatons marks no change in NATO's wholly defensive posture, and no change in NATO's fundamental strategy of forward defence and flexible response. It has been adopted in response to the continuing improvements in Soviet firepower, the Russians' tactic of concentrating their forces so as to achieve local superiority, and their creation of operational manoeuvre groups of divisional size or larger, which are intended to exploit initial breakthroughs and penetrate rapidly into NATO's rear areas. In the light of those developments, NORTHAG needed a less static defence, more defence in depth and strong armoured reserves. The new concept of operations provides all of these.

The House will wish to be aware of the major contribution to the formulation of this new concept of operations, and to getting it agreed by the Alliance as a whole, played by General Sir Nigel Bagnall, then the commander of NORTHAG and now chief of the general staff.

[Mr. Stanley]

In a letter to *The Times* on 3 July last year, General Chalupa, commander-in-chief allied forces central Europe, said:

"I would also wish to acknowledge General Bagnall's significant contribution towards the successful accomplishment of our primary task, which is the prevention of war by maintaining a credible defence posture. I appreciate in particular his untiring efforts in developing and refining further the defence concepts and plans evolved by his predecessors."

I am sure the House was gratified to see General Chalupa's generous tribute to General Bagnall.

Turning to northern Norway, although the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines have major roles in protecting this key area of NATO territory, the Army also makes a significant contribution, and trains accordingly. We deploy to northern Norway, not merely 3 Commando Brigade, but the battalion with logistic support that the Army contributes to the ACE mobile force (land) AMF(L). These units undertake the same arctic warfare training as the Royal Marines, and have recently been equipped with the new BV206 over-snow tracked vehicle. The AMF(L) role is currently being discharged by the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.

In terms of operations outside the NATO area, the House will recall that in November 1983 my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence announced, in the light of our Falklands experience, an important range of enhancements for 5 Brigade. That brigade has been renamed 5 Airborne Brigade to reflect its new ability to mount a parachute assault with a minimum of one parachute battalion and its supporting air defence, artillery, signals, engineer and medical elements, all of which can now be parachute dropped.

The House will be glad to know that all the enhancements announced in November 1983 have now been implemented, as has the programme of fitting station-keeping radars to a number of Hercules aircraft so that the whole of the leading parachute battalion group can be delivered in a single parachute drop. In view of the importance we attach to our out-of-area capability, we announced last month that a major strategic exercise would be held in Oman later this year involving British forces and those of the Sultanate of Oman. The exercise is to be called Saif Sareea, which I am advised is Arabic for Swift Sword.

The aim of the exercise will be to practise our ability to respond rapidly to a crisis outside the NATO area. The exercise will involve some 5,000 service men from all three services. The units taking part will include elements of 5 Airborne Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade. It will also involve ships from the Royal Navy task group, which will be on its way back from its planned deployment to the Pacific. In addition, the RAF will make a major contribution in the form of a detachment of Tornado aircraft and substantial air transport resources. Exercise Saif Sareea will be the largest out-of-area exercise we have undertaken for many years and should prove to be of great value.

The one operation in which the Army is involved every day of the year is supporting the police against terrorism in Northern Ireland. In recent years, and indeed over the centuries, terrorism has taken many forms. Today, terrorism is increasingly assuming an international dimension, and in Northern Ireland takes one of the most sophisticated forms of any in the world. Fortunately, the British Army has unique experience and unique expertise in combating this menace.

The Army's assistance to the police in dealing with terrorism is not confined to Northern Ireland. It also assists the police, who have the primary counter-terrorist responsibility in the rest of the United Kingdom. It does so through the provision of specialist skills such as Royal Engineers explosive search teams, Royal Army Ordnance Corps bomb disposal teams, and through specialist training and equipment. In June last year it was an RAOC team that rendered safe and cleared the large quantity of terrorist bomb-making equipment found by the Strathclyde police in Glasgow.

However, it is of course in Northern Ireland in support of the RUC that the Army's counter-terrorist effort is overwhelmingly concentrated. Last year saw some significant successes. As a result of the security forces' efforts, 522 charges were brought relating to terrorist offences and 237 weapons were seized and nearly seven tonnes of explosives were recovered. One cannot speak too highly of the skill and bravery of all those elements of the armed forces and the RUC who secured these results.

The work of the Army's bomb disposal and search teams in Northern Ireland in saving lives, property and jobs from destruction by terrorist bombs continues to be outstanding. These teams dealt with some 200 explosive devices last year, one of which contained 1,600 lbs of explosive. For the bomb disposal teams, the smallest device represents as great a personal danger as the largest. The way those teams combine outstanding technical skill with selfless personal bravery commands our highest admiration.

The achievements of the security forces in Northern Ireland in 1985 were not obtained without cost. Twenty nine police officers and soldiers lost their lives last year, and a further 340 were injured. Of the 29 killed, 27 were members of the RUC or the UDR. As the House recognises, the men and women of the RUC and the UDR, knowingly and willingly, accept the particular risks that service with either force or its reserves automatically confers. These men and women are at risk on duty, at home, and, if part-timers, at their place of work as well. They are at risk both when they are serving and when they retire. One man killed last year had finished his service with the UDR seven years previously. They are at risk at any place and at any time. The commitment and the courage of the men and women of the RUC and the UDR are of the highest order.

That commitment and that courage have been recognised in the award to service personnel last year of a further 73 decorations for gallantry in Northern Ireland. Those decorations included one George medal, one military cross, 12 Queen's gallantry medals and six military medals, one of which, sadly, was posthumous. In addition, 102 service men and service women were mentioned in dispatches. We salute those who were honoured in this way. My only regret is that for security reasons the citations cannot be made public. They make remarkable reading.

Over the years the terrorist threat in the province has moved through various phases, and the security forces have had to adapt their response to meet each phase. Currently, the terrorists are making particular use of home-made mortars against police stations. This has been coupled with the attempted intimidation of building

contractors doing work for the security forces. The Government are firmly determined to ensure that such tactics do not succeed.

An additional battalion, the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment, was moved at short notice to Northern Ireland at the beginning of this month and became operational there with commendable speed. Additional Royal Engineers have also been deployed in the province and, as I saw for myself recently, they are doing a first-class job in providing the security forces with additional protection. The House will be glad to know that the work of rebuilding the first of the RUC stations that was severely hit before Christmas has already started.

The events of the last few weeks have underlined once again the importance of security co-operation across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. We are in no doubt that the Anglo-Irish agreement marks a crucial step forward in this area which is equally vital to the Republic and to ourselves. I should mention that the terrorist weapon find — about which we were all delighted to hear—made by the Garda last weekend just south of the border was one of the largest ever such finds in the Republic.

It is to the immense credit of the security forces that we have come a long way from the peak of violence in the early 1970s. The RUC has increasingly been able to resume policing on the streets, and the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland are able to live normal lives. I know that the whole House will wish me to express our gratitude to all the members of the security forces in Northern Ireland for the dangerous and essential work that they do.

Last year reminded us, to an unusual degree, of the Army's value in being able to respond quickly and effectively to civilian needs. In the last 12 months, the British Army has helped in three major natural disasters outside the United Kingdom. Successive teams of Army air dispatchers from the Royal Corps of Transport, including three Territorial Army members, served continuously in Ethiopia from February to December last year air-dropping desperately needed grain to areas inaccessible by vehicle.

With the RAF, the air dispatchers air-dropped over 14,000 tonnes of grain in a huge total of 954 separate sorties. Almost all these airdrops were made at extremely low level from RAF Hercules aircraft flying at about 50 ft from the ground. This reflected both flying and air-dropping skills of the highest order. Following the Mexico earthquake disaster, a Royal Engineer troop was on the scene within 48 hours of our being asked to help. It was given the key job of trying to save the partially collapsed building that was the hub of a high proportion of Mexico's telephone network and therefore represented a vital communications link for the whole country. The building was unstable, and contained a number of rapidly decomposing bodies. The Royal Engineers worked round the clock on that building for nearly three weeks in physically hazardous and most unpleasant conditions. They rightly earned the high regard and very warm appreciation of the Mexican authorities.

Only a few weeks after that, the Army was again on hand with the service team that was deployed to Colombia to help evacuate and get relief supplies to civilians in the Armero district who survived the devastating volcanic eruption there.

In case anyone should think that the Army is only likely to play that sort of a role outside the United Kingdom, the House will recall that when over a quarter of a million people in Leeds suddenly found themselves without a water supply just before Christmas, the situation was saved by all three services sending water bowsers to Leeds with most impressive speed, following a no-notice emergency call-out in the middle of the night. The speed and proficiency of the responses made by the Army and of course by the other two services to these major crises for civilian communities has been extremely creditable.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My right hon. Friend has talked about the admirable service given by the armed services here and overseas. I endorse everything that he has said. Can he tell us whether he will deal with the crisis in the services brought about by so many young, skilled, qualified officers, NCOs and other ranks leaving the services because they are deeply upset and concerned about the level of pay and the dramatic reduction in allowances when they are serving in not very popular parts of the world, including the British Army of the Rhine?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is anticipating a later section of my speech.

I now want to turn to the other main commitments that the Army has. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence made it clear that we shall continue to be responsible for the defence and internal security of Hong Kong up to 1997, and that we shall maintain the forces needed for that purpose. He also made it clear that we intend that there will be a continuing role for the Gurkhas after 1997 with the British Army, though not of course in Hong Kong. We shall be giving continuous consideration to the Army's force level in Hong Kong up to 1997.

There is no change at present in the Army's commitments in Brunei, Cyprus, Gibraltar and Belize, or to our contingent in Sinai with the multinational force and observers on the border between Egypt and Israel.

As far as the Falklands are concerned, our policy is to maintain the forces at the minimum size necessary to defend the islands and the dependencies. The opening of Mount Pleasant airport has greatly improved our rapid reinforcement capability. Once the airport and garrison facilities are complete, we should be able to reduce still further the level of forces permanently stationed on the islands.

Given the events of the last few days, the House will wish to know the situation of our small training team in Uganda. The value of the British Army presence to foreign expatriates in Uganda, of which British expatriates are still the largest component, was shown immediately after the coup against President Obote last July. A considerable number of expatriates wanted to leave at that point. An evacuation convoy from Kampala to the Kenyan border was, therefore, jointly planned and administered by the British high commission and the British Army training team in Uganda. That action won widespread praise and gratitude from all involved. During the events of last weekend we did, of course, keep in the closest touch with our team in Uganda. We will now be considering its future in the light of the new situation in that country.

The House will also be interested to know that, building on the success of British training teams in Zimbabwe since

[Mr. Stanley]

independence, it has been agreed by the Governments of Zimbabwe and Mozambique and ourselves that the British army training team in Zimbabwe should provide some training for Mozambican officers and NCOs at the Battalion battle school at Nyanga in Zimbabwe. The first course is due to begin in February.

The contribution we make to providing military advice and training to foreign countries all over the world through the loan service personnel of all three services receives less prominence than I believe it merits. The Army contributes some 450 personnel in 20 countries. Those teams maintain an excellent standard of training, are highly regarded by their host countries and are an asset to Britain, and to the West, out of all proportion to their size and their cost.

I have spoken so far about the operations and commitments of the Army's full-time professionals. I now turn to the Regular and volunteer reserves. The critical importance of the reserves is shown by the fact that, in a period of tension and after full mobilisation, the size of the Army as a whole would increase by some 175,000 through the addition of the reserves, and the size of the Army in Germany would almost treble. From that it can be seen that the Army would be in no position to discharge its wartime commitments without our reserve forces. Moreover, the reserves are strikingly cost-effective. The TA, for example, generates over 30 per cent. of the Army's order of battle for only some 5 per cent. of its budget.

As for the regular reserves, we are carrying out more detailed planning for fitting them to their wartime tasks. We also started a new training scheme last year to give regular reservists a week's refresher training in their third year out of the Army, and we gave some 2,000 of them the opportunity to take part in exercise Brave Defender last year. We shall continue to look for cost-effective ways in which we can make greater use of our regular reserves.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My right hon. Friend's words on the Territorial Army and the volunteer regular reserves are welcome in many quarters of the House but particularly on these Benches. Can he say whether progress has yet been made with his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Health and Social Security to try to help those members of the TA who are unemployed and who find that their supplementary benefit or dole is cut immediately whereas it can take several weeks for the pay office to go through the administration of payment? That is causing great hardship in areas of high unemployment. Progress would be very much welcomed by the TA.

Mr. Stanley: I am aware of the problem to which my hon. Friend has referred. I assure him that my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support is pursuing the matter personally with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the DHSS.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): We greatly applaud my right hon. Friend's remarks about the TA, its reliance and its cost-effectiveness. None the less, can he assure the House that cost-effectiveness will not be taken to the point of penny-pinching? I am thinking particularly of the recent successful recruiting drive which is bringing in many young people who are enthusiastic and are excellent material. However, they have to train in drill halls that were built for the 1930s and have been virtually unmaintained, giving an uncared for impression that can be discouraging to young recruits.

Reference has been made to people leaving the services. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he is aware of the serious drain at the level of lieutenant-colonel or of regimental and battalion commanders, a rank that is crucial?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Briefly, please.

Mr. Browne: It is a matter not just of pay but of career opportunities.

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the points he has made. I have not yet completed what I wish to say on the TA but I can assure my hon. Friend that we are encouraged by the levels of recruitment which we have been achieving. I am about to come to that. I take his point that if we could provide a training base in reasonably attractive conditions that would be a plus for recruiting.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I hope that my right hon. Friend will say something about the cadet force because that is the nursery for recruiting. I understand that the cadet force is now much better equipped. On page 45 of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" a good deal of space is rightly given to the cadet force. If young people are properly trained, not only does it do them good for civilian life but a very high proportion join the regular forces or the TA.

Mr. Stanley: I endorse what my hon. Friend has said. One meets a large number of people who have come into all three services, but particularly the Army, from the ranks of the cadets and the junior leaders. As he will see in the second volume of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", we have been maintaining a high level of entry into the cadet force and we hope that will continue.

The expansion of the Territorial Army is making steady progress towards our target of 86,000. The strength of the TA was only some 59,000 when we came into office in 1979. It is over 76,000 now, having increased by some 4,000 in the past year.

The House will be interested to know that we are having good results from our trial scheme to raise TA units from the many British people living on the continent. Many of these are ex-service men, and they invariably have language skills and good local knowledge as well. These continental TA units look like proving a very valuable addition to our reserve forces.

Equally successful has been the expansion of the home service force. The enthusiasm of the force can be judged from the fact that 92 per cent. of the force's strength participated in exercise Brave Defender.

The HSF has already grown to 2,800 — in other words, over halfway to our initial target strength of nearly 5,000. We shall be considering whether we can go beyond that figure.

As I have made clear, the Army's Regular and volunteer Reserves are an indispensable element of the British Army. We are very grateful indeed to employers who are generous and sympathetic towards the release of their staff with TA commitments, recognising that it is in the national interest that those commitments should be fulfilled. In this context, I am very pleased to be able to announce the formation of a national employer liaison

committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Tommy Macpherson. I know that Mr. Macpherson and his committee will make a most valuable contribution to maintaining and increasing the essential support that the TA receives from employers. Mr. Macpherson has the two essential qualifications: substantial experience as an employer in industry and substantial experience in the services as well.

We are very grateful to all those in the Regular and volunteer Reserves for giving their time, their skills and their enthusiasm to the British Army.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He will know that his remarks and the emphasis that the Government place on the Territorial Army are widely welcomed. Is he satisfied that there are now sufficient man training days for the Territorial Army to carry out its task adequately? Will he say something about the history of the expansion of man training days?

Mr. Stanley: It is obviously a matter of judgment as to what level of training days will meet the particular requirements of the TA. We make that judgment as accurately as possible. There is a trade-off: the more the training days are expanded, the more difficult it is for some individuals to get the necessary degree of release, which makes it that much more difficult for units to carry out their exercises as formed units. So there is a balance to be struck. The recent major exercises, both Lionheart and Brave Defender, have shown that the Territorial Army units, the Volunteer Reserve, and the Regular Reserve are now achieving a good level of training and have done very well in both exercises.

The calibre of the British Army rests ultimately on the calibre of its people. I am glad to say that recruitment overall goes well, with both officer and soldier entries being close to target. The Army's view is that the quality of entrants has been rising. Amongst officers the proportion of graduate entrants is now about 45 per cent. compared with 30 per cent. as recently as 1978-79.

Rates of retention are as important as rates of entry. Though the rate of premature voluntary retirement has risen from its historic low point in 1981-82, it is still well below the record high in the last year of the previous Government. Pay and conditions of service clearly bear on rates of retention. Although we are fully aware of the concern over the reductions in local overseas allowance that have taken place in Germany, our view is that there is nothing basically wrong with the LOA system, which provides absolutely essential financial compensation for those service men who have to serve in overseas countries where the cost of living is substantially higher than in the United Kingdom.

As far as pay is concerned, this Government, unlike our predecessors, have accepted the service pay recommendations in seven successive reports of the armed forces pay review body, with the one exception of part of the 1984 award being made subject to seven months' phasing.

We have also made a number of important improvements to conditions of service. We have introduced a scheme to sell surplus married quarters to service personnel at 30 per cent discount. We have allowed time in service accommodation to count for discount purposes in the local authority and new town "right to buy" scheme. We have improved the free travel entitlement for married personnel serving in Northern Ireland and the Scottish islands and we have abolished the contribution that parents serving overseas had to make towards their first child's visit to them for the third school holiday each year, which saved many parents several hundred pounds. There is no question that the record of the present Government on service pay and conditions is very much better than that of our predecessors.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend said that he was going to raise the matter later in his speech, but would he admit to the House that it is not only graduate officers and others who are very important to the armed services, it is the qualities of motivation and leadership, which do not always accompany a university degree? Would he indicate that in the future the position of non-graduate officers will be given a higher priority by the Government than has perhaps been the case in the immediate past? The position of graduate officers is very much better moneywise than that of non-graduate officers. Will my right hon. Friend attend to this point in future?

Mr. Stanley: I understand fully the point that my hon. Friend makes. I would not want him to think from what I have said about statistics in relation to graduate entry that the Army is reluctant to have non-graduate officers. There are very many of them and they are of the highest calibre. When people are considering the Army and, perhaps even more important, once they are in the Army, it is good to know that all officers are treated exactly the same, whether they have degrees or not, and that they are treated entirely on their merit. I can assure my hon. Friend that that will continue.

Mr. John Browne *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: I think that this will have to be the last intervention because many of my hon. Friends want to speak, and I want to draw my remarks to a close.

Mr. Browne: Would my right hon. Friend comment on the fact that retention is a matter not just of pay—I agree with much of what he has said—but of career prospects?

Mr. Stanley: Yes, I agree. It is a question of career prospects and a multitude of other factors. There is the degree of stretch on the force, career prospects, pay, conditions of service, it is the total of all the elements that go towards to job satisfaction.

In the last Army debate I announced the Government's scheme to make it possible for war widows, for the very first time, to visit their husbands' graves overseas, almost entirely at public expense. I can tell the House that the scheme has been an unqualified success, as I know at first hand. It was a privilege to meet a number of widows taking part in the scheme at the El Alamein commemoration service last October. The letters I have had from widows taking part in these pilgrimages have been as appreciative and as moving as any I have received.

In the first year of the scheme, some 350 widows, often accompanied at their own expense by other members of their families, visited cemeteries in a total of 11 countries, stretching from Europe to the far east. I cannot speak too highly of the way in which the scheme has been run by the Royal British Legion, both at the legion's headquarters and at its newly created pilgrimages department at Aylesford which, as it happens, is in my own constituency.

[Mr. Stanley]

The British Legion's organisation and sensitivity, both in the preparations and on the actual pilgrimages, has been superb, as the war widows themselves have been the first to say. I should like to express our very warm appreciation to the president of the Royal British Legion, General Sir Patrick Howard Dobson, and his pilgrimages team for the outstanding way in which the Royal British Legion is running this scheme.

The Army today is a well balanced and highly trained fighting force. It has amply demonstrated its superb professionalism in NATO reinforcement and home defence exercises, in supporting the police against terrorism, in international peacekeeping, in providing military training for many other countries, and in responding with speed and great effectiveness to a large variety of civil emergencies. The Army, like the other two services, does our country the greatest credit.

5.19 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I add my congratulations to the Royal British Legion, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred in closing his speech, in the work it has done in assisting war widows to go abroad in the manner he suggested.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave us the usual tour of the world that he does with that boyish enthusiasm of his for his job, which we appreciate — from carrying water in Leeds to ferrying convoys out to Uganda. However, he skated over the real problems which the Department faces. Indeed, listening to him, I thought perhaps he was not aware that there is a defence budget, let alone that it is out of control. Perhaps the Minister of State will deal with that and with all the problems of procurement when he winds up.

Debates on the three services seem to be coming later and later in the year. The last debate on the Army took place in October 1984. At least we have the advantage on this occasion that the debate comes after the publication of the White Paper on public expenditure. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman has heard of it and has read it. The picture given by that White Paper is not quite as rosy as the one which the right hon. Gentleman tried to set out early in his speech but which he left pretty quickly.

The picture in the future will not look so good, not only for the armed forces in general in terms of conventional weapons, but also for the Army in particular. One reason, I think, is that so many large projects are now being undertaken which do not form part of the Army's expenditure and commitment. I refer to Trident and to the European fighter aircraft, two projects to which the Government are totally committed and which no doubt will not bear any reductions. I mention also the problems with Nimrod and the costs of Nimrod. This too could affect the Army's budget. I mention the apparent commitment to maintain a 50-warship Navy, but to maintain three-figure orders a year, although I understand that, according to Mr. Desmond Wettern, even that is running into some difficulties. Then there is the need to replace the Navy's amphibious vessels. With all those major commitments, some of the reductions in expenditure it seems to us are bound to fall on the Army.

Referring again to the White Paper on public expenditure—it is never easy to work these matters out, because the Government try to conceal as much as they can —even on the most favourable estimate, and taking into account the fact that there will be some decline from now on in Falklands expenditure because the replacement of equipment lost is coming to an end, if one considers this from the point of view of general inflation, it has been calculated that over the next three years, which is the period of the public expenditure White Paper, there is likely to be a decline of about 5 per cent. in the total defence budget.

That decline, if it continued, could mean that by the end of the three-year period defence spending would be down from about 5·4 per cent. of gross national product to possibly 4·9 per cent. of GNP. But that, of course, is on the basis of general inflation only. There is apparently something called defence inflation, although I am not absolutely clear what it is. Defence equipment, it seems, tends to increase in cost faster than the retail price index or any other indicator of general inflation in the economy. On that basis alone, there will be some decline, but within that decline there will be a massive increase in expenditure on Trident. I guess that in the next few years the expenditure will rise to almost £1,000 million a year. Therefore, with a slightly declining budget and an escalating cost in respect of one of those items and, indeed, the European fighter aircraft, there is great danger that the cuts will start to fall, and many of them will fall on the British Army.

The Government can and might well get themselves into the ridiculous position of cutting front line defence and expenditure on weapons of first resort and spending vast amounts of money on Trident, which, I understand, is still being described as a weapon of last resort. It makes no sense to cut spending on weapons intended to deter and prevent us from ever having to use a horrific weapon of last resort like Trident.

Where will the cuts fall? Will they fall on equipment, on pay or on the British Army of the Rhine? Will it be the Challenger programmes? What programme will have to be pruned back and cut as a result of what we see as an inevitable decline in the total defence budget?

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): In dealing with the legitimate point which the right hon. Gentleman is putting to the Government, can he give the policy of the Labour party in this regard? While we know that it wishes to reduce our defence expenditure to the lowest common denominator of NATO, and says that it will abolish Trident, it cannot finance everything that it wants just by abolishing Trident. What would Opposition Members do to deal with the problems and to reduce expenditure?

Mr. Davies: We have made it clear that we will abolish Trident. We have also made it clear that, without Trident, it will be possible to maintain conventional defence spending at present levels. That is perfectly possible if we get rid of the Trident missile system.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The right hon. Gentleman is very careful to reply that the Labour party would maintain conventional defence spending. We want to know whether it would abolish Trident and maintain defence spending overall — in other words, use the money from Trident — all of it, if necessary — to strengthen conventional forces?

Mr. Davies: I made the point clear. We have a non-nuclear defence policy, and that means conventional

defence spending. I said that, by cancelling Trident, we can maintain present levels of conventional defence spending.

I hope that the Minister of State can deal with one aspect of equipment mentioned recently in *Jane's Defence Weekly* on the SP70, the self-propelled howitzer. This is, so *Jane's Defence Weekly* tells us, in great trouble. It is a programme which affects our ordnance factories and in which we have a 25 per cent. stake. After a considerable time, it appears that there are great problems with this self-propelled howitzer.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The right hon. Gentleman has quoted *Jane's Defence Weekly*. Is this the same journal which Opposition Members were so scathing about when they mentioned the special forces which infiltrated Greenham Common?

Mr. Davies: Indeed it is; the hon. Gentleman is right.

I deal next with the problems facing the armed forces. The danger is that orders will start to be postponed and to fall off. We have seen the effect of that on the royal ordnance factories at Birtley and Chorley today with 131 jobs being lost—this on a day when there has been an announcement of record unemployment.

There will be problems over training. The services are now also being affected by a cut of 10,000 civilian jobs which is putting heavy burdens upon the armed services. Last year's 7·5 per cent. pay increase has been whittled away by rent and other increases. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the local overseas allowance, although he said nothing about the inquiry which, I understand, he has set up or is setting up. Perhaps the Minister of State can tell us, if there is an inquiry, whether it is proceeding. The cuts wiped out totally, especially in Germany, any increases in pay under the 7·5 per cent. increase last year.

Experienced officers, especially in West Germany, are leaving the service and going into industry, for all sorts of reasons. Morale in the services is not as high as the picture the Minister tried to paint when he opened the debate.

We do not envy the task of the new Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). I do not think he is likely to be any more successful with the defence budget than he was with the Scottish rating system. We feel sorry for him because he has to clean up after the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who went through the Ministry of Defence—towards the end of his 10 years in the Cabinet—like one of those self-propelled howitzers, out of control.

The Minister rightly told us of the number of roles the Army plays. It plays a major role in Germany, the Falklands, Belize, Hong Kong and Gibraltar. It carries out training exercises in other parts of the world. It also has a role in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It performs those duties with skill, diligence and considerable tact.

The Army's role will be extended with the creation of a kind of rapid deployment force. The Minister clearly said that this was to perform a role out of area, outside NATO. We have deep misgivings about this, partly on grounds of cost, but partly because it means that Britain will again be drawn into conflict in various parts of the world. I believe that our main task and duty should be to play our role in NATO and western Europe.

The main out-of-area role still concerns the Falklands. That commitment not only costs money, but means that hardware and equipment, which should be available to our forces to perform our NATO role, have to be diverted to the Falklands.

The Government can be condemned because they have failed even to try to reach some kind of honourable settlement and achieve a solution to the Falklands problem. It will not be easy to come to an agreement that protects the lives and livelihood of the Falkland islanders and enables us to reduce our military presence. No one pretends that that will be easy, but the Government stand condemned for not even trying, especially now, when Argentina has, instead of a Fascist dictatorship, President Alfonsin, who is courageous in his domestic policy and is trying to reduce the influence of the armed forces in Argentina. I think we should have given him some opportunity to negotiate and reach an honourable settlement.

In the debate on the Army on 17 November 1983, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

> "Despite our preoccupation with events outside the European theatre, the Army's most important operational commitment remains, and will remain, in Germany." — [*Official Report*, 17 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 1017.]

I do not know how far that commitment will be affected as a result of the problems of the budget and the cost of Trident and the European fighter aircraft, but the Government should address themselves to this matter.

The Labour party will fully observe and maintain our obligations under the treaty of Brussels and retain the BAOR at its current level. We made that commitment last year, and I repeat it. The Minister touched on the new strategy of follow-on force attack, or whatever it is called.

Mr. Stanley: I should like to correct the right hon. Gentleman. I was referring to the new concept of operations of the northern army group, which has nothing to do with follow-on forces attack.

Mr. Davies: I misunderstood the right hon. Gentleman. The House tends to forget what a radical step it is, and was, for Britain to commit a large section of its standing army so far east in Europe to a strategy which not only has been agreed by a number of other nations but which we increasingly believe owes far more to the political considerations of the host country than to sensible military requirements. I refer to the strategy of forward defence.

In the 1983 debate on the Army, the Minister of State said:

> "The forward defence of West Germany is the forward defence of the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report*, 17 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 1018.]

I do not know whether he was using the phrase "forward defence" in a precise sense. I do not criticise him for that. I think that the House well knows that forward defence is a precise and inflexible form of strategy.

The underlying hypothesis of NATO strategy is that Russia will suddenly unleash a massive blitzkrieg, frontal attack across the central plains of Europe. I do not think many hon. Members or people outside the House, even those in the Federal Republic of Germany, give much credibility or credence to that hypothesis, but that is the scenario with which we have to deal. It is on that basis that the NATO strategy has been created and on that basis that we have to look at the concept of forward defence.

Forward defence means theoretically that not one square kilometre of territory of the federal republic is to

[Mr. Davies]

be avoidably given up. Territory is not to be relinquished even temporarily for space, despite the obvious difficulty of holding territory in the early stages of mass attack.

It seems to me, and to many senior officers to whom I have spoken, that that is not a sensible military strategy when it is determined by political considerations and not by military considerations. The consequences of that strategy are considerable. If war broke out, it would lead directly to the call for an early use of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Robert Atkins The right hon. Gentleman and I have been to Germany and other places together and drawn differing conclusions about a similar problem. Is it not more likely that the Warsaw pact countries might use chemical shells, or the threat of chemical warfare, which would be more devastating? Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on his party's view that there is no need for a chemical offensive?

Mr. Davies: I am not avoiding the hon. Gentleman's question, but very senior officers in the British Army in Germany now privately admit that, on a worst case analysis, it is possible that the call for battlefield nuclear weapons will come within seven or eight days of the start of the kind of conflict we are supposing.

The corollary of conventional forward defence is early nuclear response. The two go together. The strategy might have made some sense a long time ago when the United States had a nuclear monopoly and massive nuclear superiority, but it makes no sense today when there is nuclear parity between the super powers. It makes no sense in a world of nuclear shells, nuclear land mines, and even nuclear backpacks. It makes no sense from a military point of view.

To try to escape from this dilemma, General Rogers and NATO have come up with the concept of attack on follow-on forces. I am sorry that I misunderstood the Minister. The idea sounds like a reasonable and sensible strategy. It is a type of sub-strategy to forward defence, to postpone the time when battlefield nuclear weapons have to be used. This follow-on force attack strategy means, in effect, a deep strike into eastern Europe, presumably using up to 10,000 missiles with conventional warheads, I do not know how the other side is supposed to distinguish between the different types of warheads. I am not suggesting that this is a nuclear strategy. As I understand it, the strategy is to try to postpone the early use of nuclear weapons by going down the road of follow-on force attack.

We seldom debate these matters, and that is a condemnation of us all. This important issue should be debated—not to enable us to disagree but so that the British public can understand how, where and in what circumstances our forces are committed.

The strategy of follow-on force attack involves considerable difficulties financially, diplomatically, politically and militarily. It will cost a lot of money. It will influence how the other side sees NATO as a defensive alliance. Many people say that, militarily, it makes no sense and that, in any case, it would postpone the early use of battlefield nuclear weapons.

We have called on the Government to conduct a defence review. NATO has a duty to conduct a review. Difficulties arise because many nations are involved. There are difficulties especially in view of the deep attachment of the Federal Republic of Germany to forward defence. The Government have a duty to initiate a fundamental strategic review in NATO. Flexible response and forward defence are old doctrines. The Government have not taken into account the nuclear developments of the past 10 to 15 years.

It was reported that in October 1984, NATO Defence Ministers agreed a plan to withdraw 1,400 nuclear warheads from Europe. We welcome that plan. We approve of it and endorse it, because it is a step in the right direction. I understand that, at a previous meeting in Montebello in Canada, a kind of twin-track decision was made—to reduce by 1,400 the number of warheads and to call for the modernisation of other weapons. As we know, in the awful jargon of this awful business, "modernisation" really means "bigger, more lethal and more dangerous".

In October 1985, in Brussels, it was reported that General Rogers would consult the different nations that have battlefield nuclear weapons, including Britain, about modernisation. What is happening? I am talking not about secret military operations but about what is happening and its effects on our forces. Has a request been made for the modernisation of what used to be called tactical nuclear weapons? What is the Government's view on that call for modernisation? What about the nuclear warhead, the W82, about which there were some problems some time ago in the House?

At that time, statements made to the American Congress differed from statements made by Ministers in the House. I exonerate Ministers, because I think that the excessive zeal of Pentagon officials who were seeking large appropriations from Congress was the reason for those statements in America. We should be told about these matters, or there will be misunderstanding. Information would enable the House to make up its mind on how it sees this difficult issue of modernising nuclear weapons.

The Labour party takes the same view on chemical weapons as the Government. This is the one aspect in which the Government have at least tried to play a constructive role in the talks. Various statements have been made—they have not been absolutely clear—that the Government have no intention of basing chemical weapons in Britain or of equipping the BAOR with American chemical weapons. It is understandable that military men want a weapon that they believe the other side possesses—therein lies the real problem of the arms race. If one tries to match, weapon for weapon, the whole business gets out of hand, as it has done.

The Government have tried to be constructive with respect to chemical weapons. We applaud their actions at the talks. The omens have improved. As a result of the Geneva summit, there have been certain initiatives. The real problem is not just the stocks of Russian chemical weapons. No one seems to know how much the Russians have — the German intelligence service says 30,000 tonnes, the Americans say 700,000 tonnes, and the British Government say 300,000 tonnes. The Americans are said to have about 40,000 tonnes of chemical weapons. The real problem is the development of binary weapons by the United States.

Mr. Robert Atkins: What about Russia?

Mr Davies: I do not know whether Russia is developing binary weapons. The development of these

weapons poses an important problem, which is why it is important to have an agreement. The plant at Pine Bluff in Alabama will soon start working, and pressure will be put on the Governments of Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany to station some of those weapons on their soil. I hope that we shall hear a clear commitment that that is not the intention. A proliferation of chemical weapons in Europe would cause considerable damage to NATO's image.

I turn to procurement and first to the royal ordnance factories. Not only are they in the news these days, but the Government have embarked upon a privatisation scheme. We opposed privatisation. We said that it would not do the royal ordnance factories any good. They operated well as a trading fund, making good profits and achieving an excellent return on capital. The ROFs are in a state of turmoil, partly because of privatisation and partly because of the drop in orders. We are concerned that a thriving commercial organisation is gradually being destroyed by the Government's plans.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the royal ordnance factory in Nottingham has a bigger order book and a higher turnover, and employs more staff, than at the time of privatisation?

Mr. Davies: That may be the case in Nottingham, but it is certainly not the case generally. How much do the Government expect to get from selling the ROFs? I think that £400 million was mentioned in Committee, and one newspaper said that the amount was £200 million. When is the flotation likely to take place?

A number of issues affecting the ROFs were brought out in a press release issued by Royal Ordnance plc and sent to hon. Members. On the defence budget, the chairman of Royal Ordnance plc states:

"Royal Ordnance is concerned about possible substantial reductions in Front line defence capability as a result of cuts in the MOD budget . . . This is linked with concern about the cost of the Trident, Tornado and European fighter programmes".

Later he says:

"Royal Ordnance awaits an order for the 7th Challenger Regiment by MOD. Without new orders it is likely that there will need to be substantial rationalisation"—

we know what that means—

"of Royal Ordnance tank manufacturing capability."

There are problems also with ammunition procurement and strategic capacity support for explosives and propellants.

Worst of all is Ministry of Defence procurement policy. The press release states:

"Whilst RO accepts MOD pursuit of value for money and competition within UK it does not believe that overseas companies should be invited to compete for UK requirements for unique UK equipment."

This is a problem for not only the royal ordnance factories but the whole competition policy instigated by the former Secretary of State for Defence. It is all very well to have competition in the United Kingdom, but, if the market were thrown open to companies in other countries—many of them in Europe—which are supported by their Governments, this would lead to the destruction of our defence manufacturing base which the Government have inflicted on our civilian manufacturing base. There are real difficulties and I hope that we can be told something by the Minister of State about the ordnance factories.

Finally, no debate would be complete without a reference to helicopters, and I certainly will not disappoint the House in that. It is my view that there are two reasons for the Westland problem. Firstly, the Ministry of Defence—or perhaps it is the Army—did not show much haste in deciding what helicopters they wanted for the Army and other services. There was something called air staff target 404. Where is it? I think it has escaped or got lost in the Ministry of Defence, like the budget which it is trying to lose.

I think we would like to know what has supplanted AST404, if that is the case, and what is happening about helicopters. Is the matter being studied at all? I understand that the Army will and does need two or three different kinds of helicopters—some to blow up tanks and others to carry troops and heavy equipment. Therefore, the first problem for Westland has been the fact that the Government have failed to have a proper policy in relation to the kind of helicopters needed by the armed forces.

The second reason was that the Government do not have an industry policy and they do not know whether they want an industry policy. If the Government had behaved like the Governments of most other civilised countries and had a decent industry policy, I do not believe that the Westland problem would have arisen in the way in which it did.

When the problem arose, we expressed our support for the British and European package. That was not out of any rabid anti-Americanism or romantic pan-Europeanism. I think that there is a real problem, as the House knows, for Britain's defence industries. It is not necessary to go over the problem but it lies, especially with the more sophisticated equipment, in trying to join European countries, again not because of any romantic Europeanism but to protect our own defence-industrial base. I think that we can do that better by having some form of collaborative projects with European countries rather than risk the problem of being gobbled up by the United States of America.

In our opinion, the defence budget is now getting out of control. We are concerned that the effect will be a reduction not only generally in our conventional defences but substantially in equipment and possibly in pay for the Army and the armed forces. One of these days, the Government will have to decide how they can perform all those different roles. The only logical way of doing so is to cancel Trident and concentrate on our conventional defence. The Government will have to face up to that one day, and if they do not the next Government will.

5.53 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I am grateful for being called, especially so early, in the debate on the Army for a variety of reasons. I should like to welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the new Secretary of State for Defence, to the Front Bench. I should like to pay tribute to what he has done in the past. He and I were Ministers together in what I tend to call the good old days. His hands are very sure, and he has had long experience in the Ministry of Defence and as a soldier before that.

We are of course extremely sorry to lose, especially in such circumstances, the former Secretary of State for Defence. I think that it is appropriate to pay tribute to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) achieved in the Ministry of Defence. What he achieved involved the whole Ministry becoming cost conscious in a way that it had never been before. I can see that in the attitude adopted in my own constituency, a large

[Sir Antony Buck]

part of which constitutes a garrison town. It would be churlish not to say that we regret the departure of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley and the circumstances of it and we commend his achievements in the Ministry of Defence.

What is now needed, in the sure hands of the new Secretary of State, is a period of quietude. That is needed for the Conservative party and the Ministry of Defence and that is self-evident in political terms. Much has been achieved in the Ministry of Defence not only by the former Secretary of State but by earlier Conservative Secretaries of State who have brought about much greater efficiency in the Ministry.

We are now in a difficult period because we are at the end of the period of automatic increase that is the NATO commitment of a 3 per cent. increase in defence expenditure in real terms, which the Government have honoured to the full. The fact that that is now drawing to a close means that old tensions will inevitably arise within the Ministry. There will be a fight for limited resources. We look to the sure hands of the new Secretary of State to see that that is kept within reasonable bounds. We are confident that he will do that, but it will not be an easy time and those of us in the Conservative party who are devoted to defence should recognise that there will be internal difficulties in the Ministry of Defence and between the services.

I want to utter one word of slight scepticism about the reorganisation in the Ministry of Defence. I was dubious about the appropriateness of abolishing the single service Ministers. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), like me, was a single service Minister in his time and we have an interest and a nostalgia about it. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham and I are fearful of the consequences if a service does not have a spokesman whose duty it is to put forward his own service's cause, not, of course, whether it is right or wrong.

The basis on which I worked as the Minister responsible for the Navy was that I gave, as it were, a 5 per cent. loading to the Navy from time to time. When I found there was a dispute, perhaps with the Royal Air Force, on several occasions I found that the RAF was right. One or two of the admirals have never forgiven me for saying that that was indeed the case. However, like my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, I am a little concerned about the reorganisation in the Ministry of Defence and I will be glad to have my hon. Friend the Minister of State's views on that. If we do not have a Minister responsible for a particular service, senior officers in all the forces could be looking for what might be described as parliamentary moles to espouse the cause for which they wish to fight.

Having said that, I should like to say how pleasant it is to have the opportunity to speak from the point of view of my constituency. My constituency is a garrison town. I share Colchester with my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary and we have the garrison, as it were, between us. I should like to commend the fact that in Colchester there is a splendid relationship between the armed forces and the local population. When I said that once before, there was a headline in the local press which read:

"Member commends relationship with garrison town".

In the adjoining column it said:

"Jocks do over Bull and Bush—15 fined".

That sort of trouble seldom happens. There is seldom any disruption.

Colchester has just lost the 2nd Royal Anglians who have now embarked upon a tour in Northern Ireland. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish them and all our services in Northern Ireland the best of good fortune.

The Anglians' place has been taken by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thought that that would get a loud "Hear, hear." particularly from my right hon. and hon. Friends, because our distinguished Secretary of State served in that regiment. I hope that, while the battalion is in Colchester, we can prevail upon him to visit Colchester to see it.

The Anglians have gone to Northern Ireland, and it is of them that one thinks at the moment. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State dealt with Northern Ireland. It is there that for so long our armed forces have been sustaining a burden with a professionalism and moderation that no other forces in the world could sustain. The Army has been achieving great things there. It has shown enormous professionalism over so many years, as well as extraordinary restraint.

I have been to Northern Ireland about 15 times over the past 10 years. Every time I have returned with an enhanced admiration for the professionalism of our forces there and for the restraint that they show under great provocation. It is remarkable that more mistakes are not made. Occasionally a mistake is made by a young soldier, but the whole country should be tolerant of that, which I think it is. It is remarkable that so few things go wrong there. The provocation that our forces have to endure has to be seen to be understood. Many of us have seen it on several occasions. When one goes through parts of Belfast in an armoured personnel vehicle being stoned all the way, one sees at first hand what our armed forces have to put up with.

I am glad that the pattern of service in Northern Ireland has been largely altered. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister of State would mention it when he sums up the debate. There has been a move away from what were known as the Rumor tours of duty which involved a battalion being in Northern Ireland for an unaccompanied tour of just over four months. There are a few short tour battalions there now, and the accompanied tour is relied upon, when the battalion is there for a substantial period. That has the advantage of causing less turbulence for the men's families, and a substantial advantage from the point of view of military intelligence in establishing rapport with those who live in the area. That change in the pattern of service in Northern Ireland puts less strain on the armed forces and makes them militarily even more effective.

I now move from the United Kingdom to the most far-flung of our commitments—the Falkland Islands. I had the privilege of leading the first parliamentary delegation out there after the war. It was a remarkable experience. I was most grateful for the co-operation of Opposition Members when we embarked on that tour. I think that Opposition Members will agree that, when one is out there, one is amazed by the vast distances involved. As far as Ascension, one is in moderate comfort. It is a long flight, but it is in an ordinary aeroplane. Although it is "dry", it is like a commercial flight. From Ascension, as one spends hour after hour in a semi-pressurised Hercules aircraft, the magnitude of the task that we undertook some

years back becomes apparent. I must not talk about flying too much because this is an Army debate, but the Army's supplies are going in Hercules aircraft. It is a tri-service achievement.

The Falklands was a great achievement and has a continuing effect on our armed forces. The Falklands factor has been talked of in terms of its political impact. I would not deny that there is a considerable impact on the domestic scene, but I believe that the Falklands factor has a greater effect in giving credibility to the whole Western defence posture. One of the tough men in the Politburo probably thought, "Will the decadent democracies ever do anything?" For the right of a relatively small number of people to live in freedom, our Army, Navy and Air Force, and the whole country united politically as well as in every other way. We took action to ensure that the 1,800 Falkland islanders kept that right.

I refer to the future of the Falklands. The second airport is now open, and the original airport runway has been lengthened. It seems to me that stability there is well assured. I should be glad to hear from the Minister about the level of the necessary forces remaining out there. I do not believe that the cost of maintaining the Falklands is prohibitive. It depends on how one does one's costing. A battalion costs quite a lot of money, even in Colchester. It costs £X more in the Falklands. There are military advantages from our forces being in the Falklands. No doubt a battalion is sharp and good when it goes out there, but it comes back a crack battalion, because of the amazing training opportunities in the Falklands. I should be glad if my hon. Friend the Minister of State would refer to that. The costing is difficult. Other than the Army involvement, it is necessary to have one nuclear hunter-killer submarine on station to ensure that no successor Galtieri chances his arm. We have 17 of those submarines, and they have to be somewhere. Again, it is a case of how one does one's costing.

At home, our services are in very good heart. Their professionalism is tremendous.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to deal with some other smaller matters. In Colchester, we have a military corrective training centre. It works admirably, and its new premises will be completed over the next few months. I pay tribute to the work of the Army and the staff there who, for years, have been working in ghastly nissen huts. They are now looking forward to moving into the admirable new premises. It is one of the most impressive military establishments. It has the advantage of having a high ratio of soldiers under sentence to staff. All are young, and can be dealt with robustly—they can get rid of their surplus energy in a way that could not be done in civil prisons.

I am grateful that we are having the debate. When the system was reorganised, we received an assurance that we would continue to have single-service days so that we could home in on some of the matters that are relatively small in global terms but important for each of the services. I am glad that the Government have honoured that pledge to the full. We look forward to the other single-service days and to the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister of State when he deals with many of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and, I hope, some of the points that I have raised.

6.18 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I listened with interest to the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck). He and I have discussed these matters on many occasions. I hope that he will forgive me if, in a short speech, I do not go along the lines of his thinking, interesting though it was.

Hon. Members will not be surprised to know that I wish to refer to helicopters. It was my intention to raise the general question of helicopter procurement and then talk about Westland. Indeed, I wanted to touch on the fact that it has been calculated that we have 100 helicopters fewer than we need for the central plain of Europe. Our helicopter procurement has been and remains in a mess. Our battlefield helicopter force, in terms of procurement and operation, command and control, lies not with one service, which would be sensible, and is the case in every other army, but is split between the Army and the Royal Air Force. That is ludicrous and confuses ourselves as much as it must confuse the enemy. However, I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I refer solely to Westland.

I return to the subject of Westland because of today's events. After the events of today and last night the position of Westland may alter. Westland has made and still makes important contributions to the British forces and British defence. It has an important role to play in the supply and procurement of helicopters, especially for the Army. They were magnificently used and operated and made a significant contribution in the Falkland Islands. That capacity is now being seriously inhibited because there is considerable uncertainty over Westland's survival.

Although we seem to have had wall-to-wall Westland debates in the House for the past three weeks, those debates were not about Westland but about the Government's probity and the honesty of this or that Minister. My constituents are somewhat confused about the Westland debates since the last thing we discussed was jobs and the company's future.

I want to consider the Westland situation as a result of the European consortium's new bid. I should have called that the ex-Secretary of State for Defence's consortium. The clear object of that bid, as explained today by the consortium's chief banker, is to block the opposition's bid. The potential danger of that is that it will drag Westland down and place the company in greater danger of passing into the hands of the receiver. Furthermore, now that British Aerospace and GEC have withdrawn or at least refused financial participation in the latest bid, any semblance of British leadership in what the former Secretary of State for Defence called the Anglo-European bid, and perhaps even British partnership in the European bid, has gone.

As we long suspected, BA and GEC have no real interest in Westland. They were only reluctant partners to the bid because of pressure from the MOD under the former Secretary of State's leadership. The so-called Anglo-European consortium of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has proved—as we all feared it would and as many of us predicted — to be as ill-founded and cobbled together as many hon. Members believed. It seems that the European consortium — backed by nationalised European companies which are presumably funded by European Governments—is now

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

stumping up the money to take advantage of what I can only describe as the Government's neglect and ineptitude and thereby grab a slice of Westland.

We cannot be sure of the European motives but we can be most suspicious of them. Those people expressed a preference to see Westland go to the wall only a few months ago. A key bidder and part of that general group has already revealed that he sees no need to retain a design and development capacity at Westland and would rather see the company converted into a spare parts operation. That would certainly solve the problem of overcapacity in Europe and in particular the shortage of work for Aerospatiale.

Meanwhile, the European firms, in particular the French and Italians, are falling out amongst themselves even as we have been conducting the series of Westland debates. They have been falling out over the consortium and orders. The only thing that is keeping that consortium together is the prospect of rich pickings from the Westland corpse. The consortium's banker, Mr. David Horne, said today that Westland could either accept its bid or face the receiver.

What is the situation? The Europeans know that they cannot win. They can only block and so threaten Westland with the danger of both bids failing and the company falling into the hands of the receiver. One or two members of the European consortium have said privately that they would not mind that happening.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): The hon. Gentleman might be surprised to hear that what he said about Westland is a travesty of the facts. I must state that a number of my constituents work at Westland. The hon. Gentleman said that British Aerospace and GEC have withdrawn. That is incorrect, as the British-European consortium is very much in place. It is because of the attitude taken by the Westland board that the offer being made to the minority shareholders has to be a blocking and defensive gesture. As the hon. Gentleman ought to know, the prospects for Westland shareholders and employees as a result of the Government's activities in the face of criticism are much better and sounder today. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman, coming from a party that is supposed to believe in Europe and be interested in small shareholders, should attack small shareholders and their interests in an attractive bid which the consortium is offering. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has backed the Sikorsky bid. That is an astonishing reversal by a member of a party which is supposed to believe in Europe.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman tempts me slightly off my track. I shall answer him.

I did not say that GEC and British Aerospace had withdrawn from participation. I said that they had refused to participate in the funding of the latest bid. That means, as one newspaper said today, that there can be no semblance left of an British-led Anglo-European consortium

The work force, the Westland board and the small shareholders are opposed almost to a man to the European deal. It is not true to say that I have always supported the Sikorsky deal. Indeed, many Conservative Members have accused me of being equivocal about the matter. I kept an open mind until I saw what the final deals were and then chose what I believed to be the best for the workers. I believe in Europe, but I am not about to sell to a key part of British industry, the British defence industry or the workers I represent a pig in a poke simply because it has Europe stamped on the outside.

What exactly does the European consortiun think it will be hold of if it wins? It will get a firm whose board is unanimously opposed to the takeover, whose work force is almost totally opposed to the deal, as are the small shareholders and the communities which depend on that firm for prosperity. The consortium is trying now by financial muscle to ram down Westland's throat a deal which the company, the shareholders and the communities do not want.

An irresponsible bid has been brought out of the shadows today. It endangers many jobs and the future of a key part of Britain's defence industry which has served the Army so well. That bid has been allowed to happen because of the impulsive and inadequately thought-out actions of the former Secretary of State for Defence and because of the Government's incompetence and neglect of the Westland problem.

It is scandalous that European Governments, who are the primary backers and owners of the European firms that are making the bid, should play fast and loose with Westland. Those Governments are prepared to invest in Westland when ours are not. If the bid succeeds, we shall have what is essentially the foreign nationalisation of Westland. If the European consortium succeeds in its attempt and gets 51 per cent. of the shares, it will go for an all-out bid for Westland. That will mean the foreign nationalisation of Westland.

Will the Minister tell me now whether there is any action that he can take to stop that? If he will not tell me now because he has to consider the answer, I hope he will give a clear response in his reply. Are the Government prepared to do anything to stop the foreign nationalisation of Westland? What is at stake now is the company's survival——

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The hon. Gentleman is in favour of Sikorsky.

Mr. Ashdown: I am not in favour of nationalisation for Westland. I believe that the foreign nationalisation of Westland will happen as a result of the European bid.

Mr. Baker: I apologise for my intervention from a sedentary position but the Sikorsky bid, on which the hon. Gentleman is so keen, will lead to a foreign takeover. The American helicopter industry is financed by the American taxpayer through the close collaboration of the Pentagon and the American defence industries, and is, in effect, what the hon. Gentleman would call foreign nationalisation.

Mr. Ashdown: That is more substantial rubbish than I have ever previously heard the hon. Gentleman speak. I normaly regard the hon. Gentleman as a man of considerable sense. He knows perfectly well that the Sikorsky deal, which may take up 20 per cent., not 51 per cent., will not require Sikorsky to go for ownership of Westland. The hon. Gentleman also knows that that is a deal between two private companies, not between a nationalised and a private company. He knows that the proposals that he supports and those supported by his former boss, the right hon. Member for Henley, will mean

placing three foreign Government representatives on Westland's board. That will not happen under the Sikorsky deal.

The hon. Gentleman knows that the firms in the consortium that will have representation on the board are Westland's primary competitors in foreign markets. He knows that Westland is currently competing for orders in India. What does the hon. Gentleman think the job of the French director, who is a French Government representative, on Westland's board will be if such a competitive position were to arise again? It is not difficult to divine.

The company's survival is now at stake. The Government, who are responsible for the position, must act now to ensure that Westland is not threatened further through their neglect. If they do not act, the threat will be imminent and real. No one can predict the outcome of the problem. A firm that has served the British Army and our defence forces exceptionally in the past now faces a threat to its survival.

I ask the Government to make their intentions clear, if not now, when the Minister replies.

6.20 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I apologise to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), but I shall not discuss the matter which he probed because I think that the debate is a more general one about the Army. As hon. Members will be aware, I come from a garrison town. Only half of it is garrison because the other half is waiting to be rebuilt.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment as Secretary of State for Defence. He was a soldier in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and I am sure that he will look after our interests. I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who did a great deal for the Army and who was always accessible whenever one wanted to ask him for help or guidance.

In Windsor, there is a good relationship between the military and the civilian population, similar to the one that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) has in his constituency. It has always been the tradition that there should be a close link between the civil authorities, the Army and the Member of Parliament.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said, this has been a record year for the Army. It has been called upon to carry out an extraordinary variety of duties—aid to a civil power, evacuation of civilians, famine relief, and it has attracted our deep admiration and sympathy for its work in Northern Ireland.

There have been two exercises—Lionheart and Brave Defender—both of which I attended. One realises the high degree of professionalism that exists in the Army. We have a small Army, but it is highly trained and efficient and compares favourably with that of any of our NATO allies. The soldiers are dedicated to their tasks and fully trained to carry out their missions.

Now that there is no conscription, we must rely, whether we like it or not, on the Territorial Army and our reserve forces. They must be watched continuously because they need succour and help. The soldiers are, after all, civilians. I was pleased to hear that the cadet forces will be given better equipment.

I am worried about the use of chemical weapons. I should like an assurance that all the members of BAOR are properly equipped to defend themselves against that terrible threat. Our policy, which is correct, is to have no chemical weapons, but if the other side has them there is nothing to prevent it from using them. We must prepare for that. Our professional Army—the regular soldiers—and our territorials, who have to reinforce the Army, must have the same equipment. I hope that my hon. Friend will pay attention to that important matter.

I want to mention the subject of helicopters. My hon. Friend said that the T80 was available and could be used. We must pay more attention to the use of helicopters, especially in their anti-tank role.

Lessons have been learnt from the two exercises that I mentioned. One of the lessons that I learnt was about our system of calling up men. They must know in advance where they have to report. Getting them to the right place is difficult. I remember as a staff officer having to move an Army from one place to another. There were always tremendous difficulties at crossroads and goodness knows what. When crossing Europe, one must prepare in advance. Troop movements were well done in the exercises, but they must be perfected.

Men did not complain, but they were kept in buses for a long time. They were not always sure of the routes that they should take. That will happen in an experiment. The exercises must be regarded as experiments, but it is important that we should learn from them and ensure that the problems are overcome. They can be overcome easily with a little patience and attention to detail.

Moving a body of territorials from this country is not easy. Our allies in the United States will find it even more difficult to move their forces with the speed that may be necessary to back up our forces in BAOR should there ever be a crisis.

I wish to say a few words about the cadet corps. When I was a cadet all we had was a wooden rifle and a wooden rattle. I am glad to say that they have been replaced and that all cadets will have Enfield rifles. They will feel more like proper soldiers than toy soldiers, and that is to be commended.

We have a good basis. There is a reasonable age limit at which to join these schemes. Page 45 of the Defence Estimates sets out some of the advantages of the training scheme. Apprentices are trained in skills that they may use in the Army or outside. The country needs this type of person. The Army is playing its part in training people in skills which are attuned to today.

I notice that one is allowed to join the cadet force between the ages of 12 and 18—I was not allowed to join before I was 13. The year that these boys spend in the cadet force will help to mature them and give them a sense of discipline and pride and of belonging to a force which is dedicated to the defence of our country. I am glad to see that these schemes are being encouraged. It would be worth re-employing officers who have prematurely left the Army to help train these young men. I am not talking about officers who are hopelessly out of date but those who have just left the services and perhaps cannot find a job.

I am glad to see that the various schemes are extremely well laid out on pages 44 and 45 of the Defence Estimates. A large section of this document is devoted to young people, and this is a reflection of the Government's attitude to youth. We have to consider what the younger generation are doing. I think that the Minister and the Army are going about this the right way.

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

My only hope is that, however professional our Army may be or however good our forces may be, we never let our guard down. We must remember that the Warsaw pact countries have a vast superiority of manpower and an enormous capability for moving men and equipment from the Urals to the Western front. It is a fact of life and we as a nation must face it. The Government must not drop their guard or in any way forget that there is a danger of biological, chemical and other weapons being used. We must face that possibility and make sure that our men are properly equipped and properly defended against chemical and biological warfare. If such an awful event occurred, we must not find ourselves short of means of defence.

6.35 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): First, may I thank the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for providing me so promptly with the letter for which I asked in my earlier intervention. It is clearly addressed to the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover)——

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): May I thank the hon. Member for honouring his promise not to mention it?

Mr. McWilliam: I am grateful to the Minister. I said I would not mention the contents. I was trying to say something nice about him. For the rest of my speech I will not be nice. Indeed I am angry.

This afternoon the royal ordnance factories announced 831 redundancies—446 in my constituency at the royal ordnance factory at Birtley and 385 at the royal ordnance factory at Chorley in the constituency of the hon. Member. There is a degree of complacency displayed by Conservative Members tonight. Everyone has spoken about how nice everything is and how marvellous everything is. I accept entirely what is said about the quality of individual members of the British Army. I accept the praise that has been given to the standard of training but I am worried about the complacency over the level of equipment and back-up the Army will get. These redundancies are entirely in the ammunition division. If 831 people are made redundant from the ordnance factories, that must mean that the Royal Artillery in particular will be short of ammunition in certain strategic areas. The degree of complacency expressed tonight has not taken on board what is behind the announcement today.

These redundancies are a result of a decline in ammunition orders from the Ministry of Defence. Ammunition orders have already been reduced. They were reduced from previous levels to the 1985 level of £150 million and in 1986 the likely level will be down to about £90 million. Is this reduction a direct result of the Ministry of Defence's policy of competitive tendering? Is this the total value of ammunition orders from the Ministry of Defence? Are the royal ordnance factories maintaining their share of Ministry of Defence orders?

The ammunition division is not the only part of the royal ordnance factories in trouble. I do not wish to be accused of being parochial and I shall point to all the problems in the royal ordnance factories before returning to the ammunition division.

The small arms division at Radway Green will have completed all MOD orders by March 1986. There are no orders forthcoming. Are we on the edge of a precipice? Will the Minister tell us that there are further orders forthcoming? The weapon and fighting vehicles division at Leeds has no more orders. When will the Minister announce his order for the 6th regiment of Challenger tanks? Without that order, Leeds will be in serious trouble. The explosive divisions at Bishopton and Bridgwater are in further trouble. Are these problems the direct result of the decision of the MOD to go to competitive tendering?

The royal ordnance factories have to bear the expense of design and development and then have to make that design available to competitors without cost. I think this competitive policy is unfair. It is resulting in severe difficulties. In Birtley we have lost the high explosive mortar shell order to Dennis-Ferranti in Wales. Dennis-Ferranti may well have put in a competitive order but it did not develop the shell — it got that free. Dennis-Ferranti decided to build the equipment but it must have been given some kind of commitment of continued orders before it ordered the machinery to make the shell. There is a small benefit because Dennis-Ferranti ordered the machinery from T. I. Churchill in my constituency. We did not lose all—we got some of the jobs, but not a lot.

We are still waiting to discover whether the 30,000-odd 105 mm FD shell order is to be placed with the ROFs. I have a written question down for tomorrow, but I hope that we shall get some assurance from the Minister that it will be placed. It would not make a great deal of difference to the number of redundancies, but it would help. Is the multi-rocket launch system order to be brought forward to its original date? If it is, ROF Birtley hopes to make mortars. It would certainly tender effectively for them. If the order were brought forward to the original date, that would eat into the number of redundancies.

We also want to know about the SP70 order. From reading the European press, it appears that our German friends who are involved in the tripartite deal are going a little cold on the SP70. They seem to be suggesting that it is over-specified. Vickers, which owns a factory just across the river from my constituency, is happy to tender for work on self-propelled guns if the Minister agrees that the SP70 is over-specified. I hope that he will tell us that this little bit of European collaboration will work and that the SP70s will come to fruition. If it does, that too will help to reduce the number of redundancies. Other factories such as Patricroft are working seven days a week and contracting work out. Why cannot the Minister for Defence Procurement get some of that contracted-out work up to Birtley?

We have another problem which arose some 12 months ago when, as a result of the memorandum of understanding on the FH70, the Minister decided that he would give the order to the Germans. Indeed, he decided to transfer the entire FH70 order to Rheinmetall of Dusseldorf. That firm got the chunk of the order to which it was entitled and the order for two years previously. Rheinmetall has not been able to make the shell. It has not been delivered.

Worse than that, I read in the press—there was an Associated Press article of 13 January on it—that Herr Dieter Koehler, the executive secretary, Herr Dietrich Falke, the business manager who has now retired from Rheinmetall, Herr Hans Voss, a high ranking department chief in the company and Herr Frederich Wilhelm Striepke, the company's shipping department manager, are in court. They have been charged with illegal arms exports between 1977 and 1980. They have apparently

been sending machine guns to Saudi Arabia, ammunition production equipment to South Africa and, much more serious, heavy calibre guns to Argentina without Government approval. Indeed, it is understood that the end user certificates were made out to Spain, Italy and Paraguay. If that is true, it is almost certain that those heavy calibre guns were used against British troops. The Minister transferred 300 jobs from my constituency, where we have 23 per cent. unemployment, to the Ruhr and a company that was selling arms to people who were at war with us.

I am angry. There is no reason for the redundancies at Birtley. If the Minister chose, he could prevent all of them, but he does not choose. I am sure that there is some get-out in the memorandum of understanding which enables the Minister to say to Rheinmetall, "You have been selling arms to people who are at war with us, so the memorandum of understanding is negated."

There is another problem. Germany did not get its fair share of the order in the past three years, but we must take Tornado into account. Doing that, even if Germany never made an FH70 shell in its life and bought them all from Birtley for the next 50 years, we would still not make up the shortfall on our side of the memorandum of understanding.

I am angry. The Ministry of Defence has shifted 300 jobs from Birtley, which has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom, to the Ruhr, which has one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the whole of Europe. The Minister has done that deliberately. It is a smack in the teeth for the north and it does nothing to help our strategic ability.

6.45 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am pleased to have been called to speak in this important debate. I hoped to speak not because I can claim great knowledge of soldiers or of their weapons, although I have an important constituency connection in the form of the Royal School of Military Engineering, known as the Depot Regiment of Sappers, in my constituency. We have heard much good sense from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), and I strongly agree with what he said about the Falkland Islands and our garrison there.

With five other hon. Members and three noble Lords, I was fortunate indeed to be chosen to go to the Falkland Islands just before Christmas, under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence. I should like my speech to be a public expression of my gratitude for that opportunity. I should like to say something about what we saw there and to thank those who were responsible for our trip.

May I start by thanking the commander, British forces, Air Vice Marshal Kemball, the chief of staff, Brigadier Brownson, the assistant chiefs of staff and all the unit commanders with whom we came into contact for the warmth of their welcome and for the breadth of interest and variety which they introduced into our tour. I should especially like to thank Captain Sturdie of the RAOC, who was assigned the daunting task of guiding us through a busy trip with much tight timing for our various journeys, many of which were made by helicopter. I shall not go into that matter as we have heard quite a lot about it already. Should Captain Sturdie ever fancy a career in this House, his persuasiveness and natural good humour would make him an ideal candidate for the Whips Office.

Although ours was primarily a Ministry of Defence trip and was overwhelmingly spent seeing soldiers, sailors and airmen at work, rest and play, we had several opportunities to meet His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Gordon Jewkes — recently arrived and with a difficult act to follow — and the Chief Executive and their staffs. We were able to see at first hand many of the problems and the opportunities presented by the situation in these large and very sparsely populated islands. If I say little more about the civilian side of the trip, that is no slight on those responsible for it. Rather it is because this is a debate on the Army and I must not stretch your tolerance, Mr. Speaker. We are nonetheless grateful to the civil administration for its kindness and help.

Perhaps the most significant impression with which I have been left is the co-operation and co-ordination between the three services. One would expect that of a tri-service operation, which is the designation of our military involvement in the Falklands, but the three branches of our forces are not renowned for setting aside their individual service jealousies. It may or may not have been coincidental that four out of nine members of the party had strong Kent connections. I have constituency and residential ties to the county and my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and the noble Lords Pender and Boston of Faversham also have strong affiliations to Kent. It was thus an especial pleasure that we should find that the 2nd Battalion the Queen's Regiment — our county regiment — was the resident battalion while we were there. Moreover, the 69th Gurkha Independent Field Squadron of Royal Engineers, whose home base is Kitchener barracks, Chatham — a few yards outside my constituency and but a few yards from my constituency home—was the unit of sappers looking after Port Stanley airfield.

As I said at the outset, we saw soldiers, sailors and airmen at work, rest and play. However, there is precious little of the latter in the Falklands. The men are worked hard throughout their four-month tour. That is just as well, because their quarters, either on board one of the coastels or in one of the ubiquitous Portakabins, are functional rather than commodious or comfortable. We were allowed to sample a night in a Portakabin and in a cabin shared with seven others. In such circs, one rapidly learns whether one's colleagues snore. Indeed, if property prices around Westminster continue to rise at their present rate, we could be urging the Leader of the House to permit a Portakabin village in New Palace yard. However, blundering around in the small hours looking for the ablutions block could quickly lose its novelty value.

I jest a little, because I am sure that our forces presently stationed in the Falkland Islands view their lot as a great deal more comfortable than the tents that their predecessors occupied, and infinitely preferable to the misery suffered by those forces that fought their way from San Carlos to Stanley. The accommodation problem will shortly be resolved by the transfer of the garrison to the new Mount Pleasant complex.

We were impressed by the scale and quality of the construction of the new airfield, garrison barracks and harbour that have been developed out of the wilderness at Mount Pleasant, which is 30 miles from Stanley. We had every reason to be grateful for the new airstrip, because its excellent surface and considerable length meant that we

[Mr. James Couchman]

could enjoy the comfort of a Royal Air Force Tristar, unlike earlier travellers who braved more spartan conditions and the mid-air refuelling of the Hercules.

We were all surprised by the scale of the construction at Mount Pleasant. We understood and acknowledged the need for the new airstrip to allow for the possible rapid reinforcement of a smaller garrison than is presently stationed on the islands. Perhaps we had not appreciated fully the ramifications of the many complex and interrelated tasks for which the Mount Pleasant complex was designed. During our debriefing, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces reassured us about the need for the various facilities under construction. The completion of the complex at Mount Pleasant—about four years after the Government's initial decision in June 1982—will stand as one of the finest achievements of British civil engineering and as its finest hour for many years to come. The fact that that splendid complex has been constructed 8,000 miles from the United Kingdom, with materials brought from the United Kingdom, in three years is a testimony to the civilian construction workers involved, especially as the conditions that they have endured have been extremely hard. I am not an unequivocal fan of the PSA, but in the case of Mount Pleasant, I have much admiration.

I wish to refer again to our troops and the conditions in which they work. The posting to the Falklands is not popular among the men. The posting means four months away from home on islands 8,000 miles from Britain. They are unaccompanied and there are few facilities for the off-duty hours. Perhaps it is because they are worked so hard that morale is high and nowhere more so than at the remote and lonely signals outpost at Bombilla or the radar installation on Mount Kent that we visited.

Officers spoke to us of the considerable training opportunities that exist in those under-populated islands, where one is 400 times as likely to upset a sheep as a shepherd. I fully agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North who mentioned that.

Providing recreation facilities for the men is a problem. There are few fleshpots in Stanley and fewer still in the so-called Camp, which is the area outside Stanley. Locally, the commanders try to allow everyone a two or three-day rest and recreation break during a tour. That could consist of an arduous training hike in the wilds, or perhaps a relaxed weekend on one of the islander's farms. To that end, travel by helicopter is essential, because there is no alternative. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to read the answer given by Lord Trefgarne yesterday in another place to Lord Pender. I urge him also to continue to allow a reasonable allocation of admittedly expensive helicopter hours to achieve some recreational opportunities.

Even when the move to more commodious facilities at Mount Pleasant takes place, the need for recreation facilities will not be removed. Those of us who visited the Falklands urge the Minister to consider providing facilities beyond those that are normally provided at such posts.

A growing problem is that of people skilled in short specialties being posted and reposted to the Falklands. Already there are those who are on their fourth and even fifth tour since the conflict.

A more insidious problem is provided by those who go on one tour in three. Those unlucky enough to be there during our summer, which is the Falklands winter, could be living through 12 months of winter until that process is broken. That is an arduous task for anyone to undertake.

I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) has joined us and I know that he would like to be associated with my comments. I could say much more, but time will not allow and there are many who wish to speak. I do not want to be a messenger for the men's understandable grouses, because that would sell short their generally stoical attitude to their tour.

None of our party will forget the privilege of visiting the Falkland Islands. It is no coincidence that I am wearing the tie of the Uplands Goose hotel in Stanley. It is a happy reminder of a memorable visit. Above all, we who visited the Falklands in December will remember for the rest of our days the poignant solemnity of standing on a windswept hillside by San Carlos water in the cemetary at Blue beach for our brief service of dedication. Standing beside the graves of Lieutenant-Colonel H. Jones VC and the brave men who died with him, I did not doubt that our action in 1982 was entirely right. I am sure that if any of our people, from however small a community, were ever threatened in a similar way, our forces would respond just as magnificently.

We were greatly privileged to be able to make the visit and I thank my right hon. Friend and his colleagues at the Ministry of Defence for making it possible.

6.56 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In his opening remarks the Minister mentioned co-operation between the Army and the police in various functions and at times of stress. All of us applaud the role of the bomb disposal experts in the Army, who have a most hazardous duty to perform. Their bravery must be commended by all of us in the House.

One aspect of co-operation between the Army and the police is the deployment of armed troops at Heathrow and Gatwick airports. During recent years, there have been several security exercises, but that number has been increasing. In a written answer to me on 13 January the Prime Minister identified that security exercises involving deployment of troops at Heathrow numbered three in 1981, four in 1982, five at Heathrow and one at Gatwick in 1983, six in 1984 and seven in 1985. Clearly, the numbers are increasing.

Naturally, I accept the need to combat international terrorism, whether it is on the part of an organisation or by Governments. No one in the House would condone the killing of unarmed civilians in airports and on aircraft. Such actions of cowardice and brutality must be condemned.

I am interested in two aspects arising from the deployment of armed troops at Heathrow and Gatwick. I am open to correction, but I believe that there has never been a debate in Parliament about the use of such troops. There have not been many parliamentary questions about the matter. I could trace only questions asked by myself and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris).

In her reply to me of 23 January, the Prime Minister said that those exercises are held at the request of the police. At Heathrow airport, that would involve the Metropolitan police. I wish to ask the Minister a series of questions; if he cannot answer them when he replies to the debate, perhaps he will write to me.

First, what is the mechanism whereby the police can request the Army to hold exercises at Heathrow airport? Who decides? Can the police request the presence of the Army at a picket line or a demonstration, or could the Army be called in to deal with a civil commotion in inner London? When the police request the presence of troops at Heathrow, are the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Home Department consulted about the deployment of such troops? Does the Secretary of State for Defence, with whom we are primarily concerned tonight, give his permission for troops to be used at Heathrow, or is he merely informed? There is a clear distinction. In her reply of 23 January the Prime Minister did not make it clear whether permission was required from the Secretary of State for Defence or whether he was merely informed.

Must the police give reasons for the request for the Army to be deployed at Heathrow? Is it a matter of routine, or do they act on advice from intelligence sources?

Were either of the exercises held on 14 October 1985 and between 1 and 9 January 1986 at Heathrow airport carried out under the terms of the joint tactical doctrine? I do not believe that we have discussed the joint tactical doctrine; indeed, I do not know whether it exists. I am going by a report in *The Sunday Times* of 8 September 1985, which stated:

"Under a secret agreement"—

it cannot be that secret if *The Sunday Times* knows about it—

"called the Joint Tactical Doctrine, the army will have complete control over the police in areas considered militarily sensitive."

Was the exercise between 1 and 9 January — it was much longer than previous exercises — held under the joint tactical doctrine? Are Heathrow and Gatwick airports areas considered to be militarily sensitive at a time of escalating crisis?

In her answer of 23 January, the Prime Minister said that troops were deployed at airports for deterrent purposes. That is difficult to understand. I do not pretend to be an expert on military matters, but I believe that I can ask a reasonably intelligent question and understand a reasonably intelligent answer to it. I do not understand how a potential attacker will be put off because a tank or an armoured personnel carrier is stationed at the approach tunnel to Heathrow airport. What purpose does such military hardware serve? I assume that the tanks are armed, and we know that the personnel are armed. They will have a fairly formidable array of weapons. Is it seriously considered that such weaponry would be deployed? What sort of crisis are we talking about? I cannot see the function of the troops at Heathrow airport as deterrence.

The presence of armed forces and, indeed, of armed police did not stop the outrages at Rome and Vienna. The Minister should be aware of the fact that the presence of troops is unsettling to the travelling public. Troops are not a welcome sight around Heathrow airport, because it makes passengers think that something awful is about to happen. If some passengers are as nervous as I am about boarding aircraft, it will do nothing for their confidence. I have received complaints at the GLC from some American tourists, who said that troops were not a welcome sight on arrival in the United Kingdom.

In the event of an exchange of fire in a terminal building between the police or the Army and terrorists, there is a great danger that passengers will become caught in the crossfire. The Minister and the Home Secretary must share this major concern. It was interesting to note that the chairman of the Police Federation, who opposes the use of armed police at Heathrow, suggested that the Army should take over the job of providing armed security at Heathrow airport. That would make more sense, although the presence of armed personnel at airports has not proved a great deterrent and would not be effective during a crisis in a terminal building. My view is that airports would be much better secured with greater scrutiny of passengers' luggage and their clothing on entry into terminals and before entry into departure lounges.

If anyone was seriously considering attacking London airport, he could do it by secreting himself in the surrounding countryside. That must be where the greatest danger lies, because some incoming aircraft on their final approach paths are sitting targets. Perhaps the Minister cannot answer this, for security reasons, but I would feel much more confident if I knew that special patrols operate in the countryside around airports instead of standing at the approach tunnels or outside the terminals.

There is no valid counter-terrorist reason for the deployment of armed troops at Heathrow, Gatwick or Manchester airports. I believe that there are more sinister reasons for their deployment. It is all part of the general softening-up of the civilian population, getting them used to seeing armed troops on the streets. The threat of a terrorist attack is being used as an excuse for putting armed troops and tanks on the streets of London.

Mr. Conway: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is making more of this than need be, whatever his motive. However, this Government have not deployed the armed forces to break a strike; a Labour Government did that. Yet Labour Members did not read sinister motives into it. I do not believe for one moment that the civilian population regards the Army as a threat. Indeed, they welcome their reassuring presence. Although the hon. Gentleman is trying to stir up fears, he will find an unreceptive audience in the British public.

Mr. Banks: Only if my audience is as unattentive as the hon. Gentleman is. That is not what I said. Had the hon. Gentleman listened more closely, he would have realised that I was not suggesting that the British people have no confidence in the Army. I said only that I believed that it was part of a general softening-up process by the Government so that there will be less alarm at the thought of troops being used at times of civil unrest.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The intervention of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) was wholly inaccurate. There is a long history of civilian Government in the United Kingdom using military forces to deal with civil disturbances and unrest. He is a buffoon.

Mr. Banks: Whether the hon. Gentleman is a buffoon or not, I shall pass quickly over the aspect of his qualifications.

I would condemn the use of troops for strike-breaking whether it was done by a Labour Government or a Conservative Government. I am entirely consistent——

Mr. Conway: It was a Labour Government.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman would hear the same words if it was a Labour Government. However, if it was a Labour Government, the hon. Gentleman might not be

[Mr. Banks]

here to hear my words. I am not sure how safe his seat is. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept my word that I would condemn in equally round terms the use of troops by a Labour Government.

Strike-breaking is only one aspect of the softening-up process. Some elements in the Conservative party and in the high command of the armed forces would not hesitate, in defence of the ruling class that they represent—*[Laughter]*—to call out the troops if they believed that capitalism was under threat from civilian unrest or even from the policies of a democratically elected Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but they should read more carefully some of the statements of senior figures in the Conservative party and the military to various bodies and associations.

The Conservative party exists to serve the interests of the ruling class. Whether in or out of government, it would not hesitate to put troops on the streets if it thought that the capitalist system was under threat, even if that threat came from a democratically elected Labour Government. The major reason why the troops are present at Heathrow is as part of a softening-up process to get the civilian population of London used to seeing them on the streets. I can see no valid security reason for their deployment at Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

7.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). My mind goes back to the last time when we followed each other. He will not remember it, but it was on a platform in Peckham in south London and we were discussing something peaceful, such as the Housing (Finance) Bill. He was all for whipping up fury and violence. He wanted people to charge down the street, and he sought to arouse disorder of the highest magnitude. When he started speaking today, I thought that he had at last mellowed, the years had wearied him, and age was condemning him to pleasantness and democratic, peaceful attitudes. But his final remarks reassured me that he still has his old fire, but perhaps with even less sense than he had previously.

The hon. Gentleman said that tourists and others may be unsettled at the sight of a tank at London airport. I cannot believe that anyone wishes to deploy tanks or armoured weapons unless there is a serious threat. The sight on television of terrorists throughout the world destroying civilian lives, often because those lives have been inadequately protected, is unsettling. The hon. Gentleman should think about that and not make such frivolous, scandalous suggestions to the House.

I hope that the House will forgive me for making some personal remarks, but this is the first time that I have been able to speak in a debate on the Army. It is a slightly sad occasion because, on 9 January, four years of quiet soldiering behind the parapet came to an end. One of my local newspapers telephoned me and asked politely whether my financial position would suffer as a result of this serious loss of post, and I could reassure it that my financial position would be materially improved. Nevertheless, I shall miss the duty of sitting behind the Front Bench checking the ministerial haircuts and whether the shoes of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) are in need of repair. I see that they are in good shape, and I wish him many years in them.

Mr. Denzil Davies: That is more than can be said for the Minister's shoes.

Mr. Baker: I shall have to wait until I sit on the other side before I can know that.

I saw service with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie). I thank them for their patience and kindness to me, and for the privilege of admiring their skills and dedication, above all during the Falklands campaign. I was interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) talk about the Falklands today, particularly as there is a town in my constituency of the same name.

I also wish to pay tribute to the extraordinarily high standard of civil servants at the Ministry of Defence who receive scant appreciation in the House. It was a privilege to help my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He is a man of brilliant initiative, unwavering courage and determination, unerring instinct for the heart of the matter, and, above all, boundless ambition for our country. In his time he encompassed the defeat of the protest groups, the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence and the policy of competition in procurement, which now gives us the chance of avoiding what my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) has called disarmament by inflation. I was particularly delighted to join him in paying tribute to those who fought and fell in the far east.

I add my welcome and good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). Much of the boot and ranch work has been carried out before him, but he has my best wishes for continuing it, as does his ministerial team.

I do not wish to say much about Westland. However, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) conveniently ignores the fact that the original Sikorsky proposal, which I understood he supported, was to take over the company. A 20 per cent. offer, which has now been made, amounts in most cases, and certainly in this case, to control of a public company. The work force is worried about the uncertainty and the time involved, and I understand why it follows the board now, although it did not take that position at the start. In those circumstances, that is perfectly natural. However, that is not the final measure of what is best for the future of the company and the workers.

I understand the pressures on the hon. Gentleman. A high percentage of the Westland work force knocks on his door, and, bearing in mind the proper need to obtain votes, he would be in considerable difficulty if he did not listen to the voice of the work force.

Mr. Ashdown: Mr. Alan Bristow, who, in terms of his support for the European consortium, is one of the hon. Gentleman's friends, who provides most of the European financial muscle, and who is well known everywhere for seeking to become the board's new chairman and chief executive under the European consortium, if it should succeed, is on public record as having said that he believes that Westland should be converted into a spare parts operation, and has no further need of design or research

facilities. Laying aside the needs of our constituents, does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is right for Britain's defence?

Mr. Baker: That is certainly not the view of the European consortium. I do not know whether those are the words of Alan Bristow, so I do not propose to comment on them. The proposals of the British-European consortium are available for the company to consider, and are extremely favourable to the small shareholders.

Thanks to the Government's activities, however political or subject to criticism they may have been—I regret that, and especially the loss of two extremely distinguished Ministers — the future of Westland, its workers, shareholders and bankers—the whole family of the company — is more secure today. They all have better terms than they did when Sikorsky first made a bid.

There is a need for European collaboration to continue. The European fighter aircraft project was about to disintegrate when my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley took it on. It took him about two years to produce what in European collaborative terms was a coup and in order to do that deep suspicions and years of mutual hostility between European partners and European companies had to be overcome.

France has behaved badly in the past and I understand the fears of Westland on account of that, but Britain and British companies have also behaved in ways that have given rise to deep suspicions by our European neighbours and collaborators. Anyone in doubt about the rightness of the EFA deal should note how quickly the French came back and said that they would like to play a part in it, and how quickly the Americans suggested they should be brought in to co-operate on the project.

I commend the EFA deal as a model for increased collaboration in Europe on military equipment. The lesson is that such collaboration must be Government led. Personal relationships between Defence Ministers of European countries are important, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr will continue in that way and will quickly reassure our European friends that we are committed to a policy of collaboration on projects in Europe. The rewards for such collaboration are cheaper defence equipment and tougher competition for the United States, and those rewards are in the interests of taxpayers, not just in Europe but in the United States as well.

I see an increased need in future for an out-of-area contribution by our armed forces and especially a need for our conventional weapons. The thrust of our defence effort is bound to continue to be in Europe. We cannot allow the British Army of the Rhine to weaken. We will face increasing demands from outside the NATO area and we must be able to respond to those demands. I was recently in the far east and I was besieged by Ministers of countries with which we are friendly urging Britain to help them in more complicated skilled management and military ways. Friendly nations will increasingly look to us and to our NATO allies for help, although I am not suggesting that we should get sucked into other people's wars.

I speak for no one in the armed forces or in the military establishment when I say that we ought to have a form of national community service with a military option. We need, and will need, more men and women in the armed forces, and the binding social effects of a form of community service would be advantageous to Britain. Our armed forces ought to play a part in that.

It is dangerous to extrapolate from personal experience, but I recall living in a village from which the young men of the time went away as boys and returned as citizens. I should declare my personal interest because I was one of the last to do national service. One of my two most dangerous moments was guarding Government house in what was then Tanganyika and Zanzibar against suspected riots of the kind we were debating earlier, but, because Julius Nyerere is a wonderful man of peace, no riots ensued. My second dangerous moment arose from the risk I encountered by eating snails at 3 am in the morning.

Mr. Tony Banks: You cruel swine!

Mr. Baker: I do not recommend it, even to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West because I do not wish him that kind of harm. A period of community service should be part of growing up. I am pleased that the armed forces are playing a part in the youth training scheme, and I should like to see that develop into a voluntary limb of a form of national community service. I pay tribute to the men and women of our armed services at home and overseas, and to the ministerial team that supports them. That team has, and will continue to have, my full support.

7.27 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I take issue with a couple of things said by the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). I was a national service man and I would not recommend it to anyone. My major emotion at the time was that of boredom, perhaps closely followed by a feeling of anxiety because I was in the military police. I also disagree with his panegyric to his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

The right hon. Member for Henley committed grievous bodily harm on my constituency when, shortly before his departure, he ordered three submarines from Cammell-Laird. I am sorry the right hon. Gentleman did not quit six months earlier, because his successor might have ordered one of those submarines from Scott Lithgow. I do not say that the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) is biased, but if one of the submarines had been ordered from Scott Lithgow the Royal Navy would have benefited from that decision.

I promise to make a brief contribution. It has to be brief because I am meeting my wife soon. My contribution consists largely of a melange of questions that, inter alia, were brought to me by constituents and largely relate to the provision of welfare services to members of the Army. The British Army is a highly competent professional force that performs the most difficult tasks, particularly in Northern Ireland, with admirable efficiency.

Questions have been put to me by the families of service men, and I would be grateful to the Minister if he could answer them. If he cannot answer them today, perhaps he could let me have replies within a few days. First, have the Government any plans to change the minimum age at which soldiers can be sent to Northern Ireland? When opening the debate the Minister said that recruitment is going well, although he conceded a minute later that the rate of premature voluntary retirement is high. Considerable dissatisfaction generates the decisions to quit the Army. Has any examination been carried out of the premature retirements? Given the sharp contrast between Army and civilian life, is the Minister satisfied

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

with the provision of pre-retirement guidance and training for Army personnel? I have heard complaints about that. It is an important subject. Those who have given first-class service to the nation should be offered excellent training prior to leaving the Army.

What of those who have to be dismissed from the Army on medical grounds? Are they treated compassionately by the Army at a most distressing time for them? Are they too given guidance and help to come to terms with their involuntary withdrawal from the Army?

Is the Minister satisfied with the welfare provisions available to soldiers and their families when they are serving overseas? The families of soldiers are no different from other families and they may encounter all kinds of emotional, marital and domestic problems. Has the Army the resources to deal with the distressful events within the families of soldiers? The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association employs professionally trained, competent social workers, who do a first-class job. Nevertheless, we must ask about the welfare provisions for service men and their families, particularly when they are serving overseas. Often the wives of such soldiers are young and they are taken away from their natural family environment in the United Kingdom. It is essential that resources are available to guide them when they may be suffering medical, social, economic or marital problems.

There are a couple of other questions that are not related directly to the welfare of Army personnel. Have the Government plans to reduce the garrison on Gibraltar? I have been asked about that recently. I promised a brief intervention because my sergeant major is coming down from Scotland. She has just ordered me to get my hair cut.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement well knows that the royal ordnance factory at Bishopton is wholly contained within the constituency of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. M. Curley). He also knows that several hundred of my constituents work at Bishopton. There are widespread anxieties about the lack of orders from the Ministry of Defence. If the German firm is unable to honour its obligations for the supply of FH70s, production should be redirected to Birtley and Bishopton.

The difficult circumstances surrounding ROF plc are a direct result of the reduction in MOD orders. The position is made much worse by the Government's confusing policy of competitive tendering. It is confusing and confounding in the sense that the ROF has to shoulder design and development costs; I think that I am right in saying that it has to make those designs available to competitors. Is that sensible?

My questions have largely concerned the welfare of Army personnel and their families, and I should be grateful for answers to them.

7.36 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): In his interesting, compassionate and brief speech the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised, amongst other questions, the issue of pre-retirement courses for long serving soldiers and officers. I would not presume to answer on behalf of my right hon. Friend, but in the past 20 years I have heard nothing but praise for the quality of the pre-retirement courses that are available to long serving soldiers, NCOs and officers.

In his interesting survey of some of the accomplishments of the Army during the last year my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces omitted to draw attention to the fact that 1985 marked, temporarily I hope, the end of a nine-year era in which the black button mafia has largely dominated the affairs of the Army. In 1976 General, now Field Marshal, Sir Roland Gibbs became chief of the general staff. He was succeeded three years later by General, now Field Marshal, Sir Edwin Bramall, who retired a few months ago as chief of the defence staff. He began his immensely distinguished career some 44 years ago when he tried to train me.

During the past nine years an exceptional number of former members of the Green Jackets have served as Ministers in the Ministry of Defence. No fewer than three of them—Lord Trenchard, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler) and my hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie)—have been responsible for defence procurement. As one would expect, the Army has done well during the black button era. Our soldiers are now better equipped, better trained and much better paid than they were before the black button takeover.

But surprisingly—particularly surprisingly when one considers the regiment's reputation for swift and unorthodox movement—we have never during the past nine years had a sensible helicopter policy. Our failure to produce a sensible helicopter policy has led directly to the Westland crisis through which we have all been living. The general public has been riveted by cries of scandal, but, to my mind, the real scandal is that Westland ever got into a state of collapse at all. There can be no doubt that Westland's management problems have been greatly intensified by the prolonged state of indecision about helicopter operational requirements. Many of the helicopter questions that were discussed in my room at the Ministry of Defence more than four years ago have still not been answered.

There are three main reasons why the Army has got its helicopter policy wrong in recent years. The most important is the division of responsibility for helicopters between the Army and the Royal Air Force: big helicopters, such as the Chinook, are the responsibility of the Royal Air Force, and smaller helicopters, such as the admirable Lynx, are the responsibility of the Army. The result is that both services have been tempted to treat helicopter policy as a fringe issue. Meanwhile, it surely does not make much sense to have two separate helicopter headquarters in Germany.

It will take some years before the helicopter systems provided both by the RAF and the Army can be brought together, but the command structure can be unified quickly. I note that the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence staff structure that was carried through so energetically by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) will make a unified command structure for our helicopters much easier to introduce. It would be ironic and wholly appropriate if one of the first positive results of the Heseltine reorganisation at the Ministry of Defence were to be a sensible, unified helicopter command structure.

The second reason why we have neglected our helicopter policy in recent years flows from some misunderstanding about the war in Vietnam. It is certainly true that the Americans used a very large number of

helicopters in Vietnam. A semi-popular, semi-professional mythology has grown up which suggests that the Americans were defeated because they were buzzing about in the air while the Vietcong were taking over on the ground. I spent some time in Vietnam during the conflict, and I believe that this popular myth, which is widely believed in the British Army, is inaccurate.

It is perhaps ironic that the American experience in Vietnam has overshadowed our own successful use of helicopters during the confrontation in Indonesia.

General Wake Walker noted at the end of the Borneo campaign that one British battalion equipped with six Wessex helicopters was worth one British brigade without helicopters. Borneo and the Falklands campaign remind us that helicopters have a dual use and that, useful as they may be on the central front, they are even more useful in an out-of-area role.

The third reason why the Army and the other services have neglected their helicopter policy stems from the sad fact that those who are interested in helicopter policy tend to be looked upon as outsiders who are not to be taken too seriously. An RAF officer who wishes to become an air marshal would be well advised to disguise any enthusiasm that he may have for flying a Chinook and instead devote his energies to flying the latest strike aircraft upside down at twice the speed of sound and a couple of hundred feet above the ground. An Army staff officer who aspires to a seat on the Army Board will sensibly be backing our tank programme, our armoured personnel carrier programme or our various artillery programmes; officers who seriously think about a field marshal's baton in their knapsack will be pressing for merits of the Core weapons systems. By way of contrast, those officers who show a strong interest in helicopters too often tend to be regarded as fringe people who are not quite serious about their careers.

Is it realistic, then, to think that there can be a significant increase in our helicopter strength in the next few years? I would certainly be prepared to support some transfer of funds from our tank improvement programme and our armoured personnel carrier replacement programme to make room for some extra helicopter procurement. But I recognise that the scope for transfer is limited, and that all programmes are under pressure from budgetary considerations.

There is, however, one way in which we could enormously enhance our helicopter capacity at very small cost to the defence budget. I note that there are in this country 550 civilian helicopters and that about 350 of them are civilian versions of military types. There are, for example, 50 Sea King helicopters in civilian ownership at the moment, some, I believe, in the hands of Mr. Alan Bristow. There are, I understand, 30 civilian Super Pumas operating from Dyce airport in Scotland. Many, if not most, of these 550 civilian helicopters are operated by pilots with some service training.

Four and a half years ago I suggested to the then chief of the air staff that we should make plans for taking over civilian helicopters if war broke out. I think that the time has now come to implement this suggestion as a matter of some urgency. In such an eventuality, some helicopters would have to continue in their normal role, but I believe that at least 250 civilian helicopters could become part of a territorial army of the air. It would cost money. Some modifications to the earmarked helicopters would be needed. Extra wireless sets might have to be provided. Some extra training would have to be given to pilots and ground crew, and special rates of pay would have to be worked out for those who were then associated with this territorial army of the air.

Of course, it would be unrealistic to think that civilian helicopters, even those earmarked and trained in advance, could be pitchforked into fighting on the central front, but the existence of this large reserve, which would be as large as the Army's entire helicopter fleet at present, would mean that every service helicopter now stationed in this country could be assigned to an overseas role. A few million pounds wisely spent could thus buy an enormous increase in our helicopter capacity.

I turn to the still vexed question whether the Army should look to a European consortium for the future supply of helicopters and other items of equipment. In the past 20 years there have been some European collaborative projects that have worked well. Until the recent controversy over the SP70, the gunners seemed to get on particularly well with European collaborative projects, but I note that in the past 20 years all talk about the production of a European or an Anglo-German tank have produced almost nothing. By all means let us have European co-operation in producing military equipment, but let it flow naturally if it is going to flow at all. Let us also remember that international European co-operation means that one loses a substantial element of flexibility in changing or, indeed, in postponing collaborative projects.

There has been comment today about the new European fighter. I suspect that in the course of the next few years a number of people will believe that it is wise—indeed, essential—to postpone the development of this aircraft, but the fact is that a European-wide project will make that a great deal more difficult. At the same time, I do not share the general feeling that it is undesirable that we in this country, or, indeed, our European allies, should not buy American equipment.

On the tapes earlier today, I noted that the American trade deficit for the past year had just reached record levels, some 140 billion dollars plus, and no doubt in the course of the next few months we shall have meetings of Finance Ministers once again to see how we can improve American export performance, yet at the same time we have European Defence Ministers meeting to see how one can cut off American exports in the one field in which they have substantial predominance.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that, if such a European project did not go ahead, the alternative, given that all the European countries, including ourselves, believe that the development of a fighter aircraft is necessary to our defences, is that it would cost us £1 billion on a national basis to go ahead?

Sir Philip Goodhart: That I accept wholly is the present view. As the years pass, and as the budgetary pressures increase, I rather suspect that this aircraft will turn out to be rather less necessary for our defences than is believed at the moment.

To turn back to the question of helicopter supply, in all the Westland furore there has to my mind been astonishingly little comment about the decision of the national armaments directors of Britain, France, Germany and Italy deliberately to cut themselves off from helicopter design collaboration with the Americans, who have so much more experience than all the rest of us put together.

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

It seemed to me to be a monumentally stupid decision —one of the worst taken in defence in the past decade —and I am glad that it has now been aborted.

I am sure that it will be to the advantage of the Army, and, indeed, to the advantage of the services as a whole, if the link with Sikorsky is confirmed by the Westland shareholders. If eleventh hour manoeuvrings on the stock exchange manage to stop the confirmation of the Sikorsky-Fiat link, I hope that the Government will step in to back the board, the management and the work force. I hope even more wholeheartedly that the whole Westland argument will bring forward the moment when we can say that the Army has chosen a helicopter policy which is sensible and sustainable.

7.57 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). In his pertinent remarks about the contribution that helicopters can make, he expanded on the point made briefly by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) with regard to the lack of a unified command structure, which has had some of the consequences that were mentioned.

The whole problem that Westland has faced can be attributed in no small way, I think, to the lack of clarity, not only in the Ministry of Defence but, one suspects, also in the services following the Army's decision to reassess its helicopter requirements, having decided that the AST404 was not what it wanted.

I endorse the tributes already made in the debate to the service given by the armed forces, in particular by the Army. My first contact with the Army as spokesman for the Liberal party was during exercise Brave Defender when I went to Catterick to witness two exercises in the course of that major exercise. I was impressed by what I saw on that occasion. The Minister, in opening, emphasised the important role the home service force played in exercise Brave Defender. Although the opportunity was taken by the exercise to boost the visibility of the home service force, I think that it is important not to forget the important contribution made also by the Territorial Army.

Figures have been cited on recruitment into the Territorial Army to respond to the need for manpower in the services. Because of the decreasing birth rate in the 1960s, the number of possible recruits is declining.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who advocated conscription. That is not an option. It would be interesting to hear what the Government's thinking is on future manpower levels and what they hope to do to stimulate recruitment at a time when fewer people will be available.

As to the Gurkhas, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) visited the regimental headquarters of the Gurkhas in Nepal. He was concerned about the apparent lack of morale, due to uncertainty about the regiment's future, especially in light of the Hong Kong agreement. In view of the visit by Her Majesty the Queen to Nepal in the next four weeks, I think that a clear indication of the future size of the Gurkha regiments would be much appreciated.

Another matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Mossley Hill has raised on a number of occasions relates to our duty to service men of a former age, especially those involved in the early testing of nuclear weapons in Australia at Maralinga and Christmas Island. There is evidence that men suffered long-term medical effects because they were close to the explosions. A memo in the 1950s to the chief of staff's committee shows that the Army at that time was interested in the detailed effects of various explosions.

It is regrettable that we have arrived at this point without a proper assessment being made. I urge the Minister not only to look at the work of the National Radiological Protection Board in examining the medical records but to study the veterans themselves and their families to ascertain whether there have been any longer-term genetic effects as a result of their exposure to radioactivity. Those Australian service men who served alongside our forces have been given the opportunity to press their cases in the Australian courts, and have been successful on a number of occasions. However, in the United Kingdom because of the operation of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 that is not possible, and that is something that we would wish to see reviewed.

In relation to the Army, our main obligation is to maintain some 55,000 troops on the mainland of western Europe. We accept that to be the proper recognition of our commitment to its defence. I have not heard it mentioned that the period during which the annual increase in real spending on defence was to be 3 per cent. is now coming to an end. I suggest that we did not get enough credit from some of our NATO partners during the years when we were increasing that, but obviously that is now coming to an end, and this is an appropriate time to examine the position and future role of our armed forces, particularly in western Europe.

It is increasingly being said that NATO should lessen its dependence on nuclear weapons, particularly battlefield nuclear weapons. Battlefield nuclear weapons, particularly those situated close to the frontier, are the ones most likely to be used and carry us over the dangerous nuclear threshold. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) already has pointed out there has been a decision taken to reduce the numbers, and modernise those that are left. He put a question to the Minister, which we hope will be answered in the wind-up, as to what the United Kingdom view is on this, and whether we are participating in that modernisation programme.

There is fear of a perceived inability to resist a conventional attack by Warsaw pact forces which could lead to an early resort to nuclear weapons and subsequent escalation, which in turn could lead to the use of strategic nuclear weapons. We would wish to see adopted the proposals put forward in the Palme commission to create a battlefield nuclear-free zone in central Europe. It is something that we would hope could be negotiated bilaterally with the Warsaw pact countries, but if that was not the case, we believe that we should withdraw our battlefield nuclear weapons 150 km—95 miles—from the central zone frontier.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Before he turned to his party's policies with regard to nuclear weapons he paid tribute to the British forces and to the state of the British Army of the Rhine. If the express desire of the alliance to have this nuclear-free zone were to come about, and it is one that we would all wish to see, what security could we offer to those of our service men

who are based in BAOR? If an opposing force were to resort to a chemical weapon attack—and, as he well knows, this country gave up the stockpiling of chemical weapons—what protection would he offer those troops in our name?

Mr. Wallace: I would wish to negotiate a bilateral agreement on chemical weapons, and I understand that initiatives have been forthcoming in recent months from East Germany. That is something that our Government would be able to look at. In parallel with the withdrawal of battlefield nuclear weapons I believe that it should be the object of NATO strategy not to rely on the first use of nuclear weapons. That must mean that there is even greater importance to be attached to the effectiveness of our conventional forces, in terms not only of equipment and training, but to the increasing appropriateness of some of the emerging technologies.

This is a view that is beginning to come through more in discussions. The communiqué issued after the meeting of Ministers in Brussels in May last year said:

"The current disparity between NATO's conventional forces and those of the Warsaw Pact risks undue reliance on the early use of nuclear weapons. This would be an unacceptable situation which we are determined to avoid."

I very much hope that the Government will play their full part in ensuring that we are capable of resisting attack by non-nuclear means.

That leads us on to examine the question of our commitment to conventional weapons, and highlights the crisis in the defence budget that has already been referred to. *The Economist* in a report last year stated:

"The British Army is already the most poorly equipped of all the main armies on NATO's Central Front. It has less heavy artillery than the Dutch; fewer tanks than the French, the West Germans or the Americans (in Europe); and a lop-sided anti-aircraft system based entirely on missiles—no guns at all. It needs more equipment than is now in its long-term plans, not less."

I think that that view has been echoed in other publications.

There are fears that the Ministry, particularly under the former Secretary of State, has tried to balance its budget by cutting back projects and by spinning out the purchase of equipment. We have already heard this evening the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) who spoke about this with reference to ammunition. There are fears, not only because of the shortage of ammunition but because of the cost of ammunition, that a number of exercises are curtailed or restrained.

That, inevitably, has an effect on the morale of serving men and officers. That, too, is being reflected by the number of people who have been leaving or retiring early from the armed forces. It is said that a tank regiment in Germany lost twice as many men in 1985 as it did in 1984. The forces feel that they are using old equipment which is less sophisticated than the new versions. Inevitably this will have an impact on the morale of those serving. It is a problem that is likely to get worse rather than better.

The cost of replacement and maintenance is generally reckoned to be in excess of the cost of inflation. If, as the recent public expenditure White Paper indicated, the amount of spending in real terms is to decrease—I accept that there will be a lessening amount committed to the Falklands—then if we have regard to the increases in costs that would seem to amount to a significant decrease in the purchasing capacity for conventional weapons.

We believe that there is a need for a review of our options and our priorities. We would urge strongly from this alliance Bench that there is a need to take steps towards a more common procurement policy in liaison with out NATO allies. This is not only important because of the economic benefits but in terms of strategy. One suspects that the Warsaw pact manages to have its ammunition, weapons and transport fairly well co-ordinated, and I believe that we could be at a strategic disadvantage through a lack of matching up of the contributions from the various nation states of NATO. We would strongly urge that the Trident project should be scrapped because an even greater part of the defence equipment budget will be used up on that project in coming years. This will crowd out expenditure on conventional weapons, which we believe is necessary.

In answering an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil, the right hon. Member for Llanelli said that the Labour party would maintain conventional spending if Trident were scrapped. The alliance would use the sums of money released through the scrapping of Trident to improve our conventional capabilities. That would give us the opportunity to raise the nuclear threshold. We believe that there should be that reallocation of funds.

We want initiatives to be taken to try to reduce our commitment of resources to the Falkland Islands. My alliance colleagues supported the Government in sending the task force to the Falkland Islands. They were right to do so. However, if we have won the war, we have lost the peace. Not only did we defeat Argentina on the Falklands issue but General Galtieri was defeated in his country, in the sense that democratic government was subsequently brought to Argentina. The position today differs fundamentally from the position when the task force was sent in. We shall miss a great opportunity if we do not support the democratic Government in Argentina by entering in[illegible]lks with them. Next month the visit to Britain by a [illegible]rliamentary group from Argentina through the offices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union will provide us with a good opportunity. I hope that senior Ministers are prepared to meet that group so that we can begin a dialogue which can, in good time, lead to a smaller amount of resources being devoted to the Falklands.

It would be easy to say, especially in relation to Trident, that, if we scrap one thing, we can spend the money on building schools, hospitals and sporting facilities and providing pensions and social services—all essential and worthy items. I hope that I have made it clear that we advocate a policy of considerably increasing spending on conventional weapons. We shall not fall into the trap of promising all sorts of things. The need to improve our conventional capability is of the utmost importance, and we strongly urge the Government to address their minds to it.

8.12 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I listened carefully to the hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. In such a wide-ranging debate, it is tempting to raise several important matters that concern the British Army, but I reassure the House that I shall restrain myself and limit my remarks to one such subject—the procurement of small arms ammunition. In this I have an interest, in that the one United Kingdom supplier of small arms

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

ammunition to the Ministry of Defence is located at Radway Green in my constituency, which employs just under 2,500 people.

The factory was set up by the Ministry of Defence solely to supply its requirements. When the initial capital and manpower investment was made, there was no question of competitive tendering or, indeed, of privatisation. At present, production at Radway Green runs at 200 million rounds per year, with 98 per cent. of that production devoted to Ministry of Defence contracts and the remainder being work completed for other factories in the Royal Ordnance group.

In the past couple of years, output at the factory has doubled due to orders placed in response to the Falklands conflict, after which the national store cupboard for small arms ammunition was seriously depleted. In the words of the old nursery rhyme, the cupboard was bare. The factory is operating on a high plateau, having taken on additional personnel to ensure deliveries of the orders placed.

What is the future of Radway Green? I ask that question in the light of today's announcement of 831 redundancies at two other royal ordnance factories in the north of England. The Royal Ordnance company as a whole is in the middle of privatisation plans and is due to be floated in July this year. Potential investors are looking hard at the order books to see what sort of investment it will be. They will be horrified to see that, after 1 April 1986, there are no definite orders for the small arms division, except for the promise of one year's supply of the new 5·56 mm NATO ammunition, although, of course, negotiations with the Ministry are continuing.

I am confident that Radway Green will be successful and that other orders will follow to maintain production and employment at the factory; but the level of both in the future causes me and many others great anxiety. For example, I understand that the order for 9 mm ammunition has been lost to this country and will definitely be placed abroad—possibly with Portugal where labour rates are a quarter of ours, or with Greece or India, both of which could supply ammunition cheaply. But at what cost to our small arms manufacturing capacity will this ammunition be supplied? At what overall cost will it be to the taxpayer picking up the bill for those thrown out of work here as a result?

It may interest the House to know that foreign competition is invited to tender here for Ministry of Defence contracts, but the same facility is not available to our manufacturers. Our manufacturers have no opportunity to tender for similar contracts abroad. Therefore, the competitive tendering that is taking place is completely one-sided and puts our people at a grave disadvantage. The policy ensures that part of the home market, which is necessary for continued viability, is removed completely. Our competitors can supply cheaply, and they do, because they have a stable home market arms industry supplying their national needs. It is therefore easy for them to offer any surplus production at a ridiculously low price to win orders here, at our expense.

Is it a wise policy to open our market to competitors, to place orders abroad, the result of which will be to reduce the level of production in this country to uneconomic proportions? What of the saving to the taxpayer then? Surely the more sensible and pragmatic option is to place orders for our requirements for the British Army in the United Kingdom, enabling factories such as Radway Green to have a stable future and to continue to reorganise and become more efficient by reducing overheads and unit costs. To achieve that, a certain stable level of production is vital. The excuse, or the reason, for competitive tendering is that the taxpayer has an interest in getting good value for money. Every hon. Member and every person in Britain would agree wholeheartedly with those sentiments. The cheapest is not necessarily the best value, as any housewife worth her salt will say. In the short term, it might be extremely appealing but, in the long term, it is often a disaster and usually costs much more.

It is, of course, strategically vital to maintain and to encourage our small arms manufacturing capacity in the United Kingdom. It has proved itself in the past to be reliable. It produces a quality product which the Army has come to expect and have confidence in. Deliveries can be made daily, if necessary, to top up supplies if an emergency occurs. Unlike what would happen with a foreign supplier from whom even larger supplies would be necessary to keep the store cupboard full if there are delivery difficulties, there are no difficulties in shipping, no dock strikes and no military equipment being impounded. Our home-based industry has so much more to offer. Radway Green, for example, is in a prime position, being linked into the rail network for ease of delivery to and from Longtown, near Annan, and to Kineton, the main Ministry of Defence store in Warwickshire.

What policy should be followed by the Government to ensure that our manufacturing capacity is retained and kept at a level that would ensure optimum value for the taxpayer in this price-conscious age? I have no hesitation in proposing that all orders should be placed in this country to enable unit costs to be brought down. Fewer orders and less work mean that unit costs rise. The worst of both worlds results because, at the end of the day, the only winners will be our foreign competitors and the losers will be the people of this country, once again.

I urge the Minister, with all the strength I can muster, to think long and hard before confirming so foolish a course, the results of which will not serve the best long-term interests of this nation. The best way that hon. Members and the Government can pay tribute to the service of our most excellent Army is to supply it with the best in arms and equipment produced, in the case of small arms ammunition, in this country by its fellow countrymen.

8.20 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in his intervention in the speech of the Secretary of State, made clear the concern about the standard of morale in our Regular forces. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the damage which can be done to morale when we mess around with the overseas allowances at short notice.

In answer to a question about that during Question Time towards the end of last year, my right hon. Friend covered the concern that is felt in many parts of our armed forces and the steps that the Government are taking to try to alleviate it. However, it still remains a factor, particularly for those in the armoured regiments which are perpetually posted overseas, particularly in the British Army of the Rhine.

Those of us who have friends and relatives serving in the Regular forces appreciate the changes that are taking place in attitude particularly of those who reach the rank of senior NCO and hold commissions in our forces because those who find their bi-annual moves, along with their families and wives, a perpetual strain throughout their service career find that it becomes increasingly difficult if they have wives who wish to follow a career. Many of their wives have achieved a high standard of further education and find that the sacrifices in being married to a senior NCO or officer are very great when it comes to giving up the training they received before they married. I believe that that is becoming an issue in the Regular Army and is one to which the House and those who represent the House in the Ministry of Defence must address themselves.

I should particularly like to refer to the pensions problem because that is a matter of anxiety in many areas, particularly for those who have since retired from regular service. I believe that the Officers Pension Society performs a useful service for both sides of the House in campaigning for a better deal for those who have retired from our armed forces. Indeed, the disparities in the retired pay codes still exist and, although the position of widows has improved, the equality that I think we all wish to see in the retired pay codes and widows' pensions is not yet on the horizon. I very much hope that eventually it will be a Conservative Government who will introduce the equity which we all seek.

Normally, these debates provide an opportunity to refer to the Territorial Army with which I have been and remain involved. I am glad to see that during the short time that I have been a Member of the House the proportion of time spent by the House on the Territorial Army has improved. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State devoted part of his opening speech to the expansion of the Territorial Army and its conditions, which it appreciates. I regret that that has not always been the case. I have suggested before in the Chamber that the attention given to the 30 per cent. staffing of our deployed force and the 50 per cent. proportion of the 1 (BR) Corps has not been sufficient.

I welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's presence at the Ministry of Defence because he holds a territorial decoration. Therefore, we very much hope that we have a strong friend at court because of his experience in the Territorial Army. I hope that he will continue the expansion started by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). It is an expansion which I believe will make increasingly good sense as we move towards the problems of diminishing population, particularly the young population. The expansion of the Territorial Army from 59,000 when the Government came to power to the 86,000 planned by the turn of the decade will make a great difference to its deployment and ability to train. It will also put considerable pressures on the system, and I think that that is recognised in the Ministry of Defence.

My own battalion, the 5th battalion of the Light Infantry, is being split from its northern company to form the new 8th battalion. The good will that such a split requires on the part of those in the command structure and those who will soon be taking over is considerable, and I wish that all of my colleagues in the Government and other hon. Members could see the enthusiasm which is brought to that task. The enthusiasm does not come simply from those who were employed to carry out that task, but there is a positive enthusiasm from those of our Regular Army personnel on attachment to Territorial Army units. They all work to achieve the best possible organisation in the shortest possible time.

Certainly the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Associations have played a valuable role in helping to smooth the difficulty of creating new units from existing units and new units in areas where perhaps there has not been a strong TA presence for many years.

Those of us who have served in the Territorial Army, or still do, and other reserve branches of the armed forces find the support of our wives a particularly important part of being allowed to continue to serve. The support of our employers is equally important and I am glad to say that the Whips Office is often helpful in ensuring that I can take part in my annual TA commitment. The appointment of Tommy Macpherson, who has served and commanded a Territorial Army unit and has a good record in business, is to be welcomed because the industrial community needs to be assured of the value of its personnel receiving some sort of military training. Often one sees advertisements by major national companies seeking the employment of young men who have served in the forces on a regular basis. That must say something for the training people receive in the armed forces, and that is equally true of the Territorial Army.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will be aware that morale is high, not least because the standard of bounty and pay is good, but also because the support from the Regular forces to the TA is excellent and the training facilities improve weekly. That does not mean that the House can forget the public warning we received towards the end of 1985 when the director of the Territorial Army warned of the pressures being placed on the Regular Army with the expansion plan, particularly in the case of secondment of regular officers to TA units and the provision of senior NCOs and warrant officers to act as the SPSIs of Territorial Army battalions.

The most encouraging thing I have seen during my time with the Territorial Army is that we often have people posted to our battalions who have a long way to go in their Army career. Therefore, it is not a case of appointing Regular soldiers to TA units who are just filling out time towards the end of their career. That is an important policy which the Government are continuing, and I am sure it must pay dividends in ensuring that the expensive equipment that the Territorial Army has at its disposal is used to its maximum advantage.

In the past, debates on the Army have not been terribly acrimonious and I find that many Opposition Members strongly support the Territorial Army. When I had the privilege of serving with the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the presence of the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) was very welcome and he has been a great supporter of the Territorial Army. Therefore, I particularly regretted the remarks of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I am sorry that he is not in his place, but I intervened when he was speaking. I do not think that the British public see the armed forces of this country in a sinister light. There is a warning in his remarks and those of people of his ilk for members of my party and those on the Treasury Bench.

Unless we ensure that the armed forces maintain a community involvement and a strong presence in their county areas, the danger of such scaremongering can increase. It is important that we maintain local training areas, locally based garrisons and battalion bases so that

[Mr. Derek Conway]

they are not concentrated into one or two small parts of the United Kingdom, where the unjustified sinister attitude could develop, that, whenever we see the armed forces, a military coup is about to sweep aside our democracy.

The Army should continue to be very much a part of our civilian life. In Shropshire, we are fortunate in having not only the headquarters of Western District but several Territorial Army units, which will keep going the presence of our armed forces when we lose the services of the Light Division depot, which closes this year. I believe that Her Majesty the Queen Mother is to attend the closing ceremony.

The one Army concept is growing among Regular personnel, but it is also catching on in political quarters at the Ministry of Defence. I am glad to see that.

I should like to press a constituency interest. One of my constant themes is the need to get TA battalions committed to the British Army of the Rhine into armoured personnel carriers rather than the soft-skin vehicles allocated to them. My battalion is committed to BAOR, and that will be good for its protection. The wheeled protection could be the Saxon carrier which, by coincidence, is made in Shropshire. We see not only the attraction for the armed forces but, more important, the employment and economic attractions of developing an armoured protection policy for TA units based in NATO countries.

I was grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for his assurance when I intervened. He said that our noble Friend Lord Trefgarne, the Minister of State for Defence Support in another place, is actively pursuing the problems of unemployed reserve force personnel whose pay is immediately stopped by the Department of Health and Social Security, although it can take some weeks before their TA pay catches up. I hope that those who serve under the Paymaster General do not believe that we are niggling at them. The system itself must take some time, while the pay sheets are handled at company battalion level and then passed on to the pay office for attention. There is an inevitable delay, but it is not a matter of efficiency or inefficiency. The system must simply come to terms. When our noble Friend examines that problem, perhaps he will have discussions with the Home Office. If firemen, who play a valuable role, become unemployed, they are exempt from the Department of Health and Social Security penalties that now apply to TA personnel. Some of my hon. Friends have raised that issue several times. I am delighted to hear that the Government are now pursuing the problem actively.

In the debate, the House has heard the suggestion that we could have a return to a form of national service in the TA. That view finds support in many quarters. I am not personally convinced that this country will ever be prepared to accept again a form of national conscription on a two-year basis, which we had until the early 1960s. However, some sort of military service is extremely valuable.

We might do well to look at the example of the Swiss nation, which has a form of conscription based on the TA concept. The Swiss undergo a 14-day consecutive training period and then go on a minimum number of weekends a year, when they can exercise and practise their military skills. The spin-off from such a system in this country would be welcomed by many young people. Central television allowed me to make a documentary for one of its programmes about serving in the TA on a conscription basis. A group of young people in Shrewsbury were chosen at random, and they were asked for their views. Because I was not personally involved in vetting those young people, to my great regret, I was expecting to find a pretty negative response to the thought that they might be whipped into an Army unit for 14 days' training. To my surprise, there was a positive reaction. In fact, most of those interviewed felt that they would welcome the opportunity for a short period of military training and believed that it would not be unreasonable for the country to ask them to be prepared to defend it and train for that purpose. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House with military experience will appreciate that it is not just military discipline but self-discipline that is so important for military training.

The one constant theme in my experience with the TA and the meetings that we have with the Regular personnel seconded to us is not only their determination, which I would expect from those who have chosen such a calling, but their ability and variety. They are not automatons by any stretch of the imagination, but have a great variety of attitudes to life.

It has been a privilege for me to serve in the 5th battalion of the Light Infantry. I wish that more hon. Members would take the opportunity to visit exercises such as Brave Defender to see the value to the community and the taxpayer of maintaining an active, well-trained and well-equipped TA. In that respect, the Government's record is superb, and I wish them well in continuing along that path.

8.37 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) speak with such force and effect about the value of a Territorial Army. I am sure that the House will endorse the view that he expressed.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on the success of his scheme, administered by the Royal British Legion, for taking widows to visit the graves of their husbands. I know from a case in the Twickenham constituency that was handled by the Royal British Legion how greatly that scheme is appreciated by widows and by the Royal British Legion. I hope that it will continue, and will go from strength to strength. I am sure that it is the right, decent and honourable thing for us as a country to do for the widows of those who laid down their lives in the cause of freedom and peace.

I am glad to see on the Opposition Front Bench the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who is to wind up the debate for the Opposition. I remind him that 20 years ago precisely this week the Hull, North by-election took place, when he won a famous victory against me, as the defeated Conservative candidate. At the time I minded about it very much, but, with hindsight, I am much relieved because that defeat gave me the opportunity to seek the privilege of representing the Twickenham constituency, and consequently the opportunity to speak tonight in support of the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller hall. On that I hope that the hon. Gentleman as well as the Minister will support me.

The training of British Army bands is important for our country. The high standard of excellence of British Army bands is the envy of the world. They lift the spirits of our nation. They add splendour to our royal and state

occasions. They are one of our finest traditions. They enhance morale in the Army. With the bands in the other services, they promote recruiting. As part of the traditional British scene, they help to attract to our shores visitors whose spending helps the tourist trade and thus promotes employment. It is not easy to measure the financial and fiscal effects. There are fiscal effects, because there is a tax return to the Government. Those financial effects undoubtedly exist, and should not be left out of consideration.

The tremendously high standard of British Army bands is linked inextricably to the famous and prestigious name of Kneller hall, the Royal Military School of Music at Whitton in the Twickenham constituency. As a centre of excellence, it is world-renowned. Indeed, 15 to 20 per cent. of its pupils and trainee band masters pay to come from Commonwealth and other overseas countries. They come not only because the school is in Britain but because it is Kneller hall, with its special name.

All that was put at risk by the decision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State for Defence to set up a tri-service music school at Deal. Even when that decision was made, Deal was not the cheapest option, and the cost has since shot up dramatically.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was kind enough to see me about Kneller hall on Tuesday 21 January 1986. I told her how that institution is greatly cherished in my constituency; how up to 5,000 people attend each of the summer concerts; how the Kneller hall bands play locally to schools and groups of old people and at civic occasions. I told my right hon. Friend how the bands play carols to Christmas shopping crowds and how Kneller hall stands on the only hill in the district with its Union Jack flying. I also told her that a total of 18,679 people had signed two petitions run by the Kneller hall action group and the Whitton Conservative association.

Of the two petitions sent to the Prime Minister in an attempt to save the school of music at Kneller hall, one read:

"We the undersigned, being residents of the area surrounding Kneller hall, Twickenham, and supporting the persistent efforts of the Member of Parliament Mr. Toby Jessel and the Whitton ward Conservative councillors to save the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller hall request the Prime Minister to ask the Secretary of State for Defence to reconsider his decision to merge training of Army, Air Force and Royal Marine bands, and in view of the enormous contribution the Royal Military School of Music makes in this area, to leave it at Kneller hall."

I mentioned to the Prime Minister the support I had on this issue from my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe). Kneller hall is on the edge of my right hon. Friend's constituency and he, as a Minister, has made his views and the views of his constituents well known behind the scenes. I also told my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that I had the support of other colleagues, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge is a member of the Public Accounts Committee and the Royal Air Force bands are trained in his constituency. He has therefore become very familiar with this matter.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I would like to thank my hon. Friend for mentioning to the House my interest in this matter and in particular the Royal Air Force school of music at Uxbridge. I confirm what my hon. Friend says about the great anxiety which the Public Accounts Committee has about the escalating cost of providing an alternative to the three existing schools of music and the proposal to combine them into a single defence school of music. I hope that my hon. Friend will elaborate on that in the course of his remarks.

Mr. Jessel: I know that my hon. hon. Friend took an active part in the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee on Wednesday 4 December 1985 which I attended. As I am not a member of the Committee, I do not know what the draft of the Committee's report, due to be published next month, contains. However, I was present on 4 December when, for an hour, the Committee questioned Sir Clive Whitmore, the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Defence. The Committee also questioned an official from the Treasury for a short time. I heard the questions and replies given in respect of the memorandum by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the subject of defence schools of music. If what took place on 4 December is anything to go by, it seems likely that the Public Accounts Committee may criticise the decision by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley to move the school to Deal, now that there is no significant financial advantage in that.

I would like to quote a reply given by Sir Clive Whitmore in paragraph 507 of the Public Accounts Committee report:

"Table 3 brings out quite clearly that there is not really very much difference between the costs of continuing with the present system"—

that is, with the RAF training at Uxbridge, the Royal Marines at Deal and the Army at Twickenham—

"and the cost of going to Deal."

The Comptroller and Auditor General's report shows that the capital cost of works at Deal has increased from £5·8 million to £10·6 million. That broadly offsets any saving on revenue account from merging the three together. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report show that, in respect of the 15 years from 1985 to the year 2000, on the present system the cost of capital and revenue taken together would be £32·8 million and the cost of going to Deal would be £31·8 million. That would amount to a saving of approximately £1 million spread over 15 years which would be about £60,000 a year—the total cost of employing two colonels. That is a small amount in relation to the amount of destruction the move would cause. That amount is, as Sir Clive confirmed when questioned, well within the margin of error.

The costs of making changes to Victorian buildings, which would happen at Deal, could rise higher than the present figure. It is like writing a blank cheque. I hope that the new figures will cause the Government to take a fresh look at the situation in the spirit of trying to see what can be done to save Kneller hall rather than look for reasons why it cannot be saved. I regret that that does not seem to be the approach adopted by the noble Lord, Lord Trefgarne. The noble Lord gives the impression, whenever I discuss the issue with him, that he prefers to press on regardless of the new figures and the strong feeling on the matter in my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies. The noble Lord wants to try to cut the figure from £10·6 million on capital works at Deal back to the £5·8 million, which was the previous figure, although until 4 December 1985 that figure had never been published.

[Mr. Jessel]

I believe that that cannot be done without an unacceptable cut in standards. This is a key point of my argument. High standards are absolutely essential in military music. One cannot let the standards of military music slip. The music of a military band must be crisp, precise, strong and clear. Its value depends on those qualities. Without them, a military band is virtually useless. A blurred and ragged sound of music coming from a military band would be a pointless exercise.

I should like to quote from a letter which I sent to the Public Accounts Committee and which I believe will appear as an appendix to the report to be published next month:

"On 1 August I asked the Secretary of State for Defence 'what is the main purpose of providing a tri-service defence school in a single location'? Mr. Lee replied 'the defence school of music will be cheaper to run than the present system of separate service schools. It will provide better musical facilities than those currently available, thus enhancing the services' high standards of musicianship'."

In his letter my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) continued:

"I assure my hon. Friend that no decision about service musical training will be taken that puts at risk the standards or quality of any of the service bands. We wish to maintain those standards. Indeed, we wish to ensure that the facilities provided for that training are improved, not the reverse."

I believe that the standards of musical training cannot be upheld, let alone improved, if there is a move to Deal. Kneller hall's high standards would be impaired and there are at least three main reasons for that.

First, the standard of training in performance on musical instruments at Kneller hall derives benefit from the presence of London-based instructors, either professors from music academies in London or expert players from London symphony orchestras who go to Kneller hall on a part-time basis. They have the highest standards. Some of them might go the 80 miles to Deal, but not as many as would go the 12 miles from central London to Kneller hall. It surely cannot be argued that the professors already at Deal for Marine band training could cope with the influx of all the Army band training. There are four or five times as many army bands as Marine bands. There would be a drop in tuition standards.

It is no good saying, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement did, that there would be "suitable" instruction. We do not need what is "suitable" for the training of our military bands, but what is the best.

Secondly, recruits are partly attracted to military bands by the prospect of being taught by the Kneller hall instructors, because they want training that they can use, not just in the service but later when they become civilians again. They are also attracted to Kneller hall because it is world-renowned. It has a spiendid bandstand where students perform before audiences of up to 5,000 people. That is a testing experience and a stimulus. It is made possible because 3 million people live within about 10 miles of Kneller hall, whereas only about a 20th or 30th of that number live within 10 miles of Deal. Students would not then have the stimulus of large audiences.

Deal has no bandstand and no concert hall. I believe that the figure of £10·6 million for capital works includes the construction of a bandstand or a concert hall. If that figure is to be reduced, what will be left out? Will it be the bandstand, the concert hall or, what are just as important, practice rooms?

The proposed site at Deal is a barracks. It consists largely of barrack rooms. People learning to play a musical instrument must have an individual practice room. They cannot learn in a barrack room with six other soldiers playing different musical instruments and different pieces. A trainee must listen to his own playing to improve his standard. That cannot be done properly in a barrack room. If standards are not to be lowered, there must be a great deal of construction at Deal. A joint defence school of music at Deal, or anywhere else, would need a great deal of capital expenditure on practice rooms.

When the report of the Publics Accounts Committee is published next month, I hope that the Government will consider its contents with an open mind. Unless it can be shown that there will be a substantial and certain saving and a guarantee that standards will be upheld, it would be wrong to put at risk the first-class standards of the internationally famous institution which is Kneller hall.

8.53 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I seek the indulgence of the House for entering the Chamber late this evening. I have been in Committee on the Gas Bill for many hours. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House will forgive my late intervention.

I endorse the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) about the importance of military music and Kneller hall with its tradition of excellence. I have known Kneller hall for many years. Recently in my constituency the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association held a celebration concert and Kneller hall's standard of music was exceptional.

Many of us blow trumpets in favour of the campaign that my hon. Friend has taken to his heart. I have never played a trumpet, but when I was in the combined cadet force I played a tuba and rose to the dizzy rank of company sergeant-major. That, apart from a short period as a pilot officer in the Cambridge university air squadron, is the sum of my military experience.

I have the honour to represent a heavily militarised constituency. I pay tribute to the civilian back-up of our military operations. That is often forgotten. Not least, of course, there is the headquarters of the United Kingdom land forces at Wilton, upon which we depend heavily. There are other establishments such as the Arms and Armaments Experimental establishment at Boscombe Down, the Larkhill ranges and Porton Down establishment which provide not just a great deal of employment but an enormous reserve of loyalty whenever it is needed. The people who work there are unsung heroes with what they achieve.

I am sorry that I missed the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). I should have liked to have heard their comments about the Falklands and conscription. I caught the end of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) and I endorse what he said about the Territorial Army.

There has been a great deal of discussion recently about the options available for Great Britain's military strategy. There was an article in *The Sunday Times* presenting various options for economy, in particular. There was one important mistake and a misconception in that article

which have already been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham. They related to the Falkland Islands. The new force levels for the Falkland Islands which no doubt will be announced soon will be welcome in a number of places. It will mean that the expense of the Falkland Islands garrison will be considerably reduced.

I understand that Mount Pleasant airport will pay for itself within a couple of years because we shall need to keep fewer troops on the islands. That will, however, be a mixed blessing. Important training opportunities on the Falkland Islands will be lost for many people. We must appreciate the huge success of the tri-service nature of the military operation on the Falkland Islands which is making a real contribution to our defence experience, as I saw there just before Christmas.

This country needs to rethink its position on military conscription. We are in danger of being overtaken by events in the form of the popular television programme "Yes, Prime Minister" with its characterisation of conscription. However, as we have heard recently, fact is often stranger than fiction. Conscription is the most radical option which is often forgotten when we discuss the future of defence. There are many social benefits which have been mentioned by my hon. Friends. We should remember that every other European Community country, except Ireland, recognises the benefit of military conscription. I believe it would be far more beneficial than a costly bureaucratic extension of community service which has been outlined by one of the opposition parties. That proposal received a frosty welcome in the press, including a leader in *The Times*.

The voluntary sector in Britain is almost unique among the European countries. It is advanced, it is popular, well subscribed and well supported. To suggest national service of a community service nature would crowd out that sector. I do not wish to be misunderstood, but the remarkable success of community service orders issued by the courts would, I suspect, be jeopardised if we confused the issues and suggested that some form of national service or conscription was similar to the penal option which is now available for young people.

There is much serious thought on the question of financing the defence of Britain. Senior and middle ranking service officers, through their own experience of recruiting for their regiments and their own training experience, believe that we cannot leave out the idea of military conscription. There are regiments, the Parachute Regiment in particular, which reckon that they can turn tough recruits of comparatively tender age into competent soldiers within a few months. It is hard reality and hard experience. It is certainly not blimpish dogma wishing to go back to the era of square bashing and the spit and polish of toe caps.

Why is it that many of us, myself included, have only recently become converts to this idea? I suspect that it is because politicians have swallowed the quite understandable line of the military establishment that it would be a retrograde step, not to mention sheer hard work, to go back to a system which was abandoned in the 1960s. There is a great deal of institutional inertia in the military establishments. How long will it be before politicians are forced to reconsider military conscription? If one extrapolates the figures of pay and pensions in the services, one finds that pay and pensions are consuming a growing and, I believe, insupportable proportion of the defence budget.

A more professional military establishment would develop if a highly trained group of professional soldiers could rely upon a wider group of conscripts. Only last weekend one commanding officer told me that the rate of coming and going of private soldiers in his regiment was so great that he would not notice if there were conscripts.

If this country chose to pursue a non-nuclear strategy, which, in my view, is militarily unrealistic, it would force a return to conscription even sooner than we could plan for. That would lead to a massive increase in the defence budget much earlier than we could deal with.

I do not think that this is an outrageous suggestion, and anyone who suggests that it is is ignorant of the role of national service men in our military history over the past 40 years. Undoubtedly the expansion of the Territorial Army is a stride in the right direction. Why not take a radical leap down that road? Conscription is a harsh reality with a proven record in European countries of all political persuasions. I merely ask the House to start thinking about it as a proper option for the future.

9.3 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): As is usual on these occasions, we have had a very wide-ranging debate. May I thank the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) for his kind words of congratulations to mark my 20 years in the House. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the date when I first took my seat [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That is very kind. I am thinking of how different parties reward their members. In my party I got the Humber bridge but the hon. Member for Twickenham has lost Kneller hall.

Mr. Jessel: Not yet.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman appears to be losing Kneller hall. The hon. Gentleman only spent a brief time in Yorkshire but when he was up there he learnt that great Yorkshire characteristic of doggedness. The way the hon. Gentleman has pursued this matter — he has challenged and taken on the establishment and his right hon. and hon. Friends—shows how a good constituency Member can work for the interests of his constituents on an issue about which he feels passionately. We have a degree of sympathy with the hon. Gentleman and think that he has made a sound case but we have restrained ourselves from supporting him because that would immediately damn any chance he has of succeeding in changing the mind of his right hon. and hon. Friends. However, we hope that he will be successful.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) is not here as it was good to hear him taking part in a defence debate rather than sitting directly opposite me and muttering under his breath such things as, "You are going over the top again, Kevin." It was good to hear about his experiences. He paid a moving tribute to his former political chief. We would not endorse all, if any, of what he said, but he had a colourful Secretary of State who obviously gave him great opportunities as his Parliamentary Private Secretary. It is always good to have such a relationship.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) talked about the Australians and the effect of atomic tests at Maralinga. An Australian senator has been over here in connection with those tests, on behalf of the Australian Government. Although we do not accept any

[Mr. McNamara]

commitment to a set figure of compensation, the Opposition believe that the Government should co-operate positively with the Australian Government in those inquiries rather than stand at the sidelines tendering occasional advice, because Australia is a fellow Commonwealth country and because we were involved in those tests. They were our tests and we cannot wash our hands of their ramifications. British service men were involved and there is a moral obligation to co-operate.

I found the Minister's speech somewhat disconcerting. He properly paid tribute to the role of our forces and to the Territorial Army. The whole House agrees with that, but the picture of morale that he painted had even his Back Benchers shaking their heads in disagreement. Morale in the British Army is not high and people are leaving in considerable numbers. The Minister might say that the problem is not as bad as when Labour was in government. That might be so but, by the Government's own criteria, the problem was bad then, and they are fast approaching similar circumstances.

The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) talked of a commanding officer saying that soldiers are in and out of the regiment so quickly that he would not notice if they were conscripts. That demonstrates the Army's problems. A Ministry of Defence source was quoted in the newspapers recently as saying:

"There has been continuous growth in the number of people leaving early".

That exodus is a direct result of budgetary constraints imposed by Trident and the Government's overall defence policy in which there are too many commitments, too many expensive projects and not enough money. There are fewer people in the armed forces to do more work and they spend more time on base. Budgetary constraints have meant that pilots, tank drivers and members of the armed forces generally are unable to exercise properly or to use their equipment correctly. In the first place, most service men join to see action.

Budgetary constraints cannot help the army's morale. According to *The Sunday Times* of 19 January, more than twice as many service men left a regiment in Germany in 1985 as in the previous year. Those figures mirror the problem in the other services. The men and women who are leaving the Army are highly trained. Normally, they would be expected to be highly motivated. They are difficult to replace. At the same time, in a surprisingly penny-pinching way, the Government cut the local overseas allowance in Germany by £17 million. Only six jet pilots need to be lost before that saving has disappeared. In terms of the highly skilled personnel in electronics and computers, who are now leaving the services, that saving has been lost to the nation. That is no way to run the armed services.

The Government say that they are doing what we have done in the past. However, Labour Members believe that we can learn from our mistakes. The Government are perpetuating our mistakes. I received a letter from a member of the 17th/21st Lancers. Many hon. Members have received similar letters. I have never received so many letters from members of the armed forces on an issue as I have complaining about the cut in the local overseas allowance. The letter states:

"As a volunteer single soldier the wage cuts announced on April 11 have the effect of cutting my annual take-home pay by one month's worth. The annual loss calculated at today's fixed forces rate of exchange will be approximately"

£350 a year for a trooper or lance-corporal and £440 for a corporal. He continues by saying that they joined the Army for three reasons: quality of life, the leave, and the pay. He further states:

"It is only when all three get out of balance that I begin to wonder about my future as a professional soldier. The quality of life is difficult to assess: certainly we are busier than ever before. The accommodation is, in my case, a thirty year old 'temporary' bungalow hut and I pay for this and my food. As the pace of life increases it has become increasingly difficult for me to take my leave. Certainly I can't always take it when I would prefer it. This latest cut in my pay gives me no incentive to carry on. Certainly it removes any recompense for soldiering in Germany."

It is no excuse for the Government to say that they are bringing matters into line or that service men should have known that those are the regulations. Those are real cuts for a single soldier buying a motor bike or a car or for a married man hoping to save up for a house. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) pointed out, any wage increase received by soldiers last year was cut as a direct result of the removal of the local overseas allowance.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the Gurkhas. They have had an outstanding history in our Army during the past 170 years. During the second world war the Gurkhas lost 45,000 men. We have an obligation to the Nepalese to make our position clear about the future of the Gurkha regiments. We have been told that they will have a continuing role after we leave Hong Kong, but the number of battalions required has not been revealed. Discussions are going on with the Nepalese Government. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli has said in the past, we have a debt of honour to that country. The money that goes to that improverished Himalayan kingdom in the form of remittances, pay and pensions is one third of the country's foreign exchange and an important element in the budget of that Himalayan country. We should be very worried about it.

At present, Westland is the only subject of our conversations, but two months ago there was another debacle that rivalled Westland for bungling and incompetence. That was the aftermath of the Cyprus spy trial. The trial left the taxpayer with a bill for £5 million and left the careers of at least eight men in ruins—eight men who were acquitted on all charges.

The atmosphere surrounding the trial left many questions that remain to be answered, and not only questions about the security of the defence installation at 9 Signals Regiment. It has raised questions about the way in which we treat our service men and their rights. It raises the question of the attitude of the services towards homosexual conduct and the way in which homosexuals are treated. Secondly, it raises a question about the manner in which the Army treats service men who are under suspicion. Thirdly, it raises questions about the way in which service men's rights are represented in general. Fourthly, it raises questions about the way in which they are represented in court and the decision as to the court in which they should face trial. Fifthly, it raises the question of the way in which service men are treated after they have been tried.

Of course, the Calcutt inquiry will consider some of those matters and the Select Committee on Defence will examine the composition of courts-martial and the way in which they are run, but some other matters still worry us.

Since the trial, a number of service men and ex-service men—some from 9 Signals Regiment and some from other units—have contacted me with stories of equally harsh treatment to that meted out to the eight men who were acquitted at the Old Bailey. From replies to written questions to the Ministry of Defence I have learnt that since the inquiry began into the alleged breaches of security at 9 Signals Regiment, 121 men have been discharged from the regiment, 83 of them prematurely. I have similar figures for other regiments in that sensitive area.

It is possible that some of those service men found other jobs; some may have been discharged on medical grounds; and some may have had enough of service life. Even so, those numbers are rather excessive—121 men represents about one third of the strength of the unit. That is a guess, because, although I asked for the number of men in the unit, I was told that for security reasons it could not be revealed. My information is that it represents about one third. The Ministry of Defence will not specify how many have been discharged for administrative or medical reasons. It says that it would cost too much to provide those figures; yet in the aftermath of the costly Cyprus spy trial we must have that information.

Mr. Jessel: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: I have not yet finished my argument on this aspect. I am not talking about the jury in that trial, but about the facts and figures that have been given to me.

The service men who wrote to me alleged that they were asked to leave the Army and that there has been a general purge of the regiment, as well as similar units, following the Cyprus trial. No one can deny the importance of security at sensitive military establishments, and one recognises the need for the Ministry of Defence to get rid of people who are not right for the tasks to which they have been assigned. But the Ministry has a duty to come clean about why it is doing it, and should remember that those soldiers also have human rights.

Some of the service men have been asked to leave after years of service with exemplary records. They are dismissed under Queen's Regulations 1975, paragraph 9.414, which is headed, "Services no longer required". It deals with the discharge of a soldier,

"who cannot or should no be transferred to the Reserve, or discharged, under any other paragraph. It will not normally be used for compassionate reasons, loss of efficiency, indebtedness, indiscipline, misconduct or medical unfitness."

It is the catch-all paragraph which says, "We do not want you here." Soldiers are asked to sign a document which states:

"I, Number, Rank, Name, Initial, Regiment Corps, understand that my discharge under 1975 para. 9.414 is being sought".

Paragraph b. states

"I do not intend to represent against discharge under the above paragraph either now or in the future."

Soldiers are being asked to go, not told the reason why, and told not to kick in the future. Some soldiers have refused to sign that document. Obviously, that is no way to treat volunteers. It is no right to deny them their human rights in a way that would not be acceptable to any public or private employer in civilian life.

A serving soldier who contacted me said that he and other service men had lost their security certification with no reason being given, and had been transferred from highly trained jobs to mundane support jobs. That may be in an attempt to ease them from the service. Another service man who has been discharged said that he had been harassed by plain clothes police after leaving the service, and that his passport had been confiscated. Yet at no time were charges brought against him. Other service men were accused of being homosexual and subjected to interrogation, and ridicule from colleagues, although they were heterosexual.

The spy trial has clearly had an adverse effect on many men besides the eight who were acquitted. None of those men could clear his name.

Mr. Jessel *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: I have every respect for a British jury, and that answers the hon. Gentleman's likely intervention.

The men are not permitted under Queen's Regulations to contact the press, and they must seek the permission of the services to do so, even after they have left. Even if one assumes that homosexuality was the cause, it raises questions. There was a sad case in the King's Regiment of a man murdering another man who said that his homosexuality was going to be revealed. The men in the spy trial have been acquitted and the evidence of their having been present at various homosexual orgies thrown aside. Even if that charge will lead to a murder verdict, or make someone who otherwise has a splendid character in the forces liable to blackmail and to pass secrets, we have reason to consider how homosexuals are treated in the armed force. However, that does not deal with various points that arise from the Cyprus spy trial, in which many of the people involved were not homosexuals.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was not accurate when he said that Britain was the only country with a division between the services on responsibility for battlefield helicopters. Australia and Greece have the same sort of division. However, he was right to point out the consequences of that division. It is impossible for both services to present a united front in deciding what to demand. If we did not have a conflict between the services, much of the Westland affair would never have arisen because there would have been a clearly defined target. Obviously, there will be confusion if the money for the helicopters is to come from the RAF Vote, while they are operated by the Army. I agree with the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) that it is time to end the conflict. The logical and sensible way to proceed is for all battlefield helicopters to be the responsibility of the Army Air Corps.

Will the Minister assure us that, despite the Westland debacle, the collaboration on the NH90 and future light attack helicopters will still proceed? We have been told to listen to arguments from two large private organisations seeking to gain control of Westland's helicopter company. In part of what it is doing Westland is at the forefront of technology. Had we been in Government, we would have taken a large share in that company, sufficient to give us time to work out a solution to the problem. We have done that successfully in the past. We took over Ferranti, cured its problems and got it going to such an extent that it became a jewel to be sold off by the present Government. That is what we would have done in this case, but that is not an option the Government are prepared even to consider.

If we want to be allies of the United States and not satellites, either in military or in technological terms, it

[Mr. McNamara]

would be far better to go ahead positively with the European alternative. That holds out hope for our industry and would create a degree of competition that the Government should like. It would be better to have two rival suppliers of helicopters rather than one American supplier—even though there are a number of companies in America—and a European option would prevent us losing important technology in the United Kingdom. That was the theory behind the European option agreement made in 1978 by my right hon. Friend Lord Mulley, the former Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Ashdown: I will skate lightly over the fact that by his remarks the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has put the Labour party on the same side as the large financial institutions and against the work force. That is a strange paradox. He mentioned a short-term intervention, and I welcome that because it coincides with our view. Will he repudiate the view put forward by some Members of his party for full-scale nationalisation of Westland? That was rejected by the Labour party when it was in power and considered these matters.

Mr. McNamara: The wholesale nationalisation of Westland has never been put forward by the Opposition. If it was necessary for us to take a commanding share of that company to protect it and build it up and maintain the technology, we would do that. On occasions, even large financial institutions may be right. We want to control them because when we do that they will always be right.

It is not anti-American to support the European option. It springs from our desire to see that European countries continue to play a full and proper role in the Alliance and are not seen as satellites of the United States. That more than anything would brown off the American taxpayers, who would not then want to play a great part with us.

In the last White Paper we were told we were to have a sixth regiment equipped with Challenger tanks. Everybody was delighted, not least the workers at Leeds. Then by a sleight of hand the tank order was suddenly dropped from 70 to about 55, and the order that eventually went to Leeds was for less than 20 tanks rather than the number the work force had reasonably expected. The Minister of State said "I will leave all these procurement if's to my right hon. Friend and he will deal with them when he is winding up." He was talking about half a dozen regiments equipped with Challenger tanks, jobs in Radway Green, and orders for munitions. If there is not a continuation of orders at Leeds the production line for those tanks and jobs will be put at risk. We have lost 800 jobs in the royal ordnance factories. If we do not get the order for tanks we shall probably lose more jobs in Leeds.

At Radway Green jobs are at risk; at Birtley jobs have gone; at Leeds jobs are threatened. The explosives factories at Bridgwater and elsewhere are threatened. Yet this is the Government who said that they would make the royal ordnance factories an attractive proposition in which people could invest. The job losses and the orders that are not going to the preferred places are considerably weakening the royal ordnance factories. The Government seem to be almost deliberately bent on getting rid of as many jobs as possible. They want, through competition, to drive out many of the jobs available in those factories so that when the company goes public it will have a considerably reduced labour force. That is what we warned against and we can see it happening to the detriment of our armed forces. That is why we are particularly concerned.

When the design drawings are sent by the Ministry of Defence to the competitors of the royal ordnance factories, they also show the methods of production. Under the legislation the Ministry of Defence has kept a proprietary interest in the drawings and the problem arises when it sends all the information to other companies.

I am told that at one time it was intended to put in the turrets of the Challenger and Chieftain tanks an automatic sprinkler system in case of fire. But to save a paltry amount of a few thousand pounds—candle ends—the Ministry of Defence decided against that. So the men in the turrets will be left with hand-held fire extinguishers. When one compares the shortness of time available to get out of the tanks with the value of human life, that decision should be reconsidered by the Department.

We have had a wide-ranging debate. It has come out very clearly that hon. Members on all sides want a complete re-examination of the Government's priorities and commitments. They are seeking to do too much. They have not got the money or the ability to carry out many of their commitments. They will not be in a position to do so while they continue with their foolish, pro-nuclear, Trident policy. The money will not be available and we shall end up with the weapon of last resort being the weapon of first resort because our conventional forces, including the Army, will be sadly at a loss to carry out the important role that we seek for them.

9.33 pm

The Minster of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): I have to confess that this is the first time I have attended an Army debate. Indeed, when I was thinking about today's debate I remembered reading that Lord Haldane, when he became Secretary of State for War, sent out a memorandum in his Ministry asking, "What is the Army for?" That was how I felt this morning. Having listened to so many speeches, I am much better informed, although I am alarmed at the number of my hon. Friends who seem to have been Gunners, Green Jackets and Territorials. I feel as though I am a new sort of Bateman cartoon — a Conservative Member of Parliament who has never been in the Army.

There was a certain amount of enthusiasm for the reorganisation that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) initiated within the Ministry of Defence. Hon. Members felt it was a good thing to end some of the inter-service rivalry, but not of course when it came to our debates. That was a tradition that had to continue. Of course, not having been a participant in these debates, I could not immediately see the logic, but I accept what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) said. He spoke adamantly on this point, so it must be right.

I should like to deal with a point that was raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and referred to by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I am sorry that I missed his speech. It is the question, far removed from most of the ground covered by the debate, of the nuclear weapons test programme carried out by the United Kingdom in Australia and the south Pacific in the 1950s and 1960s. Perhaps I can repeat what we have said before:

we remain confident that the tests were properly carried out with due regard to the safety of all participants. We do not believe that the health of those people was harmed. We recognise, however, that there is a general concern about this issue, and that is why we have commissioned the survey by the National Radiological Protection Board. The hon. Gentleman said that we should not walk away from this and that we had a responsibility in it. He may know that we have begun discussions with the Australian Government. Last week I met Senator Evans, the Australian Minister for Resources and Energy. I am glad to say that our initial discussions with the Australians were constructive and amicable.

There are differences. We do not accept that we have a responsibility for further clean-up work on the test sites, following earlier agreements with the Australian Government; but the Australian Government have decided that the first step should be to set up a technical assessment group to advise on a wide range of options to clean up the test sites. The United Kingdom fully accepts its obligation to provide advice on such matters, and the Australian Government intends to visit British experts to join its technical assessment group.

I turn now to some of the more central themes of the debate, and in particular to some of the points made by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) when he opened the debate. He got himself into a very strange position on defence spending. He started off by telling us that spending on the conventional part of defence was inadequate because of Trident and because of "defence inflation", as he put it. He seemed to have forgotten some of the things said by some of his own Front Bench colleagues, including the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) who on 2 July 1985 remarked:

> "The Opposition have made it clear that we would not have increased defence expenditure by 3 per cent. in real terms for the past six years."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 208.]

In other words, he is prepared to say that there is not enough now but they would never have voted for the increases that we made. We all know that only a small part of that increase in defence spending is actually going on nuclear weapons.

The right hon. Gentleman made it clear that he would not increase spending on conventional weapons. He would just hold it where it was. At the same time, he wanted to talk about the deterrent effect of conventional weapons. On the one hand, he was going to give up the best value-for-money deterrent that we can get—Trident—and, on the other, simply maintain conventional spending at the same level.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to follow-on forces attack—FOFA. As I understand it, this is not a new issue. NATO has long had the capability of interdicting second echelon forces, and that was the position when the Labour party was in power. The long-term planning guidelines approved by the Alliance over a year ago reflect NATO's objective of improving its conventional capability to strike follow-on forces.

The right hon. Gentleman was also probably getting it wrong when he linked this issue with the nuclear threshold. The whole point, as I understand it, of the follow-on forces attack doctrine is to prevent an aggressor from using his second echelon forces and thus to prevent ourselves from being drawn into a position where we had to use tactical nuclear weapons. I think the premise of what was said was wrong.

The right hon. Gentleman asked also about the modernisation of battlefield nuclear weapons. My right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State made the position on this quite clear on 22 November last year. SACEUR has made a number of recommendations to Ministers about the future size and composition of NATO's nuclear stockpile including those weapon systems in service with the British Army in Germany. These will be pursued by SACEUR, in co-ordination with the nations concerned. No decisions have been made affecting the modernisation of weapon systems in service with British forces, but we expect to begin discussions with SACEUR in the spring about their longer term survivability and effectiveness.

Quite a large part of the debate has been taken up by the royal ordnance factories. The royal ordnance factories have an excellent record of providing the Army and the other services with equipment of the highest quality. I have no doubt that, as Royal Ordnance plc, it will not only continue but will improve on this record. As it increasingly learns to operate in a commercial environment, I am sure that the company will offer the armed forces better value for money, as well as high quality. It is the Goverment's hope that the company can move to the private sector in mid-1986, subject to the usual caveats of trading performance and stock market conditions.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) for the fact that he did not receive the letter which I thought he had received about the redundancies. I want to reply directly to the points he has raised in the debate. As he knows, a number of redundancies have been announced today at Birtley and Chorley. The total number is 831, consisting of 446 at Birtley and 385 at Chorley. I understand that this number is a maximum; the actual number is likely to be rather less. Naturally, we regret that this has been necessary, but I have to stress that employment prospects at any factory have always depended on the order book and the profitability of the individual factory.

The Ministry of Defence's responsibility must be to provide sufficient equipment and ammunition to meet the requirements of the armed services and at prices which represent good value to the taxpayer. It cannot be the Ministry of Defence's responsibility simply to sustain employment in Royal Ordnance plc or in any other company. It is up to the company to create its own success.

Another point which I have to make to the hon. Member for Blaydon and to other hon. Members interested is that ammunition orders in recent years have been at an unusually high level. This reflects a number of factors — the Falklands, enhancements, particularly of the Territorial Army, and a number of export orders. That is the main reason why the output of the royal ordnance factories is declining after a very high peak.

The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have referred to competition policy, and wondered what part that has played. It is our intention that we should increase — I think absolutely rightly — the extent to which ammunition is going to be subject to competition, but we are introducing this policy gradually. There are many areas where competition is simply not practical. This year, for example, we are going to competition for only about 10 per cent. of the requirement which the royal ordnance

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

factories would otherwise have met under the preferred source arrangement. Next year, this will rise to about one quarter. I assure the House that we purchase from overseas only when it is in our long-term interest to do so.

Of course, the point which hon. Members will immediately make is: what about strategic capacity? We do take that into account—we are looking at the issue of strategic capacity. In the run-up to flotation, this is one of the things which we are discussing and negotiating with the company. There is a level of capacity which we have to maintain for strategic reasons.

Despite having my thunder stolen—I think my hon Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) managed to make the announcement for me from the Back Benches—I am pleased to announce that we have awarded a contract to royal ordnance Chorley to supply 105 mm field gun ammunition. This will create some work for royal ordnance Birtley in the manufacture of the shell bodies. This will enable Royal Ordnance plc to make some reduction in the number of redundancies that would otherwise be made. The contract is for 23,000 rounds, which is what we need to order now to maintain supply to the Army. We are considering the suitability of an alternative manufacturer of shells.

The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) referred to a number of other specific points with reference to RO Birtley. I think he knows that our orders for the 155 mm ammunition for the FH70 are governed by an agreement with Germany and Italy, which ensures that each country receives its fair share of work. To meet this requirement, our recent order was placed in Germany, and production deliveries are expected to start shortly.

It is true that there has been some delay in the start of full production of this order. Deliveries were due to start in October last year. United Kingdom and West German ammunition experts are now completing their evaluation of the pilot production lots, and we expect full production to get under way.

There is no question of default by West Germany. We are bound by the terms of the memorandum of understanding. Although the hon. Member for Blaydon sees jobs moving from this country to Germany, equally, when our part of the contract was working to our advantage, the Germans could have made the same complaint about us. We are absolutely bound in that way.

Mr. McWilliam: What about the Tornado?

Mr. Lamont: The Tornado is unrelated to it. The SP70 is still under development, and ammunition production will not need to begin before the end of the decade. It is too early to discuss to whom contracts might be awarded. It would be foolish to start production of ammunition now, because the life of the shells would be partly used before the gun entered service.

The hon. Member for Blaydon asked about the multi-launch rocket system. We expect a production contract for MLRS1 to be placed by the middle of this year. Royal Ordnance plc has started to establish production facilities in advance of the contract being awarded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) asked about the future of royal ordnance Radway Green. I met my hon. Friend yesterday and we discussed the prospects for the factory. Radway Green has not been affected by these announcements, but I know that she has some anxieties. We are currently discussing with Royal Ordnance plc our requirements for small arms over the next few years. We are in negotiation now. I cannot anticipate the outcome of the discussions, but I am sure they will satisfactorily resolve the question.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the order for 9 mm ammunition has actually gone abroad? Does he realise that the fact that it has done so will have robbed a company in my constituency of the chance to fulfil that order? That cannot be in the best national interest at the end of the day. The taxpayer will have to pick up the bills for those who may be put out of work by this decision.

Mr. Lamont: As I explained to my hon. Friend, we have placed some ammunition orders abroad, but they are—one is talking about 10 per cent.—for only small amounts. If that gets us better value for money in the defence budget—we have been hearing a lot about inflation and about the cost of the equipment required by the forces rising faster than inflation in general—we must pursue that course.

We have to get more output out of the defence budget. We have to buy the cheapest equipment and supplies if we are to meet the problems that everyone tells us exist—a shortage of resources which are no longer growing by 3 per cent. a year.

It would not have been a defence debate if we had not had comments about helicopters and Westland. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) raised a number of questions about Westland coming under foreign control. He will understand that the question of Westland coming under foreign control in a formal sense is primarily a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry. We have no information to suggest that a takeover bid is under consideration. Any bid to take more than a 30 per cent. shareholding by a foreign company or consortium would require the Director General of Fair Trading to consider the case. He might then recommend to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that he refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I do not want to expand on that. I shall answer the other points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Questions were raised about the AST404. There was some criticism of the delay to the Wessex Puma replacement. I think that greater criticism would almost certainly have been made if the Ministry of Defence had pressed ahead with an expensive replacement programme without taking account of evolving tactical thinking.

Recent exercise experience, including Lionheart in 1984, the advantages of being able to transport formed units and their equipment by use of the heavier Chinook and the greater emphasis on mobility as a result of the revised concept of operations for NORTHAG have led to a fundamental review of the requirement for helicopters which support the land battle. Such a review needed to take account also of the wider requirements for support helicopters in out-of-area and amphibious roles. A new helicopter fleet is an expensive investment. We must plan on the basis of the best judgments we can make. It has been made clear to the House before that the staff requirement has been put in abeyance and is being reconsidered.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) made an extremely interesting speech about helicopters. He made the same point that was made by the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and for Yeovil about the split in the use of helicopters between different services. In deciding on future purchases of helicopters, one would very much hope that the new organisation within the Ministry of Defence would enable us at least to take a unified defence view.

I should like to refer to the operational problems that arise from what my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham said. If we are talking about central Germany, we are talking about an air-land battle where there are problems between the services anyway in terms of command and control. I was certainly interested in what my hon. Friend said.

I remind the House of some of the ways in which, through our procurement policy, we are responding to the threat which was outlined by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I apologise for not taking part in the debate. Did my hon. Friend hear Mr. Horne this morning on the radio talking about the European consortium's proposal to block the Sikorsky business? He said that, if the deal did not go through, Westland would be faced with either accepting the European consortium's proposal or going into receivership? Does my hon. Friend agree that, if Westland went into receivership, that would be an extremely serious matter for the Ministry of Defence, because it would deprive the armed forces of the support that those 800 helicopters require?

Mr. Lamont: Of course receivership would be an extremely serious matter. I obviously could not disagree with that. I did not hear what Mr. Horne said on the radio, so it would be extremely unwise to comment on it, especially in this situation.

I was hoping, as Minister of State for Defence Procurement, that I might just say a little about the procurement policies we are pursuing. In the past few years, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of the defence budget devoted to defence equipment. In 1979-80 40 per cent. of the defence budget was spent on equipment. In 1985-86 that figure had risen to 46 per cent. That is for defence overall. However, the same is true for the Army. In that case the percentage has risen from 25 per cent. to 33 per cent. Therefore, although the Army is a more labour-intensive service, the proportion of expenditure voted to equipment has increased markedly.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli referred to the problem of what he called defence inflation — the relative price effect whereby defence equipment costs are rising more quickly than prices in general. Because of that it is not enough just to spend more money on defence. We have to increase productivity to get more output for a given input. That is why we have been pursuing the policy of increasing competition in defence procurement. I know that that policy can cause anxiety in constituencies, but from a national point of view it must be right.

We have dramatically increased the proportion of work placed on a competitive basis. In 1983-84 it was 38 per cent. of contracts, in 1984-85 it had increased to 46 per cent. and for the first nine months of 1985-86 the figure was well over 60 per cent. We are also increasing competition at sub-contract level. That produces benefits for the services and the taxpayer. We can illustrate that from the Army's experience. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley was able to announce that the competition for the production of the MCV 80 had produced savings of 12 per cent., or about £100 million. I could give many other examples of where, because we have vigorously pursued competition in defence procurement, we are producing savings all the time.

Competition produces more than simply resource benefits. It also enables us to make use of the industry's ability to innovate. When it came to the Army's remotely piloted vehicle, Phoenix, we asked the companies to submit tenders. Two companies were further invited to carry out engineering studies and make competition proposals for a development programme. Both firms invested a significant amount of their own resources as well as getting money from the Ministry of Defence. The result was that we signed a contract with the winning company for full development and production of equipment which was well defined and which could be judged by the yardstick of a competing product. There again competition brings other benefits.

We are also seeking to tighten the terms of contracts which have necessarily been let without competition, particularly in research and development. We are making much better use of fixed price and other incentive type contracts to ensure that those who obtain business from the Ministry of Defence share the associated risks.

Another policy that we have to pursue in procurement is international collaboration because the costs of development are so huge and also because within NATO there is an operational reason for wanting more collaboration. We must have equipment which is compatible with that of other countries. That is a problem which the Warsaw pact countries do not have. If the Warsaw pact had as many varied and incompatible pieces of equipment as we have in NATO, perhaps we would be able to relax a little more.

I emphasise that the policy of looking towards international collaboration when making procurement decisions is an area where my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley did a tremendous job. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) said, the EFA would not have come into existence if it had not been for the tremendous effort of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley. He pushed the concept of collaboration in equipment much further than any other Secretary of State and further than any other Secretary of State in Europe. It was he who revitalised the equipment group within Europe.

In the past year we have spent more than £1·5 billion on equipment for the Army, which has produced real improvements in the Army's capability. A large amount of new equipment has entered service. The programme for the introduction of Challenger is continuing, and a second regiment has now completed deployment. The Saxon armoured personnel carrier is now in service with one battalion. Eventually there will be 10. The new SA80 family of small arms is coming into service.

I resolutely and adamantly deny any suggestion that the British Army is anything other than extremely well equipped. Many resources are devoted to modernising the Army's equipment. I believe that my right hon. Friend the

[Mr. Lamont]

Minister of State and I have demonstrated in the debate that both the Regular and reserve elements of the British Army enter 1986 in very good shape. Our continued commitment and capability to contribute to NATO's collective defences is clear. Our contribution to the central region is of major significance. Over the past year, it has again been demonstrated at all levels that we have the flexibility and skills to adapt to changing circumstances, and we can look forward with confidence to the future——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That the Standing Order of 20th March 1984 relating to the nomination of the Select Committee on Procedure be amended, by leaving out Mr. Gregor MacKenzie and inserting Mr. Stan Crowther—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Poverty (Barnsley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): Rapidly increasing poverty in Barnsley over the past five years has had a dramatic and depressing impact on my town. I have represented Barnsley for nearly 33 years, and I have never known such misery on such a large scale as today. I lived through the 1930s and the pre-war depression years, but have never witnessed so many personal pictures of soul-destroying unhappiness through being penniless and pleading for help as are evident in Barnsley today.

That awful and worrying rise in poverty in Barnsley over the past five years of Tory administration has shattered individuals, many families, our small communities and our local economy. The crucial poverty indicators, such as the local level of unemployment, the number of social security claims and the increasing demand on social services section 1 moneys all reveal a sharp decline in personal and household incomes against a background of increasing job losses, redundancies and pit closures. That scale of poverty is placing intolerable pressure on our local services and resources, both statutory and voluntary, especially the social services, the advice services and housing.

Although Barnsley metropolitan district council has responded with various practical initiatives, trying to stave off the harshness of personal distress, Government cuts in the rate support grant, and the further cuts proposed in the so-called reform of social security will only exacerbate the serious poverty levels and the social security problems in Barnsley.

One might ask, where is the evidence? I believe it to be the frightening catalogue of social concern, which is the most distressing that I have ever come across in my time. One in five people in Barnsley is now without a job. In January this year 16,897 people were on the dole, and there was a 20 per cent. rate of unemployment, approximately 6 per cent. higher than the national average and 9·2 per cent. higher than in 1981.

The mass of poverty is startling. The social services, working on Department of Health and Social Security criteria, establish Barnsley's poverty line as being a family of four on supplementary benefit receiving £69 weekly income. In Barnsley, there are 7,875 people on the poverty line and, below the poverty line, 3,375 unemployed and 1,500 in work—a total of 12,750 poverty-striken people in the town of Barnsley. Is it any wonder that I decided to bring that to Parliament's attention?

In November, 16,739 people were claiming unemployment benefit in the Barnsley travel-to-work area. Most disturbing was the rise in the number of long-term unemployed. Although most people believe them to be in the older age brackets, that is just not true in my town. Of the registered claimants between 19 and 24 years of age, there were 1,087 people unemployed over the year. That is 45·4 per cent. of all the registered unemployed in that age category. What a damning indictment of the Government it is that so many young people in one small town in Britain should be condemned to the dole for so long with no hope on the horizon. What, then, of their poverty?

Since the beginning of 1981, 11,420 redundancies in Barnsley have been notified to the Department of Employment. Barnsley council is on a fast-moving treadmill, struggling to fight this surge of job losses. The Regional Manpower Intelligence Unit in January 1985 compared the vacancy levels in travel-to-work areas throughout England. Barnsley was ranked as having the second highest number of unemployed per vacancy in England, with 128 registered unemployed for every vacancy.

That is an appalling picture of misery thrust upon my town and constituency by a Government who have used monetarist controls, who have squeezed the economy, slashed regional aid, ruthlessly closed steelworks and coal mines, cut social services and caused massive job losses in coal mining towns like Barnsley. Yet the Government cannot provide any answer to the problems in such areas.

Barnsley council has made strenuous efforts to stem the tide. It has established an employment strategy, built an enterprise centre, small factories, seedbed workshops, and an information technology centre. The council has 35 staff working in teams to help new firms to set up, to help existing firms to survive and expand and to attract new industry and training. I have led teams to Brussels to obtain European regional development grants for the development of a business and innovation centre. This worked has saved and created 1,000 jobs in 1985.

Barnsley council launched the coal field communities campaign, which now involves more than 60 local authorities representing 16 million people, in an attempt to draw attention to the social, economic and environmental problems facing coal field areas like Barnsley. The community campaign was also intended to advocate policies to alleviate poverty, misery and unemployment in the declining economies of the coal fields.

As everyone can see, Barnsley council has not sat on its backside. It is fighting the problem. Government policies will have to be radically changed if there is to be any hope of a solution to these problems. National Coal Board Enterprise Ltd. is not the answer. Even if it is creating 500 jobs a month, that is for Great Britain as a whole. Barnsley alone needs that figure every month this year just to stem the tide and avoid being swamped.

Some 50 per cent. of all Barnsley households are in receipt of housing benefit. Earlier this year the housing department undertook a review of the waiting list. The review revealed that there are now more than 4,700 people on the council's waiting list. That means that over the past two years the waiting list has grown by 16 per cent. and in some cases in the borough the list has grown by more than 20 per cent. Of particular concern is the increased number of old-age pensioners on the list and the increasing demand for single person accommodation, which has increased by 22 per cent. over the past two years. During that time the number of single persons sharing households has increased from 200 to 286, an increase of 43 per cent. That is another tragic story of social distress for which the Government must accept responsibility.

The ratio of new house building has declined markedly in the council sector due almost entirely to Government restrictions. The rate of council house building has declined from an average of 330 units per annum in the mid-1970s to 128 in 1981-82; 15 units in 1982-83; 19 units in 1983-84; and 33 units in 1984-85.

With regard to housing benefits, I quote the case study of a miner's widow on a widow's pension of £38·38 and an NCB pension of £8·43. She receives a total housing benefit of £11·53. Under the new scheme her total housing benefit will be £9·01, a weekly loss of £2·52. That sum will be taken away from a miner's widow. Bearing in mind that 50 per cent. of all Barnsley householders are in receipt of housing benefit, thousands more people will be driven into deeper poverty because of the effects of the Social Security Bill now going through the House.

It is estimated that 29,000 people in Barnsley could lose some or all of their benefits. In Barnsley, more than 19,000 people are dependent upon supplementary benefit for the whole or part of their income. Local DHSS officers are so overstretched that they are taking up to six weeks to process the many claims for single payments for exceptional need. According to their statistics, the Barnsley, east office has 10,893 supplementary benefit recipients and the Barnsley, west office has 8,155. That amounts to 19,048, which is a considerable work load for an overworked staff.

Also noticeable is the number of supplementary benefit and family income supplement appeals listed for Barnsley. Between January and December 1985 there were 699. The abolition of the right of appeal and the review which has been mentioned are not satisfactory. They represent a major erosion of the legal right of Barnsley claimants. A significant number win their case on appeal. If the appeals procedure is abolished, a claimant's only recourse will be to the local DHSS manager. I doubt whether many decisions will be overturned under that system.

Many more claimants will approach the local authority's social service departments for financial assistance. It is inevitable that the demand on the limited section 1 moneys will be intolerable. How much more poverty will result?

In Barnsley, the most significant area of increased demand on statutory and voluntary services arising from increasing poverty is on the welfare rights officers. Within the social services department, referrals to the welfare rights officers have increased by 100 per cent. in the past two years. All staff record a dramatic rise in the number of cases with a primarily financial content. There has been an alarming increase in the volume of debt-related problems. Council staff have recently attended a training course on debt counselling. A special leaflet has been produced to help people to cope with enormous debts owed to building societies, fuel boards and hire purchase firms.

The emergence of loan sharks during the recent miners' strike was a new and worrying social phenomenon. Mrs. Catherine Allan, the Barnsley citizens advice bureau organiser, wrote to me and said:

"During 1984-85 the bureau dealt with 1,751 social security inquiries — a 63 per cent. increase in one year . . . In December 1985 the Barnsley CAB dealt with 731 inquiries compared with 569 in December 1984 . . . Indicators of the increasing poverty of clients are the large numbers of debt problems."

I received a letter from the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association. Mr. J. R. Foster, secretary of the Barnsley division, said:

"1985 saw an increase of 25 per cent. in the number of applicants, a 33 per cent. increase in the Funds disbursed, and of the total number of cases, 41 per cent. were for assistance with fuel, light, water rates and funeral expenses . . . I have one case of a pensioner whose gas supply was cut off two years ago, one of a pensioner who has had no water supply since October 85 and some others who are or have been subject of court orders. Some

[Mr. Roy Mason]

of these are elderly ladies and the thought of court action frightens them a great deal so they cut out other things to pay these bills. I may add that being the widow of ex servicemen or the men themselves, they are very uptight at having suffered the privations of wartime service they have to call on SSAFA and like organisations in their last years."

Fiona Moss, the secretary of Age Concern in Barnsley, wrote to me saying:

"I am perturbed by the increasing number of enquiries related to the standard of living of this area. In fact some are individuals who through pride have deliberately avoided what they believe to be the acceptance of charity. Many tears have been shed in my office. We have miners widows with approximately £7 a week extra pension. Their claim for housing benefits are reduced by the same amount."

She goes on to say:

"Can we afford to die? The £30 state grant is soon to be abolished. What will replace it? Our local paper states that elderly people worry about a 'Pauper's Grave', and figures show that a Barnsley family paid almost £600 for a funeral in 1985 compared to £90 in 1972. I should know—it was my own mother's funeral. In the past with fuller employment many elderly people were cared for by their own families. These families are also now in the poverty trap. I get many more of these families coming for advice about their parents' problems—they themselves are at their wits end struggling to survive on low incomes."

What a tale of woe and distress and more and more poverty.

The Barnsley Council's co-ordinated welfare rights group, Barnsley's anti-poverty team, has mounted several successful benefit take-up campaigns which have injected substantial amounts of cash to vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, the sick and the physically disabled. A team of dedicated civil servants and volunteers led by Roy Wardell, the director, and Councillor Judith Watts work well beyond their wage-related hours to alleviate stress and worry in the town.

Unfortunately, the council's anti-poverty measures have to be seen against a background of appeals by central Government for restraint in spending and of targets set by the Government and block grant penalties. At present, Barnsley is penalised at the highest level. Existing spending plus allowances for inflation and current commitments will result in the target which has been set by the Government by 1985-86 being significantly exceeded.

Education officers in Barnsley have estimated that the percentage of schoolchildren on free school meals will be reduced from 26 per cent. to 18 per cent. under the proposed changes. This almost certainly will have an effect on the number of school meals staff employed by the council and increased poverty in many families.

The financial and housing restraints on the under-25 age group, forcing young people to stay in sometimes intolerable family situations, will lead to increased family stress and breakdown in Barnsley. I received a report from one welfare rights worker at the Barnsley centre against unemployment, which says:

"One of the most serious problems faced by the young unemployed is their inability to find accommodation. Shortage of rented property has forced up rents and many landlords refuse to let their property to unemployed people. Consequently, many young unemployed people find themselves having to move into board and lodging accommodation, the disadvantages of which have recently been exacerbated by the new board and lodging regulations, resulting mainly from landlords charging exorbitant rates for their accommodation in the knowledge of DHSS payments. Although landlords have been largely to blame for the abuse of the system it is the young unemployed who have been penalised by reduction in benefits and time limits on their receipt of payment. Within two days of each other two young men, aged 16 and 17, attempted suicide, one by an overdose of valium and the other by slashing his wrists with broken glass. They were both lodgers in the same boarding house and both faced penalisation under the four week rule. In the same week, the week beginning 13 January, an 18 year old girl also overdosed. It is a nonsense to say that the under 25s should, if they have no employment, remain at home. The girl mentioned desperately needed her own accommodation due to her father's violence towards her. Also unemployed families have their benefits reduced by having adult children at home leading often to domestic tension and violence."

It is all so sickening to me and I hope that it is to the Minister.

Barnsley council and I believe that there is a direct link between economic decline, Government policies and the resulting fall in individual and household incomes—poverty. The local economy has suffered more than most from the effects of disputes in the coal industry. Punitive and inequitable legislation in social security reform and local government finance will serve only to increase rather than decrease the scale of the problem of poverty in Barnsley.

This is the story of poverty in Barnsley brought about by heartless and ruthless Tory Government policies. The town refuses to be dejected. We shall fight on, but we deplore being neglected. That is why the Minister has had to listen to this case today.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): It is never a hardship to listen to the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) representing his constituency. Yet again, he has spoken movingly about the problems that he sees in Barnsley, and I am pleased to be able to respond. I will try to pick up as many of the issues that he raised as possible in the time remaining to me. I am pleased to see that the hon. Members for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) are in their places.

I am aware that social security provision is an emotive matter, which arouses considerable controversy. I also understand that the present Bill, which I strongly support, which proposes fundamental changes in the social security structure, is a matter of high political dispute. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends accept that, whatever might be the political disagreement between us, the Government share their deep concern for the effects of poverty. We believe that many of the proposals in our Bill, as with many of our other policy proposals, are geared to alleviate precisely the problems that the right hon. Gentleman has outlined.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned some of the problems that apply to Barnsley at the moment. I appreciate, and would not deny, the special difficulties that have been caused to that area by pit closures and the resultant high unemployment. The latest unemployment figures for Barnsley are depressing and dispiriting. I cannot deny that and would not wish to.

I share with Opposition Members the hope that unemployment will soon begin to fall, but I can understand their frustration at the fact that the present high levels appear to be remaining for so long. Despite the difficult circumstances, people in Barnsley are finding jobs. Between April 1985 and January this year, the employment service placed more than 2,300 people in

permanent employment in Barnsley—an increase of 23 per cent. on the same period in the previous year. I am sure that we all hope that that trend will continue.

It is not true that the Government are unconcerned and harsh about the problems in Barnsley and elsewhere. I might draw attention to the substantial funds that are made available to Barnsley in the urban programme. In recognition of its economic problems, the need to help the area and the need to broaden its industrial base, Barnsley qualifies for help under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978. The council, to which the right hon. Gentleman paid tribute, has responded by establishing industrial and commercial improvement areas in Barnsley and in the outlying mining town of Goldthorpe. There is also a conservation workshop at Hoyle Mill, which is funded in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission. It places 80 trainees, who are engaged in restoring sites of historic interest in and around Barnsley. There are other interesting and innovative projects in the area.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about housing and some of the related problems. To help Barnsley overcome its difficulties, some £6·7 million has been allocated under the housing investment programme, and there is a further allocation of up to £1 million to meet obligations under the Housing Defects Act 1984. Despite those and other initiatives with which I shall not bore the House, Barnsley faces great problems, many of which spill over into social security requirements.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke of current board and lodging regulations. We have monitored their effect carefully. On the basis of preliminary information, there is no evidence that they are causing nomadism on the scale that many people feared. The time limits to which the right hon. Gentleman referred are subject to many exemptions. For one reason or another, large numbers of young people will find that they are exempt from the time limits, even if they are in circumstances in which they would otherwise be applied. The right hon. Gentleman will know that the limits do not apply to people who were in their accommodation some time ago.

I am not familiar with the cases that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned this evening, but I strongly suspect, although I cannot guarantee it, that those young people may have been entitled to some form of exemption. If the right hon. Gentleman cares to let me have the details of the cases, I shall carefully consider them and respond to them.

In his remarks the right hon. Gentleman spoke of social security provision. At present, spending on social security is running at more than £40 billion a year. That is a pretty substantial amount by any standards. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that that money is well spent, and primarily that is what we seek to do through the proposed changes in the Social Security Bill, which will go into Committee early next week. In many quarters, the review that preceded the Bill has been represented as a cost-cutting exercise. That is simply not so. I understand that that is the type of representation that often occurs in political debate. We believe that the proposals that underpin the Bill are principled and worthwhile. They are a part of the reform that we believe will simplify a social security system that is far too complex. They will direct resources far more effectively than at present to the people of whom the right hon. Gentleman spoke, who are in the greatest need.

The right hon. Gentleman is clearly worried about the living standards of those families in his constituency on low incomes. We, too, are worried about people on low incomes. Under the Bill those families are likely to be eligible for income support, if unemployed, or family credit if in work. The right hon. Gentleman said that many of his constituents would be worse off if the White Paper proposals were enacted. On the basis of the illustrative figures published with the White Paper we shall be spending £200 million a year more on family credit than we spend at present on family income supplement. The income support scheme is likely to cost more than we spend now on the main structure of the supplementary benefit scheme.

One aim of the social security reforms is to ensure that help goes to the people who need it most. Our reforms will direct that help to families with children. That applies to low-income working families and to those where the parents are unemployed. Today, those families are often in the greatest need, in Barnsley and sadly, in other areas too.

Our proposals will substantially reduce the unemployment trap, in which people are better off out of work than they are in work. They will eliminate the worse effects of the poverty trap, where a rise in earnings can be more or less wiped out as benefits are withdrawn.

The new family credit scheme will cost substantially more than family income supplement—about twice as much. It should reach more than 400,000 families—double the present number on family income supplement. Almost all those families will be better off than they are with family income supplement. On the basis of the illustrative rates in the technical annex to the White Paper, a couple with two children on gross earnings of £100 could receive £27·40 in family credit compared with £5·50 on family income supplement.

The right hon. Gentleman is rightly concerned about people who are not in work. Our proposals will get more help to families who are not working. Income support will replace supplementary benefit and in our judgment that will be a significant improvement. A noticeable feature will be its simplicity. At present, to determine the amount of weekly benefit, staff may need to make intrusive and detailed inquiries, such as the number of baths taken by a claimant or what his special laundry needs are if someone in the family is incontinent. However tactfully those inquiries are handled, they are plainly embarrassing and often insulting to the people to whom the inquiries are directed. Yorkshire men and women especially would find those inquiries deeply offensive.

We must find a better way of getting help to people who are in need, and with the system that we propose—one of premia based on easily identifiable criteria—it will be entirely possible to remove many of those intrusive inquiries. That simplicity—that certainty of entitlement—will be a great improvement, and will be generally welcomed in the House when the proposals are more fully understood.

I would have wished to have been able to say much more this evening, but only a short time remains. On the transitional protection for claimants, no one receiving supplementary benefit at the point of change to income support will have his weekly income reduced by the change. Anyone on family income supplement whose FIS award is higher than his family credit will keep the FIS award—the higher award—for the remainder of the

[Mr. John Major]

12-month award period. We made that clear in the illustrative figures published with the White Paper, and I emphasise it again this evening.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned single payments. I deeply regret the fact that time does not permit me to deal in detail with the points that he raised, but if he wishes to discuss that matter later, I shall be happy to meet him and his hon. Friends at any time, when we can discuss the anxieties that he expressed this evening.

The reforms that we shall make will be seen in due course as a positive advantage to people on low incomes, whether in or out of work. That is part of the intention of the reforms, and we shall seek to persuade the House and the country that they are compelling and worthwhile reforms. In the meantime, may I conclude by telling the right hon. Gentleman that I understand the difficulties which he faces in Barnsley and which he has expressed this evening in such compelling fashion. I hope that he will accept from me that our reforms are aimed at helping people in special difficulty, wherever they live. We believe that they will, and we hope that they will generally be seen to do so when they are more fully understood.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 31 January 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

River Crouch (Wharf Development)

9.35 am

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House I beg leave to present a petition about wharf development on the south side of the river Crouch. It has 579 signatures from people on both sides of the river, the vast majority being from my own consitiuency and many from the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham). The petition states:

That the advice given to Rochford district council by Essex county council to reject an application for the expansion of Baltic wharf was not properly heeded; that there was not sufficient evaluation of the applicant's claim that this development will bring about additional employment, which is thought by many to be minimal; that the views of those using the Crouch for sailing were not adequately considered, and that the increase in the number of heavy lorries that will result from this application will have an adverse effect upon the country road network and the environment on general and will not be acceptable."

I associate myself with that final observation.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your House should urge the Secretary of State for the Environmeent to call in the planning application ROC/856/84 and ROC/55/85, (Expansion to the Baltic wharf on the river Crouch, in the county of Essex) and determine these applications after a public inquiry, and your petitioners as in duty bound ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

HEARING AID COUNCIL ACT (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Laurie Pavitt, Supported by Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Reg Freeson, Mr. Jim Craigen, Mr. Clive Soley, Dr. M. S. Miller, Mr. Donald Stewart, Mr. Barry Jones, Mr. Robert Wareing and Mr. Frank Dobson presented a Bill to amend the Hearing Aid Council Act 1986: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 14 March and to be printed. [Bill 74.]

Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

During nearly 22 years in the House of Commons I have balloted on many occasions for a private Member's Bill but have never reached the first 20. It was with a feeling of great joy and excitement that I drew in this lottery the third position. It is with great satisfaction that I present a Bill that is necessary and worth while.

There is widespread, deep and understandable public anxiety about the number of cases of cruelty to children. There is also great anxiety about the many cases involving children in care who, having been moved from the home where they suffered abuse, are subsequently returned to that home only to suffer more abuse and injury and, in some tragic and horrifying cases, death.

Like all hon. Members, I am appalled by the number of cases of vicious, sadistic cruelty to children. The Bill does not attempt to deal with cruelty to children in general: it is confined to children and young persons in care under care orders. In that sphere, it is relevant and opportune. It introduces a new safeguard to protect such children. It proposes to amend the law in relation to the representation of interested parties and on appeals. It further introduces the right of transfer from magistrates' courts to the High Court. These changes are intended to make the law fairer and more effective in dealing with cases involving children and young persons in care.

Perhaps it would be convenient to the House if I explain the Bill's main provisions in detail. Clause 1, which would require the consent of the juvenile court before the local authority could implement a recommendation to return a child "in care" to the home where he or she was living before the care order was made, is a significant proposal, which would mark a new departure in our child care law. The main purpose of the proposal is to introduce a further and relevant safeguard for the child, but such a proposal would have the added benefit of providing a safeguard for social workers as well. Responsibility for the decision would be shared by social workers and the magistrates' court.

Social workers are responsible people who carry out their duties with much care and concern, but they are human and they can make mistakes. Indeed, we know that, in certain cases, they have made mistakes, some of which have had tragic consequences. Such errors must cause them great distress, and I should have thought that the extra protection that the Bill provides would be welcome to them. That aim is to assist social workers, not to hinder or offend them.

However, the main and overriding priority of the proposed change is to strengthen protection for the child. I am wholly satisfied and convinced that, by establishing a procedure whereby a decision to return a child from care to the home from which he or she had been removed by order would have to be examined by three wholly objective but concerned people, the Bill introduces a new and important safeguard.

Chapter 2 of the recent Department of Health and Social Services review of child care contains a valuable

[Mr. Dennis Walters]

discussion on the interrelationship between social workers and the court. It recommends that major issues should be determined by the courts while management of the case should be the responsibility of the local authority. As the report points out, there is room for debate on which decisions should fall into which category. I am strongly of the opinion that a decision to return a child who has had to be the subject of a care order must properly be regarded as one of the utmost importance, and one which, therefore, calls for the maximum scrutiny that the system can provide.

One may ask: how do I envisage my proposal improving the present system? First, the Bill adds a filter, in that, as well as the social workers, an independent tribunal, fresh to the case, needs to be satisfied that it is right to return the child. That is important, because social workers who have worked with a child's family over a period can sometimes get too close to the case. My proposal should ensure that the most careful consideration is given to the decision to return the child.

Secondly, the Bill spells out the test that should be applied before a child is returned — that in all circumstances the child will be safe. It may be said that the test is strict. Detailed consideration could, of course, be given in Committee to decide just how the test should be formulated. This question should be asked: when considering the return of a child, will any lesser test suffice?

Thirdly—this is a key part of the thinking behind this measure—the Bill empowers, and plainly encourages, the court to attach conditions to the return of the child. I envisage the court and social workers working together to create the best set of conditions for the particular case.

The DHSS is giving consideration to the regulations that would govern the return of children in care. The difficulty with such regulations, helpful though they may well be in other respects, is that almost inevitably they would have to be framed in general terms, setting out the minimum criteria. The Bill will allow for the laying down of conditions tailormade to fit the circumstances of the paticular child and case. The relevant clause refers to the supervision and inspection of the child and to periodic medical examination. This recognises the great importance of involving people such as general practitioners.

In some cases, no doubt, relatively infrequent inspection will suffice. In others, a daily check may be necessary. The main point is to enable the checks to be specific and appropriate to the case under review. Similarly, in some cases, it may be right to attach a condition that a particular person should not reside on the premises.

Linked to this, another important benefit emerges from the proposal — that the provisions made by the magistrate and attached to the permission to return the child will help to strengthen the position of social workers. We all remember the tragic history of Jasmine Beckford. On innumerable occasions, the social worker sought to see the child but was fobbed off with excuses. Under the Bill, the position would be clear—the social worker must see the child, or the child is liable to be removed under the terms of the magistrates' order. Everyone will know exactly where he stands. Following the Blom-Cooper report on the Beckford case, I propose that the magistrates should give their reasons and record them in writing.

What may be the drawbacks of this proposal? There will, of course, be some additional overall cost, but I sincerely hope that I shall not hear that reason urged against a reform aimed at making children safer. The greater drawbacks to which hon. Members may refer are, first, that it may lead to children remaining in care when they otherwise might not and, secondly, that it may impose delays.

My aim is to improve the lot of children in care; the last thing I want is to add needlessly to the number of such children. I emphasise at once that the Bill has no bearing on those children who are voluntarily in care, who may be returned at will and who may go in and out of care as circumstances vary at home. In this connection, I welcome the suggestion in the DHSS review that there should be further developments of the concepts of "respite care" and "shared care". The Bill is not intended to affect those children who are subject to a care order but have always continued to live at home.

My provision is directed at those children who are away from home and in care because an order has had to be made, or because a local authority resolution concerning parental rights has had to be passed on specified grounds. The children are in care because something has gone wrong at home to such an extent that the local authority and the court have had to intervene. They should never stay in care for longer than is avoidable, but considerations of safety are paramount. In some cases the same decision to return the child will be reached, and the return will take place at the same time as it would have done without my Bill. However, at the margin children will remain in care longer, or even indefinitely, who otherwise might not have done so. Those are the children whom the Bill seeks to protect.

No system is perfect and I recognise that as a result of the Bill some children will not go home who perhaps might have done so without harm. But other children will be saved from abuse, torture and even death. If the system is to err, it must err on the side of safety. The provision has been carefully thought out, and should not be seen as a hastily conceived response to a few appalling and headline-catching cases.

Equally, one does not want delays in the return of children, but I see no reason why an unacceptable delay should occur, if the provisions are sensibly operated by social workers and courts. When a child is formally in care and away from home under an order, the process of return is rarely rapid. In practice, there will be case conferences and much social work input with the family, leading to a planned return. If the application for permission is not notified to the court until the planned day of return arrives, there will be a delay, but, intelligently, the application will be timed and in the pipeline as part of the programme——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my hon. Friend accept that in the case of a child who has been taken into care on the wrong basis, and who is later found to be suffering from brittle bone disease, although it was feared that the child had suffered child abuse, the speed of return of the child should be of the utmost?

Mr. Walters: I agree that the speed of return is important. My point is that, although delay may occur in some cases, overall that effect should not be great.

The application should be timed and in the pipeline as part of the programme so that it can be formally

determined by the court at a suitable date, not long before the projected return. It has been pointed out to me that the Bill may bear unnecessarily on children who are in care for reasons other than the risk of harm—for example, because they are not attending school. In Committee, I shall willingly consider amendments to narrow the clause's impact to the children at whom it is aimed.

It has been suggested that the provision could undermine the responsibility and judgment of social workers. While I understand that anxiety, I reject it. Nothing is further from my intention than to undermine the status and position of social workers. Such a suggestion fails to take proper account of their great sense of responsibility, and of the respect which thinking people hold for their extremely difficult task. I also reject the view that the Bill could discourage Government or local authorities from maintaining through funding and training the required standard of performance in social work practice. Government, local authorities and social workers will not shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, now it's up to the courts."

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I failed to hear my hon. Friend's opening remarks, but does he agree that the Bill deserves support because it does not undermine the role of parents? Many of the reforms recently advocated have undermined the role of parents, and given too great a role to social workers, who do an extremely good job but of whom we tend to demand too much.

Mr. Walters: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful comment.

Clause 4 deals with the wider rights of audience, and the proposal reflects the recommendation of the DHSS review. The present widely criticised position is that the only full parties in care proceedings are the local authority and the child. Parents have a limited right to be heard, which is essentially restricted to meeting allegations made against them. Few would disagree that both justice and the contribution of parents to reaching the best decision demand that in all but exceptional cases parents should have the fullest rights before the court.

There is also widespread feeling that grandparents should have a right to contribute in appropriate cases. I have had a large postbag from grandparents since my Bill was published. I shall not quote from their letters, but they have been numerous—I have a huge pile of them—and many have given heart-rending accounts of how they have been affected by their exclusion. Other people, including uncles and aunts, and fathers of an illegitimate child, may have a contribution to make and a legitimate right to be heard.

I have also extended the Bill to include foster parents in appropriate cases. They may often be in a particularly good position to comment on the relationship between the natural mother and the child, and they may know the child better than anyone else. The House will remember the despair of the former foster parents of Jasmine Beckford that no one had involved them in the vital decision.

Clauses 3 and 5 deal with appeals and the transfer of proceedings between courts. Obviously, the two provisions are linked, although neither is dependent on the other. All parties should have a right to appeal, but under the present restrictive law, only the child has such a right. The local authority does not even have that right if a care order is refused. Judges have frequently criticised the law for that.

The appeal should be to the High Court rather than to the Crown court. That is also in line with the recommendations of the DHSS review. There has been much criticism of appeals being heard in open court, often by a judge whose experience is largely in criminal matters and who tends to apply a criminal approach to evidence and procedure. The DHSS recommendation is subject to the important proviso that the High Court holds a fuller re-hearing of the evidence where necessary, and the Bill specifically provides that the appeal should be by way of such a re-hearing.

It is right that I should refer to family courts. I know that many hon. Members and many people outside the House are in favour of such courts. They believe that they answer many of the problems in child care law. It is important to distinguish the machinery of justice from the substantive law.

My proposals in clause 1, relating to a court's permission, and in clause 4, relating to parties, have no direct bearing on the question of family courts. Whatever the court structure, my proposals would still be necessary. However, I recognise that the proposals relating to appeal and transfer touch upon the family court debate. I wish to make it clear that nothing in the Bill is intended to stifle or pre-empt that debate.

The issues touching family courts go far beyond the range of child care law. The proposals in the Bill about appeals and the transfer of cases merely go some way towards meeting one area of concern — the lack of flexibility in the system as between the magistrates and the High Court, and the unsatisfactory nature of a Crown court appeal in care cases. It could be some considerable time before an integrated structure of family courts is established. In the meantime, I hope that those hon. Members who favour such courts will support my proposals, because they make an immediate and much-needed improvement to the present system.

There may be those who would prefer a delay in reform —I have heard that preference repeated during the past few days — until the final conclusions of the DHSS review on child care law are reached. That is a massive exercise and I remind hon. Members of the fate of some parts of the Children Act 1975. It was enacted in 1975, but major parts came into effect only in December 1985. One hopes that such a delay will never occur again, but it serves to underline my belief that the areas of child care law dealt with by my Bill should be reformed now, and not await the protracted process of review and major legislation.

I believe that my Bill, far-reaching though it may be in some respects, although modest in others, represents an opportunity now of making real improvements in the law. It represents an opportunity to make the law better, fairer, more just and, above all, safer. The Bill does not intend to bring about a comprehensive reform of the law, but I believe that it proposes significant improvements which could, in some cases, have a decisive effect. The Blom-Cooper report makes thoughtful suggestions about how decisions taken by social workers and local authorities could be improved—better training, better and more extensive consultation and greater resources. Those are admirable suggestions and I welcome them, but such improvements would take place in the future, perhaps in the distant future, and their effects cannot be properly measured now.

In the Bill, I propose something concrete and specific, and I propose that it should come into effect in a few

[Mr. Walters]

months' time. The public would not lightly forgive us, and they would be right, for failing to seize an opportunity to make children in care more safe. The Bill offers such an opportunity in a way that would not prejudice more comprehensive Government legislation in the years to come. I hope that the House will agree to give the Bill a Second Reading.

10.5 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I compliment the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on his good luck in the ballot and I offer him my congratulations on his choice of legislation. Improvements in child care law are of considerable importance to us all. Some hon. Members will know, and I have mentioned this before, that we order things differently in Scotland. Scotland has children's panels and hearings, and social work departments have ready access to the sheriff court in cases of child abuse. Our system of children's panels and hearings and the ready access to the sheriff courts is marvellously informal and unlike court proceedings. In my view, as a Yorkshireman long and happily domiciled in Scotland, the Scottish system is much superior to the English system.

It is perhaps a shame that England does not take a leaf out of that Scottish book. However, that does not mean that we have no cases of child abuse occurring from time to time in Scotland. I am sorry to say that we are not that fortunate. I regret that there will always be cases of child abuse, whether physical or sexual. As legislators, our aim should be to reduce as far as possible the incidence of that form of cruelty. Children must be given the fullest protection under the law and the rights of parents must not be ignored.

I offer the Bill a qualified welcome, because I have several criticisms against its form and content, but those criticisms are offered in the hope that they may help to improve the Bill in Committee. I sincerely hope that the Bill is enacted, but it is in need of some improvement.

It is right that in England the courts should be involved in child care decisions. As in Scotland, that would ensure more effective safeguards for the child and for the rights of parents. In the Bill there appears to be no clear, precise mechanism to enable the court to assess the judgment of a social services department. Representatives of the British Association of Social Workers tell me that a court may have to be responsible for a decision that should be made by social workers.

I am also worried about the lack of training of magistrates. Moving north of the border once again, may I say that a children's hearing in Scotland will have three lay members and a reporter. The reporter is employed by the regional or island council but can be dismissed only by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hearings are informal. Parents can sit around a table with the social worker, other witnesses and interested parties. The proceedings encourage closer questioning about the circumstances surrounding an application. The present training of magistrates in England does not give me the confidence that I have in our system.

The Beckford inquiry report offers some criticism of the magistrates in that case. The magistrates concluded the case by saying:

> "In making these Orders it is our earnest hope that the Social Services Department will do its utmost to carry out a rehabilitation programme to unite those children with their parents."

The chairman is reported as having directed this comment to the parents:

> "The Social Services will do everything to help you both and get your children back with you."

We know the appalling conclusion of that case. Representatives of the British Association of Social Workers suggest that there is little doubt that, if no such statement had been made by the magistrates, the area officer, if not the social worker and team leader, might have taken a very different view about the rehabilitation of Jasmine Beckford.

In England, there are considerable delays in child care hearings, which can have disastrous consequences for young children. It is especially damaging if the child's return home is delayed unnecessarily. In the Scottish system, everyone accepts that time is of the essence in child care hearings. Even resort to the sheriff's court can be achieved within seven days. We must do something about the delays that occur south of the border.

Another criticism of the juvenile courts is their adversarial approach to such matters, which is derived from the criminal courts. Is such an approach suitable for important decision-making in child care cases? In some cases, the objective is to examine personal capacities rather than to determine right from wrong. That is as true for the decisions covered by the Bill as it is for child care orders. We do not have such a system in Scotland.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman can tell me when he replies whether clause 1(4) takes account of the effects of delays. It would be wrong to remove a child from his or her parents simply because a court hearing had to be delayed for administrative reasons.

Clause 5 provides the power to transfer proceedings to the High Court. Has the hon. Gentleman analysed the implications of such transfers in terms of the delay involved in returning a child to his or her home? A case conference involving the interested professionals could meet, within days if necessary, and ensure a professional assessment of a child's home before the decision was made to return the child.

Will the hon. Gentleman also deal with the criticism contained in the brief sent to all hon. Members by the Association of County Councils? In the penultimate paragraph, which deals with voluntary arrangements made between parents and local authorities without a court order, it states:

> "It is surely not intended that a simple return home following such voluntary arrangements, for example, for a parent to have an operation, during a period of homelessness should be covered. In 1983 . . . more than 20,000 children were admitted to care under such arrangements."

Does the Bill deal adequately with that criticism?

I welcome the concern expressed so eloquently by the hon. Gentleman, but I am deeply worried by some of the apparent deficiencies of the Bill. I hope that they can be ironed out in Committee.

10.17 am

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for what he said about the Scottish system. He seemed to be arguing for more comprehensive reform than the reforms that we are discussing today. I do not disagree with him, but it would be sensible and proper

for the House to act on the basis of the best knowledge that it has available. The consequences of that are contained in the Bill introduced so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters).

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his good fortune in the lottery of the private Members' ballot. On occasions when I was fortunate enough to draw a reasonably high place in the ballot, my hon. Friend was kind enough to support me, so I am delighted to return the compliment and to support his important Bill. I also congratulate him on the way in which he introduced the Bill. He selected the subject wisely, and it undoubtedly reflects considerable public anxiety.

By now, cruelty to children should be no more than an aspect of history, but unfortunately, as we know only too well, that is not so. That is a major reason for the need to provide for children in care. On the whole, existing arrangements work very well. That is a compliment to the dedication, ability and judgment of social workers and local authorities and to the decisions of Crown and magistrates' courts.

As has been demonstrated, and as we know too well, with the best will in the world mistakes have been made, with tragic consequences for the children involved. I am not naive enough to believe that mistakes can be avoided completely, because human judgment is involved at some stage; and some judgments will prove wrong. The Bill will make it less likely that mistakes are made as there will be safeguards for children at risk and in care.

It is argued that changes in child care law should await the outcome of the review that has wisely been initiated by the Government. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury emphasised, the results of that review might be some time coming and there might be a much longer delay before a slot for relevant legislation is found in the Government's programme. Although the review and research are necessary, if sensible action can be taken, as now, it should be, above all where the wellbeing of children is involved.

I support the Bill and trust that it will receive a Second Reading and ultimately become part of the law of the land.

10.21 am

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I support the Bill and congratulate the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on his choice of subject.

I have had an opportunity to speak to practising members of the Bar who are widely experienced in such work, and they fully support the spirit behind the Bill. I have also had an opportunity to talk to magistrates and judges who are experienced in this class of work and they too are fully behind the Bill.

The hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison), with his usual ingenuity and charm, managed to congratulate the Government on something in passing. It is perhaps the only time this week that the Government have been congratulated on anything. He omitted, however, to say anything about the long overdue establishment of permanent courts. When we consider legislation on the welfare of children, we should bear that in mind. The Opposition have for years asked the Government to establish family courts but they, with their usual nonchalant incompetence, have dragged their feet in the face of overwhelming evidence.

I strongly support the Bill and wish it well.

10.23 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chiselhurst): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on the way on which he has tackled this complex issue and on his introduction of the Bill.

Children come into care through two routes. The first is voluntary care. Parents might want their children to be taken into care so that they might be looked after by the local authority, perhaps because they cannot cope or because of illness. I understand that the Bill does not cover children in those circumstances. I hope that my hon. Friend will clarify that beyond peradventure because it is confusing to see clause 1(1) referring to children "received into care", which could mean received voluntarily. The second route involves children who appear before the courts because they have committed an offence or because they are considered to need to be in care and the local authority or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has instituted care proceedings.

The House knows that I sat as the chairman of a juvenile court for several years before entering the House and I vividly recall several cases in the latter category. The two categories are not so easily distinguishable because often when we read the social inquiry report, and heard about the child's background, we realised that it was hardly surprising that he or she had committed and offence. Conversely, with some children who were brought before us as needing care, when we read the report, we wondered how the child had got so far without committing an offence.

I also remember having to make care orders. We should be clear what we are talking about—taking a child into care because that is in the child's best interests. We are saying that the state has decided to deprive a parent or parents, who have produced the child and brought it up so far—which might be a few months or some years—of their child or, in some cases, children. We are saying that the child will be better off with social workers in a children's home than with his or her own parents, however inadequate they my may be. We are saying that they should not be in their own home, however poor the material standards might be. It is an extremely difficult decision.

I recall a case when all of the evidence was overwhelmingly in favour of making a court order and we had to sit and watch the matron lead two or three children away and take the youngest from its mother's arms. Such an example brings home to me the fact that we are considering deeply personal cases.

Hon. Members who have been magistrates will know that we weigh up the circumstances and make a decision and that is that. If we spend time afterwards wondering whether we took the right decision, we should never get a moment's sleep. There were some cases over which I lost sleep, and they were care cases. We should not belittle their importance.

The court represents society and makes a decision having considered the information presented to it by social workers, the police, the school, if relevant, and other sources, but it is the court that decides on the order. It can decide to make a supervision order, the implication of which is that the child will remain at home but be under supervision of social workers, or it can make a care order if it thinks that the child would be best away from home.

[Mr. Roger Sims]

There have been problems in the past when the court felt it appropriate to make a care order and the social workers took the child into care but promptly returned it to the home. Had that been the court's intention, it would have made a supervision and not a care order. Most of those difficulties have now been ironed out, but the circumstances that I have described whereby, sooner or later, a social worker can decide, without recourse to the court, to return a child in care to its home is a difficulty that the Bill seeks to tackle.

There are many occasions when social workers decide that the time is right for the child to return home. It does so, and all goes well. The case is successful. However, occasionally all does not go well, the tragic results of which we know. The intention of clause 1 is to bring back into the process of returning a child to its home the protection of the court and its authority.

A director of social services for whom I have a high regard has written to me expressing his anxiety about the Bill. He fears that the Bill will undermine the function and management of social services, in particular, with regard to the issue of discharge, by making it a matter for the court to decide. He refers to the legislation as representing:

"a vote of no confidence or little confidence in Social Services Departments".

I am afraid that there has been a lessening of confidence in social services departments and social workers. Most social workers are dedicated, professional people who do an extraordinarily difficult job. Most of the cases that they handle are dealt with successfully and receive no publicity. Sometimes there are mistakes. Sometimes things do not work out, not necessarily because there has been a mistake but merely because we are dealing with human beings who are fallible and unpredictable. It is those occasional cases that receive the publicity. Those cases have, I fear, lowered people's confidence in the social work system.

If a social worker can persuade the court that it is appropriate for a child who is the subject of an order to go home, the court's decision would confirm the social worker's assessment. Far from that undermining the social worker's confidence, it would be a vote of confidence in the social services department. Far from undermining social service departments, it would strengthen their position and add an extra dimension of protection to the social worker who, if there were subsequent criticism of his action, could point out that his recommendation had been considered and confirmed by the court.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned representations made to him by the British Association of Social Workers which had questioned the provisions of the clause. It suggests, for example:

"There appear to be no mechanisms to ensure that the Court is in a position to question the judgment of the social services department."

I find that difficult to understand, because the court will have every opportunity to do so. The social worker would appear before the court and all those involved in the case would have an opportunity to explain to the court why they thought it appropriate for the child to return home. Normal court procedures offer every opportunity for that to be done.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned another point made by the BASW:

"The training of magistrates is haphazard and their expertise varies considerably".

Those of my colleagues who have sat as juvenile court magistrates can confirm that they have special training. A juvenile court bench consists of a chairman, who is a man or woman with considerable experience in the juvenile court. The other two lay magistrates will not be ignorant of juvenile court matters. The BASW's comment is somewhat unrealistic.

If it were true to say that the returning home of a child subject to a care order should not come before the court because it is not qualified to make that judgment, it is surely even less qualified to make the original care order. The BASW's comment represents a criticism of the entire system. Although some people may think like that, it is not my view.

The House will gather that I warmly support the proposal contained in clause 1. A number of points arise on later clauses but they may be rather more Committee points and I shall not go into them in depth.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury may find that there is a difficulty with clause 1(6) and how to define "safe". How can a court decide that it is "safet" to return a child home? Can there be a definition of the word "safe"? Magistrates have to make a balanced judgment on the information before them. They cannot be 100 per cent. satisfied, for the reasons I have given—we are dealing with human beings. For similar reasons, I am not sure how practicable or desirable it will be for the court to have to give reasons for its decisions publicly even if it were possible and desirable to record them. There are many factors involved.

Clause 4 presents a problem. It refers to the possibility of naming as respondents those persons whom the court considers fit. Who will decide who are to be the respondents in the case? I shall quote from a point effectively made by the Judges' Clerks society which states:

"By leaving to the Court the choice of who shall be made respondents to a Local Authority's application under this clause, the Bill is imposing a new and unrealistic duty on the Court. To investigate the background circumstances of the family and the child, and determine who shall be heard ultimately, the Court will need to appoint a Reporting Officer or other independent person to act on its behalf to establish the identity of possible repondents"

Clearly, the social worker could not do that because he or she is involved. The society continues:

"It will then need to hold a preliminary investigative hearing at which the claimants to participate will be invited to present their claims or the court will need to appoint everyone listed by the Reporting Officer as respondent".

That matter may present a difficulty.

It is an admirable principle to try to involve other parties in the case, but rules will need to be issued when the Bill is passed to define what is a "proper interest" when deciding who should be involved in the case.

My hon. Friend mentioned the important point that in the case of a young single girl whose child is in care it could well be that the putative father should be a party to the proceedings. There should be some clarification, either in the Bill or in rules, as to who has a proper interest.

On clause 3, on appeals, and clause 5 allowing transfer to the High Court, I fear that I might have to part company with my hon. Friend to the extent that his press release of 19 December refers to problems that have arisen and suggests that these clauses "ease the urgent need for family courts." That will not do. There is an urgent need for

family courts and I would be reluctant to support anything that allowed the Government any sort of get-out in setting them up.

Mr. Walters: I did emphasise, and I want to do so again, that nothing in the Bill is intended to pre-empt the debate on family courts, or indeed progress towards them. It may well be that in a press handout there was a sentence which, with hindsight, might have been worded differently.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that clear. I am not worried about what he has said. I am more concerned about what my hon. Friend the Minister is likely to say and how he is likely to use the Bill as a further excuse for inaction. He must know of the growing pressure for family courts and the growing impatience of the lack of Government action on that front.

The House knows of the review of child care law by the Department of Health and Social Security and of the proposals for family courts which we hope to see from the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Ryman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he aware that the junior Minister who is now sitting on the Treasury Bench stated explicitly in the House several weeks ago on a Friday in a debate on child abuse that he did not have the faintest idea when family courts would be introduced. In effect, he was shirking responsibility for the decision, because he said that that was the responsibility of another Department. With that nonchalant incompetence that the Department so often displays he passed the matter over to another Department.

Mr. Sims: I might choose more felicitous expressions to describe my hon. Friend's reaction, but I would not dispute the general tenor of his comments in the debate in which the hon. Gentleman and I took part.

Mr. Thurnham: The Labour party, in its manifesto in October 1974, said that it was in favour of bringing in family courts, but by 1975 the Labour party in power was finding all sorts of formidable difficulties as to why it was not able to do so.

Mr. Sims: That is true. We all remember the Finer report in 1974 urging strongly the implementation of family courts, since when everybody has said that they are a good idea but nobody has done anything. That is not strictly true because all sorts of organisations within and outside Government have brought forward proposals, but nothing has happened. I fear that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will once again fall upon the fact that a review of child care law is going on and that something will emerge on family courts as an excuse for not proceeding with the Bill.

I have on occasions in the past spoken in the House on behalf of the Magistrates Association and the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children, on whose executive committee I sit. It is fair to say that both those organisations are sympathetic to what the Bill is trying to achieve, but they dislike piecemeal legislation and would prefer some of the proposals to be incorporated in the legislation, which they hope will incorporate the changes in child care law and the setting up of family courts.

I have little faith in the Government's will to proceed along such lines, certainly in the immediate future. There is certainly no prospect of anything happening in this parliamentary Session. My hon. Friend the Minister may be able to say what the prospects are for the next Session, but even if something were done in the next parliamentary Session we know how slowly wheels turn and it would be a long time before we saw family courts and a complete change in child care law implemented.

For that reason, I am in favour of my hon. Friend's Bill and on the principle that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush I intend to give it my full support and I hope it will be similarly supported from the Front Bench.

10.45 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) has spoken from his great experience as a magistrate. We were all moved to hear him say that cases concerning the care of children were the most difficult with which he had to deal and that, if he lost sleep at all, it was over such cases. We can all understand that.

I join my hon. Friend and other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on his success in the draw. I remember the excitement of that day—I think it was 14 November—and the great interest in what subject he had chosen. I congratulate my hon. Friend on choosing such an important subject and wish him success in the safe passage of his Bill.

I am not familiar with all the intricacies of the law on this matter. I speak only from personal experience of having fostered and recently adopted a child who had been in care and shuffled about from pillar to post for six years before coming to my family. I am well aware of the need for particular provision for children in such circumstances.

I hope that the Bill will be successful. No doubt it will need to be modified, but I was sorry to see the letter from the Association of County Councils yesterday which seems to be opposed to the Bill. I hope that such reservations can be overcome in Committee.

This week I also received a publication entitled "1986: Children Today" which draws attention to the scale of the problem. No doubt my hon. Friend has seen that. The latest figure given for the number of children in care in the United Kingdom is 104,628. I think that figure relates to 31 March 1983. The "Review of Child Care Law" shows that 20,000 children have been in care for over three years, and again that shows the need for measures in this area.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman has just given the House the statistics of children in care. Has he the figures of children returned from care each year?

Mr. Thurnham: I have them at my side, but I hesitate to refer to them now. We must be careful about children who cease to be children because of their age. The "Review of Child Care Law" is a somewhat formidable document which runs to 179 pages with 223 recommendations, but it lacks an index. I hope that when the Government produce their response to it they will produce a document which is as useful in the information that it contains but more helpful to those who want to extract information from it. If the hon. Gentleman refers to that, he will see that there is a considerable amount of information, but perhaps I could leave him to look at that point. The hon. Gentleman said that time is of the essence and I concur with that. I appreciate that there is a difference between the law in England and the law in Scotland.

[Mr. Thurnham]

About 3,000 handicapped children are in long term National Health Service hospitals and local authority homes—about 1,000 in NHS hospitals and about 2,000 in local authority homes. I referred to that in my Adjournment debate speech on 25 November. The private Member's Bill initiated by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is in Committee at the moment and also has a bearing on this matter.

I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury to another category of children. There are about 2,500 children in the country suffering from brittle bone disease. The juvenile court in Bolton is currently dealing with a child who may be suffering from that disease. The case has not yet been determined, so I cannot refer to it in more detail, but there are two aspects to which I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention and ask him whether he will consider providing help for those particular cases.

The case was first drawn to my attention in November 1985. The local evening newspaper in Bolton covered the case. It is a nightmare for all those concerned — the child, the parents and the social workers. The trouble is that medical experts have no certain way of diagnosing brittle bone disease at an early age. The child went into hospital for a routine examination, returned home and was found not to be well. The child was taken back to the hospital on the same day and found to have a broken thigh bone. The medical experts cannot agree that the child is definitely suffering from brittle bone disease, because I understand that there no diagnostic test available to prove the case conclusively intil the child is older. Therefore, the social workers are unable to agree to return the child to the parents because the risk of child abuse is present. I am greatly concerned that that case has dragged on and is still in the courts. The parents were unable to have the child over Christmas and came to see me because they could not get time in court. I found that court time before Christmas is taken up with hearing licensing cases. Anything that can be done to speed up court hearings in such cases must be done.

The case is very complicated. There have been four medical opinions. Two say that the child is suffering from brittle bone disease and two say that they cannot be sure. We all remember the horror of the Jasmine Beckford case. Therefore, one would not criticise social workers for feeling that they should be exceptionally cautious in such cases. The case is a nightmare because the medical experts cannot conclusively prove the existence of brittle bone disease, but two experts say they are sure. I should like my hon. Friend to bear in mind the need for speeding up court cases in this instance because, as I have said, the case has been dragging on since November, causing great anguish to the parents, and presents nothing but a nightmare to all concerned. I should like to know that we shall have family courts or whatever provision is best suited to bringing that about.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to consider whether more provision can be made for medical research into diagnosing brittle bone disease. Obviously, the social workers are presented with a dilemma when medical opinion is uncertain. Can provision be made to provide a better diagnosis in such cases? I should also like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to Dr. Roger Smith's article in the *British Medical Journal* of 18 August 1984, which says that pre-natal genetic diagnosis is now a definite possibility. He said that

"an exciting biochemical chapter is now being written"

I am concerned that societies, such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, are resisting research in that area.

I now return to the number of children in care. The recommendations of many bodies have called for provisions in the law, particularly where children have been in hospital for so long that parental contact has broken down. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pay particular attention to the need for care orders to be clearly established. In many cases I think that the local authority may be unaware of the existence of the child—the child may be hundreds of miles away from the local authority area where it was born or where it was last domiciled — and the parents may have lost touch with the child. There is an urgent need for reform in that area.

An excellent document entitled "The Case for Family Courts" has been produced by the sub-committee of the Society of Conservative Lawyers. That document contains many recommendations. I do not know whether my hon. Friends have had a chance to refer to it. One of the recommendations is for a children's ombudsman. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister has been able to consider that, but there does not seem to be any action or response on that front. In respect of children who are mentally handicapped and have lost touch with their families, I think that there is a case for reconsideration of that matter.

There is another difficult area concerning handicapped children which I should like my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury to bear in mind. There is an extremely difficult problem with a baby born so severely handicapped that the natural parents feel that it would be futile to use the medical facilities which might be available to try to prolong the life of that child. Care orders have been instifuted in such cases. The law in that area is uncertain, and the ethical position is extremely difficult and complicated. However, in America there are changes afoot. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would comment on whether he has been able to give thought to that aspect.

I wish my hon. Friend success with his Bill in Committee. I hope that any reservations which may exist will be overcome. I look forward to changes in legislation which will enable cases, such as that of my constituent which I have referred, to be heard more quickly and a satisfactory answer to be arrived at speedily.

10.56 am

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I should like to add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on introducing a Bill which I believe is a practical and realistic step forward. I do not share the hesitation of those who feel that the Bill will impede progress towards a family court. I think in many ways it will highlight interest in and attention on the subject and raise other anomalies which will speed the development of a family court on its way.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) that in many ways our present procedures work satisfactorily in many cases. There are juvenile courts and many social workers across the country taking on these extremely difficult and always emotional

decisions and doing so satisfactorily. Some of the recent tragedies have highlighted public awareness and public anger that there are still children in today's world who suffer the most appalling injuries at the hands of their parents.

The history of child care law has, in my view, been too frequently an over-reaction to appalling incidents. We have to guard carefully against this. In most of the cases that have come to public attention recently the procedures laid down simply were not followed. The procedures were not necessarily wrong but there was bad practice. It is very easy at a time of emotional strain and difficulty, especially when there is a great deal of press and public interest, to look for scapegoats. The Beckford case is a good example of that. I do not believe that any of us would seek to argue that the magistrate, social workers, neighbours, doctors, teachers or anybody involved in that case had been about their business in the way in which one would recommend in an ideal world.

I speak about such matters with feeling, having been the chairman of a London juvenile court for many years before entering the House, as well as being a qualified psychiatric social worker. Therefore, perhaps I have a proper recognition that both magistrates and social workers have an important contribution to make but I realise that their contribution is different. I believe that the court does have a place in child care law. I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) when he talked about the great difficulty and burden of making such decisions. For a juvenile court magistrate there are probably few more serious decisions to be taken than that to deprive a parent of its child until that child is 18 years of age. This is a serious decision and it is one which I think parents are entitled to have ratified by a court.

I have always been sceptical of the Scottish arrangement for children's hearings. Somehow, it seems to be a denial of the seriousness of the court. I do not believe that, in child care cases, people can sit down in friendly fashion at the table and discuss in a harmonious, almost chatty, way, those serious matters. One needs the formality of a court, although it does not need to be a hurly-burly public place which, most of the time, is devoted to criminal cases.

Dr. Godman: May I say to the hon. Lady that the children's panels treat matters relating to child care with the utmost seriousness? I hope that I did not give any other impression during my speech.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Gentleman, and I entirely accept what he says. When the Scottish hearing system is discussed by those involved in English juvenile court hearings, it is often misrepresented as a remarkably informal setting. I am simply seeking to argue that the element of formality and the seriousness of those enormous decisions need to be given due attention.

Under the Bill, it is proposed that appeals should be heard in the High Court rather than the county court. I am sure that that is a step in the right direction. It is supported by the Department of Health and Social Security review of child care law. The High Court would offer various better options. There could be a more flexible application of the rules of evidence, which is a point easy to overlook. Frequently, in child care cases, the evidence is hearsay evidence. It is on the edges of permissibility. One is dealing with peoples' opinions; what people have said; or an individual's assessment about a child. It is naive to think that it is easy to come to a decision.

In cases of physical abuse, at least one has clear evidence, such as bruises, but what about the many cases of emotional abuse, neglect, children being deprived entirely of care or interest, or cases of mental cruelty? In those cases, it is difficult to get hard and clear evidence. The suggestion of appeals going to the High Court is one of the many ways in which the Bill eases the passage towards a family court. Similarly, extending the right of appeal to local authorities and parents is an eminently sensible and reasonable approach.

The suggestion that the court should review the decision that the child should be returned home to the parents from whom he was removed is a good idea, mainly for the reasons that I have already stated. A court hearing highlights and clarifies the seriousness of the matter. I have some reservations, which I should like the Committee to explore. There is the problem about the mechanisms in the juvenile court for hearing cases. There is no tradition that magistrates will hold on to a particular case. I believe strongly that in juvenile court work, the continuity of the magistrates is as important, in some cases, as the continuity of the social workers. If we are seriously suggesting a system under which a case will come back for review, every effort should be made to have the same bench or at least the same chairman sitting on that further case.

Further, this may be too much of a blanket proposal. Perhaps it should be appropriate only in cases where the child has been taken into care initially for neglect or abuse. There are other cases where the proposal is less appropriate, and it may be an unwieldy requirement. For example, I have been told that in truancy cases the child is safe at home, but I am open to discussion on that. Those are often exactly the families that need an element of authority and reality testing. They need to realise the nature of their responsibilities, and that they should insist that their children attend school.

The suggestion that the system would lead to delays needs consideration because in child care cases, of all cases, a speedy decision is vital. For example, if there is a three or six-month delay for a child of three or six months, that may be the equivalent of the whole of the child's lifetime all over again. We must consider the relationship with the parents and the extended family and the emotion involved, so we must consider carefully the threat to many relationships if there is a delay.

It should not be regarded as a criticism of the way in which social workers conduct and handle child care cases that they need to take the family back to court to have the case reviewed. That should be looked at positively. It touches on the issue of training. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will be mindful of the fact that social work training is closely related to the issues that we are discussing today.

The provision for the court introducing conditions for a child returning home is eminently helpful and appropriate. Too often, in recent cases when a child has died, clear evidence was available, if only it had been gathered, that the child was losing weight. A regular medical examination is an extremely sensible and straightforward requirement, which could be introduced in

[Mrs. Bottomley]

many cases. In nearly all the major horrific cases, if the child had been seen at an early stage by a medical, many further difficulties could have been avoided.

The Bill allows for other interested third parties to have the right to be heard in the magistrates' court, with leave, and where appropriate. That could be a licence for all sorts of busybodies coming along to court wanting their views to be heard. This is an important development as long as it is clear that it is not an automatic right, but a provision that is available. In care cases, of all cases, it is important that the extended family should feel that there has been a full and fair hearing on extremely complex and emotional matters.

I support all those who have called for a family court. It has been estimated that at present there are no fewer than 20 different ways by which a child can come into local authority care. There is an enormously complicated network of courts, and bits and pieces of child care law. The child care law review takes a step in the right direction. The review is a little ambiguous on family courts. We shall not have satisfactory measures for children's and parents' cases to be heard properly, fairly and in an understandable way, for the children and the parents as much as anybody else until we move forward with family court provision.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury on introducing the Bill, and I hope very much that it gets a Second Reading and that there is an opportunity for further discussion and worthwhile debate in Committee.

11.8 am

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on introducing the Bill, which I support.

There is no doubt that we need greater court supervision of care cases. I see the Bill as an interim measure before we set up a family court, which many of us would like. I should like to make two points, one about the contents of the Bill and the other going somewhat wider.

First, I refer to the provision that grandparents and others in the extended family should have access through the court to the care case. I have come across several cases in which there were others, particularly those with whom the child had been boarded out, who should have been heard. I should have liked them to have the right to be heard. I am delighted to see that provision in clause 4(2). It will be an important additional safeguard to children in care, who are subject to the control of the court.

The Bill does nothing to derogate from the principle that the parents' place is prime. I am pleased about that. We were recently given the figures for child abuse, but it is difficult to discover from those figures much about the children's background. It is clear to me from the figures for 1980-1984 that a high proportion of such children come from family units without two natural parents. A high proportion of children who are abused live with single parents. We should not forget that when considering amendments to existing legislation.

Some reports about the desperately sad cases of child abuse try to impose on social workers more responsibility than they can or should carry. Many social workers achieve an extraordinary high professional competence, but to try to impose upon them the ultimate responsibility — that of parenthood — is dangerous and unhelpful. Many who report on child abuse cases or react to them fall into that trap.

I support the Bill and hope that it will have a swift passage.

11.12 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Bill's aim is to protect children who might be battered at home. That is a laudable and important aim. Everybody has been shocked by the recent murders of children at the hands of their parents or step-parents. That is hard enough for people to understand or accept, but when a child who is murdered or beaten is in local authority care, that is totally unacceptable and causes widespread concern, which we all share.

Because the issue is so important we must ensure that the Bill meets that concern and is not either ineffective or, worse, counter-productive to children's interests.

I have substantial reservations about the Bill, which are widely shared. My reservations are shared by the social work profession in the form of the British Association of Social Workers, and the Association of Directors of Social Services, by the local authority organisations through the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, by the legal profession in the shape of the Law Society, the children's legal centre and the Legal Action Group, and by part of the judiciary through the Justices' Clerks Society. Those bodies have a great deal of experience and involvement, so we must pay careful attention to their reservations.

One of my reservations is that child care law and practice is bedevilled by piecemeal and patchwork additions. This is a substantial reservation, not a nit-picking, bureaucratic point. The Social Services Select Committee was emphatic on the matter, so when we are engaged in another possible patchwork and piecemeal addition we must be convinced that the Bill's benefits will outweigh the problems of the patchwork approach.

The Bill provides that a child cannot be returned to its family without a court order. The hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) talked about abuse, torture and death. In Committee we should consider narrowing the Bill's scope so that a court's consent is required only when a child is likely to be physically at risk.

I am worried in case the Bill makes it necessary for children who are in care voluntarily to be covered by a court order before they can return home. The hon. Member for Westbury has put my mind at rest about that. About 20,000 children are brought into care voluntarily each year. It would be impossible if the courts had to give their consent before such children were returned to their parents. Worse, it could disastrously undermine voluntary care.

Voluntary care is a positive intervention in helping and supporting families who are in difficulty or who have temporary problems—such as the mother having to go into hospital for an operation or the family being temporarily homeless. It would be a disastrous turn for the worse if parents who place their children in care voluntarily know that they cannot have them back without a court order. I am much reassured, but some adjustment will have to be made in Committee.

The Bill provides that the courts must be involved in every case. I do not think that we need an automatic review

which could become a rubber stamp. We need a good and widely understood complaints or appeals mechanism. For example, it would have been better in the Beckford case if the foster parents had had the right to trigger an appeal or make a complaint and initiate court proceedings. There cannot be effective scrutiny by the courts unless a third party is worried or objects. The court's involvement should perhaps be dependent on objection rather than be automatic. Without that, many cases will not be scrutinised at all.

Requiring every case to go to court will exacerbate critical problems of delay which already exist in the juvenile courts. Delay is not a technical matter. Delay can work strongly against a child's interests. The first five years of a child's life are critical in terms of its mental, social, physical and emotional development. Periods which might seem short for an adult are enormously long to a small child.

A deep problem caused by delay already exists. The added jurisdiction of so many extra cases would, I fear, immeasurably worsen the problem. The justices' clerks are also worried about that. We should not impose upon the courts an extra responsibility that will lead to delay unless we are convinced of the extra benefits involved.

The parents should always be respondent and always be treated as parties in a case. If they do not want to be represented or attend the court they do not have to, but they should always be respondent.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) talked about other people who might apply for leave of the court to be joined as parties to a case. She said that that might open the door to busybodies. We should re-appraise our attitudes to busybodies. To one person someone might be a busybody but to another they might be a caring neighbour or relative. We have elevated the principle of non-intervention in the nuclear family to the point of ideological dogma. We should recognise that others share responsibility and anxiety about a child as well as the parents, the social services and the courts.

Dr. Godman: I am interested in what my hon. Friend says about so-called busybodies. Many of the cases of child abuse referred to the NSPCC and the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children are first brought by such "busybody" neighbours.

Ms. Harman: Indeed. I hope that we can rehabilitate busybodies and recognise that they are——

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As the inadvertent sponsor of busybodies, may I ask whether the hon. Lady agrees that it is important that the court should have power to give leave for other interested people to speak? There would be a slight difference in emphasis if anybody felt that they had the right to speak. The court should have some right to decide whether a person's evidence would be relevant.

Ms. Harman: The Bill says merely that people may, by leave of the court, be joined as a party. I hope that in Committee we can give the courts guidance on the grounds on which they should consider an application for leave to be a party.

The question of busybodies raises a peculiarly English cultural problem. Anyone who has taken small children to the continent will have been amazed by the fact that if small children are left in a pram outside a shop in, say, Italy, people take them out of the pram, look through their clothes and ask what they are fed on. They regard that as normal. They ask how old the children are and comment on whether they are too large or too small for their age. Such behaviour in this country would be regarded as busybodying. On the continent it is regarded as part of the collective responsibility for children who are not only children of a family, but children of the community.

Our awful cultural approach, which amounts almost to the privatisation of children, bedevils child abuse problems and a whole load of attitudes, approaches and policies towards children.

The child should always be a party to a case and always be represented by a guardian ad litem. I fear that, without such a provision, the courts will have no independent check of the evidence. The court must go on the evidence before it and not on a hunch. Magistrates may be unhappy about a case, but unless there is evidence that a child is not safe, they are in a difficult position.

Magistrates are being given a considerable responsibility. They will have to be satisfied that a child will be safe—an important but absolute term. We must consider the quality of the decision that magistrates will be able to make. They will have to decide whether a child will be safe and they will have before them the social worker, who wants the child to go home—otherwise the case would not have come to court—and the parents, who want the child to go home—otherwise they would not have gone to court.

Unless the child is a party to the case, with a guardian ad litem, the court will have no independent means of looking behind the evidence and carrying out investigations, perhaps questioning the health visitor, neighbours, teachers or the family doctor.

Children's panels in Scotland have an inquisitorial arm so that they can take an independent look at the evidence. I fear that we may place magistrates in a dilemma. All the evidence will be going one way and the magistrates will have a considerable responsibility. There may be more cases in which magistrates feel that there is no evidence that a child is not safe and that they therefore have to make an order. But there will be more sleepless nights because magistrates will not have the means to look behind the evidence. The appointment of a guardian ad litem would at least give the courts the help of independent evidence. As the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said, they have to reach a most difficult decision.

The fact that the juvenile court is to be the forum for the decision raises fundamental problems. We are asking a court designed to deal with adversarial procedures to take an inquisitorial approach. As I said, Scottish panels take that approach, but they were set up with that in mind. It is difficult to graft an inquisitorial procedure onto an adversarial system, which is set up in different ways, with different rules and different resources. That will create problems.

My subsequent comments about magistrates relate not only to the Bill but to the magistracy and all child care law, and underline the urgent need for a family court. We are giving magistrates extra jurisdiction and we must examine whether they will be able to discharge that responsibility.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West mentioned the importance of continuity. In Scotland, it is possible to get a hearing before a children's panel very quickly and the aim is that the same panel should hear a case each time.

[Ms. Harman]

If the child comes back to court a year or even two years later, the aim is to have the same panel hearing the case, thereby ensuring continuity.

If a different group of magistrates hear a case each time, they do not have much chance to make high quality decisions. We may be giving them a responsibility which it is unfair of us to expect them to discharge.

I do not say that all magistrates in juvenile courts are badly trained and inexpert, but there is a widely recognised problem. If magistrates sit on a range of cases, they do not build up the expertise that is accumulated in the Scottish system or would be built up here if we had a family court.

The training of magistrates is patchy and unsatisfactory. That is not the fault of individual magistrates; it is an intrinsic problem of the system. It is misconceived to believe that we can relax when we take the decision away from social workers and give to magistrates the responsibility to say that a child will be safe.

We must remember that in the Jasmine Beckford case the magistrates leaned on the social workers to send the child back home, where she was murdered. They limited the opportunity of social workers to keep the child in care.

Everybody will remember what Mr. Blom-Cooper said about social workers in the Jasmine Beckford report. No doubt those comments have contributed to the creation of the atmosphere in which the Bill has been produced. However, we should also remind ourselves what Mr. Blom-Cooper said about the magistrates. He said that they were "utterly misguided", that they did not protect abused children and that they should be "publicly upbraided".

The best course would be for the Government to use the Bill not as an excuse for inaction, but as a spur to action. The child care law review has attracted astonishingly widespread support for its work and its consideration of the substantive law changes that are required is well under way. The family court review is also underway, though it is proceeding more slowly.

The proposal for the introduction of a family court has had virtually unanimous support for many years, as is evidenced by the Family Court Campaign, which I thoroughly endorse. A family court would provide a speedy, expert, flexible system with an inquisitorial approach as well as the adversarial way of recognising the rights that have to be balanced in difficult cases. The Government should get a move on and overtake this Bill with measures to change the substance of the law and procedure in a comprehensive way, which is long overdue. If that happens, this Bill will have achieved its aim.

11.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Whitney): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on his long overdue good fortune in the ballot and on his choice of subject. Over a number of years my hon. Friend and I have engaged in a number of exchanges and have co-operated on foreign affairs. It is of special interest to me to have the opportunity of responding to his important initiative in an area which is of such great national concern.

Hon. Members who have already spoken in this debate have vividly expressed the horror that all of us feel as we regularly learn from the media the details of yet another case of child abuse. It is easy to get the impression that never a week passes without the emergence of still one more alarming story of cruelty to children and of irresponsibility on the part of some of those who are specifically charged with the duty of caring for children. Disturbed though we all are by such cases, we must always seek to hold in correct perspective the small number of child abuse tragedies compared to the many thousands of children at risk who are protected by prompt action, and we must bear in mind the great deal of good work that is done by professionals and which goes largely unnoticed and unsung. We must set that against those few cases in which things go tragically wrong.

While accepting the sad truth that the death of some children in dreadful or violent circumstances will remain inevitable, as it has been throughout history, every such tragedy is one too many and we must strive to learn from each one for the sake of other children in future. This is a task in which we all have a role to play and a contribution to make. It is a challenge to every one of us, to the whole community, and cannot just be left to the professional worker employed by the public in the social services department of the local authority.

As relatives or as neighbours, there may be occasions when any one of us may have to take necessary but unpleasant action if it appears that children could be at risk of abuse from their parents. The voluntary organisations have a vital role in complementing the efforts of the statutory services and, as we all know, outstanding in this field is the valuable work carried out by the NSPCC. It is worth noting that that organisation has now moved into the second century of its existence, and that underlines the fact that, lamentable though it is, cruelty to children is not a uniquely modern phenomenon.

As legislators, we have a duty to provide the right legal framework and the object of my hon. Friend's Bill is to improve the effectiveness of that framework. Before offering comments on his proposals, I hope it will be helpful to the House if I set out some of the other action that the Government have put in hand to improve the quality of child care. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) has recognised, on the basis of her long experience and deep knowledge of these matters, in many cases what has gone wrong recently has not been because of the law but because of bad practice. We should all be concerned about that and willing to tackle it.

The essence of the Government's function must be to ensure that all the agencies that need to prevent child abuse at local level fully understand what is expected of them and how they must work together. They must have established arrangements that work well to that end. This involves not just the social services departments, though they will have to be in the lead, and not just the health authority, but often education authorities, the police, the probation services and the voluntary sector. It can also mean developing ways of harnessing the help of members of the community.

The Government must constantly keep an eye on what is happening nationally and must help authorities to learn lessons from experience and raise the standards of their practice. All our recent reports indicate that, while much good work is being done in an area where decision-making is extremely difficult and emotionally demanding for all concerned, there are shortcomings in practice, in fieldwork and at more senior levels of management. We shall continue to use all the means at our disposal to put these matters right, working with local authorities, where

I hope we shall have the support of the elected members of these authorities as well as their staff. I hope that councillors will be alive to their important responsibilities for ensuring the good management of their services and for monitoring their operation. Within the next few weeks, we shall, for example, be issuing for consultation a draft guide on child abuse procedures which will bring up to date the guidance on the handling of cases, concentrating on the inter-agency collaboration which is an essential element in effective work to prevent child abuse. The Department will shortly be publishing a report on the recently completed inspection by our social services inspectorate of the supervision of social workers and assessment procedures in child abuse cases. This report will make a number of important recommendations to improve the management of such cases.

In July last year, we issued a consultative paper on the conduct of child abuse inquiries. The consultation period ended on 30 November and work is now well in hand on the final version. We are also working on further guidance to improve the current arrangements for reviewing the situation of every child in care, a review which local authorities are required by law to carry our every six months. Three weeks ago, on 10 January, I was privileged to launch a well attended national seminar, in which professionals from all over the country participated. That seminar examined the results of a major programme of research which has just been completed on decision making by social workers engaged in child care. We are now organising a series of regional seminars and training aids developed from these studies. Those are some of the practical measures we are taking to improve the quality of child care and to prevent child abuse.

As I have said, all hon. Members have a special responsibility to see that there is an effective legal framework for child care. We need laws that above all else, provide for the protection of children while ensuring that at the same time proper recognition is given to the rights and responsibilities of parents. Where those responsibilities and rights are restricted or removed, there must be due legal process in which all concerned have a full opportunity to put their case and to appeal if they are aggrieved.

Our present law has been built up over many years and reflects in part swings in opinion about the relative weight to be attached to children's and parents' rights. Not surprisingly, it is complex, difficult to follow and lacks consistency. There is wide recognition of the need for reform, for which the Select Committee on Social Services cogently argued in its report on child care in 1984. Following that report, we set up a review of the existing law, and the report of the official working party was published last October. It made more than 200 recommendations.

The majority of the responses to the consultation exercise, which ended just a few days ago, have generally been favourable and there is a broad consensus on the need for a comprehensive reform to produce a coherent body of law in an area which has suffered from too much piecemeal amendment. We shall be reaching conclusions shortly on how best to proceed in the light of the responses to our consultation exercise and will then make our intentions known to the House. I should certainly like to see an early opportunity for Government legislation, as I am sure will many hon. Members.

A number of hon. Members have referred to the idea of family courts, and I think that it would be appropriate if I offered some comment on that subject. My right hon. Friends the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary have established a committee of officials to examine the feasibility of a unified court with exclusive jurisdiction in all family matters to identify the main options and to examine their resource implications.

Although, as has been pointed out by both sides of the House, there is now a consensus in favour of a family court, there is still some variation of view on the form it should take and how it should be organised. Major changes could be involved. Depending on the type of court selected, it could lead, for example, to considerable re-organisation of judges, staff, accommodation and welfare services and extensive procedural changes. It is, therefore an undertaking of some complexity with a number of inherent difficulties. We realise, as the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) pointed out with his customary charm, that it has taken longer to produce a consultation paper than many of the enthusiasts of the scheme would wish. Although it had been hoped to produce an initial consultation paper in the autumn, it has not proved possible for the family court review to keep to that timing. However, my right hon. Friends believe that careful preparation is necessary when moving into such complex territory.

Ms. Harman: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many people will be bitterly disappointed at his statement that, because a narrow area with respect to the jurisdiction and procedure of the family court does not as yet attract 100 per cent. consensus, the Government will not move on this matter? The Government are allowing themselves to become bogged down. The Government are not noted for waiting until there is unanimity and consensus on every point before bringing measures before the House. We can only suspect, therefore, that they simply lack the political will to make space for this important measure and to bring it before the House at the same time as the substantive law is changed following the child care law review. That is not good enough.

Mr. Whitney: Clearly, the hon. Lady misunderstood the point I was making. I am grateful to her for giving me the opportunity to offer some clarification. I was saying that there were many matters of debate and many issues. Although it is regretted that the timetable has not been met, there is no question that we shall not move forward. The review is in hand. I am optimistic that the exercise will be launched before very long—I can say no more than that. We must recognise that this idea has been a long time coming. As my colleagues have pointed out, the Labour Government were a good deal more dilatory than the present Government. We have been working on this matter for a considerable time.

Mr. Ryman: Has the hon. Gentleman or any other Minister in his Department received legal advice on this matter from any Law Officer?

Mr. Whitney: It seems a pity that this important debate, in which there is a consensus, invites the hon. Member for Blyth Valley to make only that sort of intervention.

Mr. Sims: Will my hon. Friend accept that impatience at the lack of action on this front is not confined to the

[Mr. Sims]

Opposition but that many Conservative Members feel that the delays, one after the other, in even producing a consultative paper are becoming unreasonable? We should like action to be taken. If action is not taken soon, it will strengthen the case for my hon. Friend to get cracking on the Bill.

Mr. Whitney: I recognise the strength of feeling on this issue on both sides of the House. I am sure that it has been well and truly noted by my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor.

I shall leave, for a moment, the subject of family courts. Clearly, that is a matter to which Ministers will return. I should like to emphasise that the comprehensive change in child care law which we are seeking does not need to await decisions that may be taken on a family court. I hope that it was helpful to the House to have that review of current developments in child care and the Government's position on the reform of the legal framework. I shall now turn to the details of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 are intended to provide an extra measure of protection for the child who is already under a care order. As hon. Members know, as the law stands, the local authority in such cases has to exercise full parental rights and responsibilities in relation to the child, and at all times has to act in accordance with the so-called welfare principle—always to give first consideration to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child in accordance with section 18 of the Child Care Act 1980. There is no doubt at present about the statutory duty of the local authority. The focus of the social worker's attention must be the interests of the child.

The Bill proposes that there should be an exception to the general rule that local authorities have full discretion in the discharge of their parental responsibilities by requiring that, before a child subject to a care order can be returned home to his parents, they should satisfy a magistrates' court that the child would be,

"safe in all the circumstances"

those circumstances including a wide-ranging set of conditions which the court could impose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury has explained why he believes such extra protection is desirable. It clearly would provide a defence against the danger that social workers, in their anxieties to help and support families, can return a child home in circumstances where the risks for that child are unacceptably high. This can happen, but good child care policies and social work practice should effectively prevent it. I have already referred to the action we are taking to see that all authorities have satisfactory arrangements to that end.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the need to get court approval before a child was returned home would ensure not only that the decision was subject to independent scrutiny and detached judgment but that all such cases were fully and properly considered by the local authority before putting their case to the court. The House has to consider carefully whether this approach is the only or the best way of protecting these children and the possible consequential effects. Now is not the time to go into every detail, but I hope it will help the House if I put before it some considerations which we believe are relevant.

First, is the magistrates' court the best place to take decisions of this kind involving what are essentially professional judgments? I suspect that there is no clear answer to this on which all would agree. The Select Committee on Social Services in its 1984 report on children in care was clearly strongly opposed to extending the powers of the court, preferring that it was concerned only with sanctioning legal changes of status, such as the making or unmaking of a care order. Much of the comment we have received on our own child care law review supports that view. This question is one not only of principle, but of practice. How in practice would the magistrates' court deal with such cases? How would they fit in with the traditional adversarial approach to issues in cases where the local authority and the parents were likely to agree to the return of the child? There would surely have to be provision for a guardian ad litem for the child, and, if necessary, separate legal representation. How, in turn, would the conditions proposed by the court be enforced? What would be the consequences of a breach by either parents or the local authority?

Secondly, what might be the effects on social work practice of this provision? Might it not lead to authorities being more reluctant to undertake positive rehabilitation work with children and families because of the inevitable delays and extra work involved in preparing for court hearings, and hence to be a disservice for some children whose best interests will be in a return home? My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury has covered those points and taken a positive view.

Much recent research emphasises the importance of maintaining links with families from an early stage of a care order if long-term prospects for discharging the order are not to be prejudiced. The need is generally for flexible, sensitive and responsive working with families, including the option of returning the child home while still under a care order. Would the delays involved in court proceedings and the inevitable inflexibility of applying specific conditions attached by the court be compatible with that need?

Thirdly, the courts have additional burdens of a wide variety. The clauses as drafted would bite on all children in care, many of whom may not be in care because of parental abuse or neglect. About 12,000 such children live at home at any one time. My hon. Friend said that he would be willing to see the Bill amended to restrict it as far as possible to abused or neglected children. Nevertheless, some problems would still remain. For example, if guardians ad litem for the children had always to be appointed, there would be a problem finding sufficient qualified people. Professional time taken up in court work inevitably means less time to devote to other pressing cases.

Those, then, are some of the questions we need, to address in reaching a view on the merits, or otherwise, of clauses 1 and 2. There is one further point. In the end the quality of any court decision will depend on the quality of the professional work done by social workers and others working with children and their families. Whether or not the Bill becomes law, our chief concern should be to see that standards of professional practice in all cases are as high as possible, and that local authorities are discharging their responsibilities as a "good parent". That is a matter which, as I mentioned earlier, we are already pursuing vigorously with local authorities. A key element in that follow-up is likely to be how decisions that a child should be returned home are taken, the level at which they are taken, and the need for such decisions and subsequent

monitoring arrangements to be part of a well-considered plan for the child, following full assessment based on advice from all the agencies concerned, of whom there may be several. This is action which we and local authorities must take, irrespective of the progress of the Bill. It supports my point that the court avenue is not the only, nor necessarily the best way of protecting children at risk.

One final observation on the central proposal of the Bill is that no one is infallable, neither local authorities nor the courts. As the Blom-Cooper report so graphically made clear, and as many hon. Members have pointed out, in that sad case it was the court that initially encouraged the local authority to return Jasmine Beckford home. There was also one tragic affair some years ago — the case of Wayne Brewer—in which the magistrates went against a local authority's wishes by revoking a care order, and the child was subsequently killed.

Clause 3, which provides for appeals in care proceedings to go from the juvenile court to the High Court, rather than to the Crown court, and for local authorities to have a right of appeal, is broadly in line with the recommendations in our review of child care law. The proposal that local authorities should have a right of appeal fills a gap widely recognised as wrong.

Clause 4 would allow the magistrates to make parents and other interested persons full parties in care proceedings, and is again an objective similar to that recommended by the review. The Government are still considering responses to the child care law review and have not yet decided their position on these and other recommendations, so I cannot give a definitive view on the substance of these clauses today. However, I must express some concern about legislating for those specific changes ahead of more comprehensive legislation, in which a consistent coherent approach across the board can be achieved. Questions of court jurisdiction and procedure are more directly the concern of my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor. I believe, however, that they too would prefer that changes in those areas are not made piecemeal, but as part of a wider package. Clause 4, in particular, could have considerable resource consequences for legal aid. One advantage of legislating across the whole spectrum of child care law is that increases in resource costs in one area may be offset by savings elsewhere, while in a partial Bill of this sort it is much less possible to achieve that.

Clause 5, which allows cases of unusual difficulty or length to be transferred from the magistrates' court to the High Court, was not among the recommendations of the child care law review. The apparent objective behind the clause may go some way to providing the more professional approach to care cases that some see as an advantage of a family court. Like clauses 1 and 2, this provision would break new ground in care proceedings, and it would be desirable for the House to know the views of those who would have to operate it. At first sight there are clearly questions to be asked about the criteria and procedure for transferring cases; how they would work in practice; and whether any possible improvement in the quality of decision-making for children would adequately offset the adverse effects on the child and family of delay in reaching court decisions and the trauma of further court appearances. There is a case for deferring legislation of this sort until the prospects for a family court are clearer, though, if there is support for it, I would not rule out the possibility of a measure on these lines in the comprehensive child care Bill that we hope to introduce in due course.

Clause 6 deals with the timing of implementation and, as it stands, seriously underestimates the time needed to introduce the changes proposed. However, that is no doubt a matter which can be considered later, if the Bill proceeds.

I am sorry to have spoken at such length, but the Bill raises important issues. Changes in this area need and deserve the most careful consideration. The Bill is both timely, and untimely. It grapples with issues which have greatly concerned all of us in recent months, and from that point of view it is most timely. But it also comes when we are well advanced with a major review of child care law and when, whatever else may or may not be agreed on, there is almost universal support for the idea of a comprehensive measure, rather than further piecemeal legislation, however well intended or appropriate. We must also beware of the risks of over hasty changes in the law too narrowly focused on specific problems that have been tragically highlighted.

If the House decides to give the Bill a Second Reading, I am sure that much detailed discussion will be necessary in Committee. Some of the questions and reservations which I and many hon. Members have expressed make it clear that we shall have to take those issues a good deal further. I hope that the Government will have a clearer view of what we want to achieve in the major child care law reform having considered the result of the consultation exercise. That may well affect our attitude to the provisions of the Bill at that stage.

Having offered some of our misgivings, for reasons which I hope my hon. Friend will understand, and having emphasised the concrete actions that we have already set in hand to improve practice, I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to end where I began, which is by congratulating him on introducing the Bill, which is certainly important and seeks to deal with an issue of the greatest national concern. I congratulate him, too, on the spirit in which he introduced the Bill.

11.58 am

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I apologise to the House for not having been present for the whole of the debate. I intervene briefly because the tragic case of Jasmine Beckford was in my constituency, and, inevitably, I have been heavily involved in it. I congratulate the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on drawing the matter so quickly to our attention after the conclusion of the Blom-Cooper report.

There has been a good deal of common sense in the speeches from both sides of the House, not least from the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), and it is clear that there is a good deal of consensus. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on stressing the many important points which she knows from her knowledge of my constituency. The House may not know that for several years my hon. Friend was a worthy member of the Brent community law centre, and consequently advised my constituents about social services and other matters.

In relation to the background to the Beckford case, I had close association with the six area teams involved. If there is an inner city responsibility for social services across the board, including what we are trying to do in the

[Mr. Laurie Pavitt]

probation service, the wide responsibility of social workers has a great impact on how much and what expertise they can apply to their functions. That forms an important part of the Blom-Cooper report.

I heard the Minister's reply to this timely and untimely Bill. I have sat through many dabates when private Members have had a good cause, but they are like the man who seeks the one-handed lawyer, because, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are never quite certain which hand they will receive. In relation to the Bill being timely and untimely, I accept that comprehensive legislation must follow, but the likelihood is that the Bill is a step in the right direction. The debate has highlighted several important background issues, not least of which is the framework of family courts and the Scottish experience brought to bear by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). The possibility remains that we need not wait until the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted by the Government's legal department.

The legislative procedure of the House is always under severe pressure from priorities — what Bill shall be introduced this Session and what Bill in the next. I hope, from my impression of today's debate, that the Bill will succeed in reaching the objectives of the hon. Member for Westbury when he had the good luck to come out of the hat.

12.2 pm

Mr. Walters: With the leave of the House, I should like to make a few brief comments on the debate.

There have been several helpful, constructive and well-informed speeches from both sides of the House, which show that my Bill has received considerable support. It has been slightly more qualified from the Front Benches but is supported on the main question of Second Reading.

Hon. Members will agree that most of the points that have been raised can be dealt with in Committee. However, I shall take up one or two of those points without delaying the House too long. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) made a good point about clause 1(4). It would be intolerable for a child to be removed again because of administrative delay. We will consider carefully that matter in Committee, but the key answer is for the application to be in the pipeline in good time.

The hon. Member also mentioned voluntary care. Clause 2 makes it absolutely clear that the provision applies only to children in care under orders or resolutions, so that preoccupation would not arise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) raised two specific matters about children suffering from brittle bone disease and children who have been put into care on medical grounds. Those are sensitive issues and we shall consider them carefully. I cannot give my hon. Friend an answer at the present time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) raised several points, including the definition of "safe", which was also raised by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). That matter may need redefinition, but, as I said in my speech, if the system is to err it must err on the side of safety. That is a point that we shall consider.

I am grateful for the helpful and well-informed speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and for Devizes (Mr. Morrison).

The hon. Member for Peckham referred to piecemeal and patchwork legislation. Although the Bill is not meant to be full and comprehensive legislation, it does introduce measures that are specific and which have been carefully worked out. They are important measures and would in no way affect the more comprehensive legislation that will take place in due course.

The hon. Member for Peckham mentioned the Blom-Cooper report and the criticism of the magistrates. It is true that magistrates made a comment, but it was more a throwaway line on the basis that they hoped that the child would be returned to the family as soon as possible. In retrospect, that has been rightly criticised as a mistake. I do not believe that a similar situation would arise if my proposal was agreed to. Here, the magistrates would have to consider carefully whether an order to return a child should be made. I have emphasised the advantages of a detached, but concerned, group of people having to study the case as presented to them by those more closely involved. I believe this to be relevant and important improvement.

My final point is directed to the Minister. Comprehensive legislation eventually could do much better, but there is an old and boring cliché which says that sometimes the best is the enemy of the good. If we believe that the Bill is good, positive and constructive, let us not delay in getting it through the stages, especially if we believe that it has a contribution to make, as I do.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second Time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Protection of Military Remains Bill

Order for Second Reading read:

12.7 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill will make it an offence to interfere with the remains of crashed, sunken and stranded military aircraft and vessels without authority. The main purpose of the Bill is to protect the sanctity of wrecks that contain human remains. There are other reasons why it may not be desirable for the general public to interfere with the wreckage of military aircraft, such as safety and security. The Bill will help to prevent that.

During the last war, many military aircraft of various nationalities crashed in the United Kingdom, on land and at sea. Some landed in remote parts of the country and have become totally buried. Whilst it is possible to ascertain from Government records what aircraft went missing, in many cases it is not known where they came down.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in what has become known as aircraft archaeology. Several individuals, groups and organisations have been searching for and excavating crashed military aircraft. That has caused distress to relatives and friends of the deceased aircrew. As many of the aircraft contain munitions, their activities can be a danger to themselves and to others.

Similarly, many military vessels that sank during the world wars still contain the bodies of their crews. The activities of amateur and professional divers who like to explore the wrecks and remove treasures from them are a continuing source of distress, especially to relatives and ex-shipmates. Many of those engaged in such activities seek the consent of the Ministry of Defence and are prepared to desist when permission is refused.

Many non-military aircraft and vessels crashed or sank with their crews and passengers on board. Many would feel that similar protection should be given to those graves, although it must be recognised that, in general, there is little evidence of public concern — perhaps because special honours are always accorded to those who gave their lives defending their country. But any effort to protect all vessels and aircraft, civil as well as military, would create immense practical difficulties.

By limiting the Bill to military wrecks, including merchant vessels requisitioned or chartered for the direct support of the armed forces, enforcement becomes more manageable and protection is given to the wrecks in respect of which there is the greatest public concern. Therefore, the Bill would cover vessels such as the Atlantic Conveyor, but not the Titanic or the Lusitania.

The protection of the Bill is not limited to vessels and aircraft that contain human remains, nor to those that were lost in time of war. There are three main reasons for that. First, if the Bill made it an offence to interfere with only those wrecks that contained human remains, the prosecution would have to prove that the wreckage contained human remains. Digging up the evidence would defeat the purpose of the Bill. Secondly, although it might be relatively easy for a person to recognise the remains of a military aircraft or vessel, he may have no means of knowing whether they contain human remains. Therefore, the Bill as drafted enables a potential offender to know more clearly whether he would be committing an offence. Thirdly, a potential offender might have no means of knowing the date of a crash or sinking, and if the offence related only to wartime wrecks, he may not know clearly whether he was committing an offence.

The Bill extends to the remains of aircraft and vessels in the service of the armed forces of other countries which lie within the United Kingdom and its waters. There are many of those—American, Canadian, French, German and others—and it is right that they should be given the same protection as our vessels. I know that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is worried about the German vessels that were scuttled in Scapa Flow. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have something to say about that, and I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall try to make certain that the activities of divers round that fleet will not be affected by the Bill. However, in international waters, only the wrecks of British military aircraft and vessels are protected by the Bill. It will allow the Secretary of State to give a licence to any person to carry out any specified act which would otherwise be an offence under the Bill. He will also be able to issue a general licence, which should meet the point made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. Such a licence would normally be issued in respect of a wreck that did not contain human remains and did not need protection for other reasons.

The Bill will protect the wrecks of British and foreign military vessels and aircraft in the United Kingdom and its territorial waters from interference by people of any nationality. The majority of British naval wrecks are in international waters. Although it will be impossible to assert jurisdiction over the activities of foreigners outside United Kingdom territorial waters, unless the offence is committed on a ship registered in the United Kingdom, the Bill will make it an offence for British subjects to interfere with such wrecks. Wrecks in overseas territories will not be covered by the Bill, but there is a power to extend its provisions to colonies by Order in Council. That would include the Falkland Islands.

The provisions relating to offences in international waters have been carefully drafted to avoid suspicion in other countries that the United Kingdom is claiming excessive jurisdiction. The size of a controlled site is strictly circumscribed, no powers of entry are prescribed, and jurisdiction in respect of offences is limited to those persons who have some connections with the United Kingdom or who commit offences on British-controlled ships. Furthermore, the Bill provides that no proceedings for an offence committed in international waters shall be instituted without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. That will provide some assurance that considerations of international law and comity will be taken into account before a prosecution is brought. It has been thought necessary to provide powers to board ships for the purpose of investigating possible offences, and that power extends to foreign vessels in United Kingdom waters. Again, that provision has been carefully drafted to be consistent with our international obligations.

The Bill is small and relatively minor, and I shall detain the House no longer. We shall consider it in Committee, when I hope that any points that hon. Members may wish to raise can be covered. I hope especially that we have covered the point that will be raised by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

12.13 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I agree generally with the motives that prompted the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) to introduce the Bill, especially having regard to the sensitivity surrounding wrecks that contain human remains. That was brought home to us in recent years by the loss of life during the Falklands campaign. As the hon. Gentleman said, my special worry relates to the vessels of the German fleet that was scuttled in Scapa flow in June 1919. There are still substantial wrecks remaining which have proved popular to ever-increasing numbers of divers. The Orkney tourist bureau estimates that between £250,000 and £500,000 was generated for the local economy last year by the divers who wished to examine those wrecks.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that the diving can continue. I hope that he can tell me—if not, perhaps he will write to me—about the progress of the negotiations between the Orkney Islands council and the Ministry of Defence to buy three of the wrecks, the Dresden, the Bremer and the Koln. The negotiations have become bogged down in the legal department of the Ministry of Defence. If the process could be speeded up a little, it would be very welcome.

12.15 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I welcome the Bill. Its objectives are honourable, and it should be supported by everyone in the House. It is revolting that people should wish to dive on those wrecks to, among other things, aquire mementos. My worry about the Bill—this was not mentioned by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates)—is that clause 1(2) defines a protected place as one which contains the remains of such an aircraft or vessel at or near the site of

"the crash, sinking or stranding or is on or in the sea bed."

I hope that, in Committee, we can insert in the Bill a guarantee that there will be no interference with the lawful activities of commercial fishermen who fish above or close to wrecks.

Over time, wrecks become the habitat of a wide range of species of fish—shellfish and demersal species—so such areas become a productive ground for fishermen. Some British fishermen specialise in wreck fishing. That usually involves line fishing, or bringing nets — very skilfully—close to a wreck on the sea bed. I would like an assurance from the Minister that this fine Bill will not harm the interests of British fishermen. I am worried that fishermen may have to obtain a licence before fishing above or close to a wreck.

Mr. Mates: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. For my part — my hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt give his own assurances—the Bill is not intended to restrict fishermen going about their lawful business as they have before. There may be a point about nets, but I should have thought that the nets would be more disturbed by the wreck. That often happens by accident. We must ensure that line fishing does not become an offence under the Bill.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. He is right to mention nets becoming snagged on wrecks. I recall fishing on a large trawler off the Norwegian coast which lost its entire gear when its nets became snagged on a wreck. The overwhelming majority of fishermen welcome the Bill, as do I, but their interests must be safeguarded.

12.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on his good fortune in the ballot and on his presentation of the Bill. The Government welcome it.

I hope that the House will think it right to respond to public anxiety on this sensitive issue. For a number of years, concern has been growing in my Department and outside about our inability to prevent the desecration of the graves of airmen who crashed with their aircraft, and of sailors who went down with their ships, whose bodies have not been recovered.

There is no question of the Bill interfering in any way with the normal activities of fishermen. Most of those who are interested in the wreckage of military aircraft and vessels for pleasure or profit are thoroughly responsible people who take care to obtain our consent before they act. The main groups are those with a genuine interest in aviation or marine archaeology or marine life, commercial sailors interested in the cargoes of sunken vessels or in non-ferrous metal fittings such as propellors and sport divers who like to take souvenirs of their dives. Unfortunately, there are a minority who pursue their interest or business with little respect for the dead or regard for the feelings of others.

Public sensitivity about interference with vessels that are the tombs of those who died in them began to manifest itself strongly about 30 years ago. A growing feeling in the country that the naval vessels that were lost with their crews in wartime should be left undisturbed led the Admiralty to review its war grave policy in 1955.

I should stress that the term war grave does not have any formal significance or legal status. Indeed, it may be argued that the term war grave, used to describe a place where an unrecovered body lies, is a misnomer. These are not formal graves such as those for which the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible. It is important to recognise that fundamental difference. Formal graves are already protected by statutory and other means. They do not need the protection of this Bill and are not affected by its provisions. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent and devoted work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in perpetuating the memory of the fallen.

In 1955 the Admiralty Board reconsidered its policy of selling wrecks for scrap. Until then, the only grounds for refusing to sell a wreck had been security. The question which the board had to consider was one that was being asked increasingly—should sunken wrecks which may contain the bodies of their crews be disturbed? The Admiralty was faced with a dilemma. If it adopted a policy of freely giving permission for salvage operations it could thereby hope to ensure proper treatment for the remains of ships' companies, but at the cost of appearing to condone the disturbance of the bodies in what many people would feel was their appropriate resting place. If the Admiralty declined to grant permission for such operations, they would not thereby be prevented, and desecration of the remains would normally occur whenever the salvage was

successful. There had been examples of this in the previous few years, which included the salvage of ships near Anzio and of submarines near Helsinki.

The Admiralty therefore decided to establish a policy by which wrecks known to contain human remains were to be left untouched unless there were special circumstances. These special circumstances came to be defined as cases when there was a danger to navigation, the presence of explosives, a strong risk of unauthorised access which might be reduced by an official pre-emptive operation to remove attractive items and where reputable groups wanted to undertake valuable historical research. In all cases, there would need to be some guarantee that every care would be taken to minimise disturbance to any human remains.

Those criteria were applied to all naval wrecks from 1914 known to contain human remains. Older wrecks were dealt with on their merits. The problem is of course that the irresponsible elements do not usually bother to ask our permission. If they are not sensitive to our wishes, there is nothing that we can do at present.

On aircraft, it was also our policy to ensure that, as far as possible, human remains should not be disturbed. However, when aircraft are unearthed, it is customary to remove any remains for proper burial. The policy has the support of all concerned, including the Royal Air Force Association, the Royal British Legion, the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, and the War Widows of Great Britain Association.

The Department's guidelines continue to be respected by some and ignored by others. Every so often, a report in the press about souvenirs or more valuable items being brought up from a war grave, or about a world war 2 aircraft being dug out of the ground, draws public protest and renewed criticism of our inability to prevent such acts of desecration.

For example, in January 1967, a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* asked whether it was true that the British Government had given permission to a scrap metal firm to salvage three British cruisers—the Aboukir, the Cressy and the Hogue—that had been torpedoed in the North sea in August 1914 and sank with much loss of life. The writer thought it deplorable that British war dead should not be allowed to lie peacefully in what was their grave. The director of public relations to the Royal Navy wrote to the paper explaining Admiralty Board policy, but the correspondence nevertheless generated public concern. The Royal British Legion had complaints from some of its members, and one of its branches registered the strongest protest.

We were in that case able to explain that the wrecks had been sold to a British firm in 1954, and that the conditions of sale had included a clause requiring the nearest naval authority to be informed with dispatch in the event of the bodies of any naval personnel being recovered during the salvage operation, and for all reasonable steps to be taken to comply with instructions given regarding burial at sea or delivery to shore. Although the firm removed some external metal from the vessels, it gave an assurance that the inside of the vessels would remain undisturbed. Such assurances are welcome, but they are not of course enforceable in law.

In 1973, reports appeared in certain newspapers that the wreck of HMS Royal Oak had been looted and desecrated by amateur divers. This vessel, as hon. Members may know, was torpedoed in 1939 in Scapa Flow, with the loss of some 800 lives. The reports gave rise to ministerial correspondence and Parliamentary questions which appear at Column 299 on 12 June 1973 and at column 212 on 22 June 1973. As a result, the then Scapa Flow Dockyard and Port Regulations were amended to put a legal ban on unauthorised diving. The ban is now applied by an Orkney council byelaw. Similar protection could be provided for any wrecks in other dockyard port waters, but the House will recognise that this would only be scratching the surface of the problem.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has written to my Department about the vessels that were scuttled in Scapa Flow. There is no question of our wanting to restrict diving and commercial activities associated with them. We recognise their importance to the economy of Orkney and Shetland and, as we know that there are no bodies in them, we shall issue a general licence virtually immediately to enable those activities to continue. That would not necessarily apply to HMS Royal Oak, where bodies lie.

A couple of years later, there was parliamentary and public concern about reports that the wrecks of the Prince of Wales and Repulse were to be salvaged. These vessels were lying in international waters off the coast of Malaysia. More than 800 members of their crews were lost when the ships sank following Japanese air attacks in 1941. The possibility of Japanese salvage companies being interested in those vessels led to Oral Questions in another place on 21 October 1975 and 13 July 1976. Feelings of outrage were expressed. There were critical articles in the press. The *Daily Mirror's* account began with the words "The wrecks of two British warships which still entomb more than 800 sailors are in danger from Japanese grave-robbers". The Royal British Legion at its annual conference passed a resolution calling for the wrecks to be protected. The City of London Branch of the Royal Naval Association passed a similar resolution.

That concern was again in evidence, both inside this house and elsewhere, in the wake of the Falklands compaign. Assurances were sought that the sunken warships in Falkland Islands waters would be protected. Two of those wrecks, the Ardent and the Antelope, lie in territorial waters and are protected under the Falkland Islands Protection of Wrecks Ordinance 1977. The Coventry, Sheffield, Atlantic Conveyor, RFA Sir Galahad, and the sea king helicopter which crashed into the sea with the loss of 21 lives, are outside territorial waters. They would all come under the protection of the Bill, on a basis analogous to the example of Prince of Wales and Repulse that I mentioned.

Two well-publicised salvage operations claimed particular public attention in recent years. In 1981, a salvage consortium was permitted to recover gold from HMS Edinburgh. Authority to dive under Government supervision was given on the grounds that the gold bullion on board was sufficiently valuable to tempt other salvors who might not respect its status as a war grave. Nevertheless, the operation provoked adverse comment, particularly from the Survivors' Association.

It was the salvage operation on HMS Hampshire which really brought matters to a head and convinced us of the need for legislation. HMS Hampshire sank in 1916 off the Orkneys after striking a mine, with the loss of many lives, including that of Lord Kitchener. In 1977, the Ministry of Defence was approached by a group of German business

[Mr. John Lee]

men who wished to be allowed access to the wreck. Permission was eventually given, on the understanding that only the external features of the wreck were to be filmed and that no attempt would be made to land on, gain access to or otherwise interfere with the wreck. Permission was again requested and given in 1979.

The consortium again applied in 1983 to dive on and film the wreck. Ministers considered the request in the light of the heightening in public sensitivity on the War Graves issue since the Falklands conflict and decided that it should be refused. Despite that refusal, the consortium arrived with a diving salvage vessel and in a well-publicised operation raised some 30 small items, some personal, together with the ship's wheel and her huge phosphor-bronze propellor. The matter was widely reported in the press and the Ministry's inability to enforce its War Grave policy attracted some unfavourable comment.

Legislation would appear to be the only effective way of curbing the activities of the more irresponsible elements and assuaging public feeling. I hope that, if the Bill is passed, it will act as a deterrent and that it will seldom be necessary to prosecute.

We have no wish unnecessarily to hinder the activities of responsible individuals and groups, and we will ensure that permission to dive on a wreck or excavate an aircraft is not unreasonably withheld. A list will be compiled of known wrecks and crash sites which we have no reason to protect. That will be pulished under the general licence provisions of the Bill. Among the wrecks for which a general licence will be issued from the outset will be those that sank with no loss of life: for example, the German fleet that was scuttled in Scapa Flow in 1919. We also have it in mind to publish a list of wrecks and sites believed to contain human remains.

In summary, it is hoped that the Bill will provide a more powerful deterrent than has been available in the past. It will give only partial protection to wrecks in international waters, notably Prince of Wales and Repulse, as it can only reach United Kingdom citizens or United Kingdom vessels interfering with such wrecks. It will cover all Her Majesty's ships sunk in peace or war since 1914. As in the past, authority to dive will not be withheld unreasonably from genuine scientific and archaeological research groups; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be enabled to issue licences to such groups, and a general licence covering, for example, wrecks where there are not human remains.

Applications for licences will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. Initially, it is not our intention to charge a fee on the making of applications, but if the work load becomes greater than expected, we may decide to do so to cover our costs.

I hope that the House will agree, in the light of the evidence, that there is an obvious need to introduce some means of controlling access to the remains of military aircraft and vessels and that the Bill's provisions offer a reasonable way of dealing with this often emotive problem.

Mr. Wallace: I take on board and am grateful for the assurances that the Minister has given me. I have never been entirely clear about the legal status of some of the German wrecks off Scapa Flow. Some salvage rights belong to one of my constituents, a Shetlander, albeit that the wrecks are in Orkney waters. Will those rights be protected under any licence that is subsequently given?

Mr. Lee: It would be unwise of me to give a categorical assurance or firm commitment on that problem, but I guarantee to study it and to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) seek the leave of the House to speak again?

Mr. Mates: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Mates.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Committee what day?

Mr. Mates: Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is an unusual procedure for the House to take a Bill through all its stages on a Friday. Does any hon. Member have an objection?

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

12.36 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a rare privilege to have an opportunity to present a private Member's Bill. When I was fortunate enough to draw 12th place in the ballot, I publicised that fact in my constituency and asked for some suggestions as to what legislation it would be appropriate to present to the House. Among the suggestions that came forward was one from the East Lothian local health council, which suggested that something should be done about the use of tobacco products by young people and children in Britain. That is an eminently sensible subject to deal with and I am delighted to have this opportunity to move the Second Reading of the Bill in the House this afternoon.

I said that it was a rare privilege to present such a Bill, but I suspect that it is an even rarer privilege to have an opportunity to have a proper debate on a private Member's Bill which has secured only 12th place in the ballot. So I am particularly grateful for that good fortune.

This is a modest measure with two fundamental objectives. The first is to clarify the law which makes it an offence to sell tobacco to children and young people under the age of 16. The second is to extend the definition of tobacco to include other tobacco products such as tobacco products for sucking or chewing, which obviously means the product that has had a lot of publicity recently — Skoal Bandits — which is being manufactured and marketed in Britain by the United States Tobacco Corporation.

I want to make two general points in the context of this Second Reading debate. The first must be to refer to the serious problem of tobacco use by young people in Britain today. The recent Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report showed that no less than 13 per cent. of secondary school pupils in England smoke regularly. That is an alarming enough figure, but in Scotland the figure is even higher and more alarming because 16 per cent. of secondary school pupils there are smoking cigarettes regularly.

In a written reply on 13 December the Minister told me that by his Department's reckoning no fewer than 1,600,000 people under the age of 20 are smoking in Britain. It follows from that that somebody is selling vast quantities of cigarettes to children and youngsters in Britain. In another written reply on 13 December the Home Office said that there were only 42 prosecutions for the sale of cigarettes and tobacco to young people in England and Wales during 1984 — the same year to which the figures from the OPCS report refer.

A new generation is getting hooked on a dangerous habit and the matter is running out of control. It appears from the facts which I have cited that the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, which are supposed to prohibit the sale of tobacco and cigarettes to youngsters, are not working. My Bill is intended to strengthen the prohibition which is already supposed to exist and remove any doubt that it is an offence to sell all tobacco products to children and young people under the age of 16.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Would "all tobacco products" include the infernal Skoal Bandits?

Mr. Home Robertson: I am coming to that. I have been concentrating my remarks on conventional smoking tobacco, with which we have been familiar for a long time. However, we now have what my hon. Friend refers to as the "infernal" product, Skoal Bandits.

The second part of my Bill concerns new tobacco products which are for sucking or chewing, the best known example of that being the product mentioned by my hon. Friend. The manufacturers of that product can quite safely say that it does not cause lung cancer. That stands to reason, because one does not inhale sucking tobacco into one's lungs. However, such products are certainly addictive and they contain nicotine. There is sound evidence from the United States of America that they can cause cancer and other diseases of the mouth.

I have a report on the health implications of smokeless tobacco use from the consensus development conference of the National Institutes of Health in the United States of America which took place earlier this month. In the conclusion of that report it says:

> "Use of smokeless tobacco has a long history in the United States, but trends in recent years, in particular the increasing use of snuff by children and young adults, have led to concerns about possible health consequences."

I believe that "snuff" is the word used to describe such products in the United States. The report goes on:

> "The human evidence that the use of snuff causes cancer of the mouth is strong. Risk is particularly high for parts of the mouth where the snuff is usually placed . . . The primary behavioural consequence of regular use of smokeless tobacco is long-term nicotine dependence and its associated health risks."

That is recent evidence from the United States of America.

In April 1985, in this country, the chief medical officer of the Department of Health and Social Security warned that

> "the habit significantly increased the risk of developing cancer of the mouth, an extremely unpleasant disease which might be difficult to treat and could result in disfigurement or death."

That is the risk to which children in this country are being exposed when they think of purchasing such products.

It is sad to relate that the Government — I think inadvertently to be fair to them — gave a £1 million grant towards the establishment of a factory to manufacture those products in East Kilbride in Lanarkshire. Although the United States Tobacco Company has given assurances that it will not pitch its marketing efforts towards youngsters I fear that we already have disturbing evidence of efforts to sponsor students in college and to sponsor activities such as sport, which is clearly directed to young people and children. The very nature of a product which is sweet flavoured and designed to be sucked like a sweet and sold in shops which also sell sweets must point towards sales to youngsters.

There is widespread alarm about the implications of such products for children. We have seen instances of mothers in a village in Fife in Scotland picketing a shop which sells Skoal Bandits because they are angry that their children are being exposed to such risks.

My Bill has the support of such organisations as Action on Smoking and Health, health authorities and local health councils all over the country. It has the active support of the British Medical Association, and I have received letters of support recently from people as far apart as

[Mr. Home Robertson]

Camberley and Caithness—the length and breadth of the country. Indeed, the Bill has all-party support in the House.

The most significant public supporters of my Bill are my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) and the chief executive of East Kilbride district council, from whom I received a letter stating the council's wholehearted support for the objectives of my Bill. Jobs are very important in Lanarkshire, but not at any price.

My Bill is a modest and reasonable response to widespread public concern. I hope that it will improve and clarify the law for the benefit of all concerned. I freely acknowledge that the vast majority of people involved in the marketing and manufacturing of tobacco are responsible, and are not seeking deliberately to sell such products to young people, but the Bill is an endeavour to clarify the situation for the benefit of all concerned. I hope that it will help to protect young people throughout Britain from an extremely dangerous new tobacco product. I commend my Bill to the House.

12.45 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I shall seek not to detain the House for long, not least because I have already addressed it at length on a previous Bill.

I should like to voice my support for the Bill, and I hope that it will be accepted by the Government. I do so not only in a personal capacity but as chairman of the all-party group on action on smoking and health. We are sometimes described as a bunch of anti-smokers. I make it clear that we do not look upon ourselves in that role. If people want to smoke, it is up to them, but we feel that it is our job to ensure that they are informed and educated about the effects of smoking and tobacco products. As far as possible, they should be dissuaded from increasing their consumption, or persuaded to decrease it, if they will not stop. In particular, people should be dissuaded from taking up the use of tobacco products altogether. By far the most important people at whom some of our ideas are projected are young people. It is so important that youngsters should be not only informed as to the dangers of tobacco products but dissuaded from purchasing them.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) gave us the frightening figure that over 41 per cent. of children aged 16 are smokers. That is higher than the adult percentage. Something must be done to reduce that. As well as simply informing those people, we have to take every possible legal measure to make it more difficult for them to acquire the habit in the first place. One way to do that is to strengthen the law, as the Bill seeks to do, to prevent children from buying cigarettes.

The quantity of cigarettes being purchased shows that a large number of children must be buying them from shops. Indeed, a survey showed that 86 per cent. of children said that they bought their own cigarettes in shops or from machines. It is common knowledge that many tobacconists are prepared to sell cigarettes singly, for a few pence per cigarette. We must emphasise as strongly as possible that that is illegal. The Bill rightly strengthens the law on that front.

This week, the petition urging the Chancellor of the Exchequer to increase the tax on tobacco received much publicity. The selling price of cigarettes would be increased, which would be another deterrent and make it much more difficult for children to take up smoking.

If cigarettes had just been introduced to this country, they would almost certainly be banned forthwith. The tests on them are conclusive as to the harm that they can cause. One realises the impracticability of prohibition, but there is now a new tobacco product on the market. There is no doubt about its effect. In a written answer to a question that I asked in July, the then Under-Secretary told me:

"The Chief Medical Officer wrote to doctors following a recommendation by the Department's committee on carcinogenicity, which considered that there was evidence that the use of non-smoked tobacco products within the mouth is causally associated with an increased risk of oral cancer."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. *773*.]

Given that, it is surprising that the product is allowed on the market.

In reply to another question, the Minister said:

"There are at present no plans to prohibit the sale of Skoal Bandits or other tobacco products in this country".—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. *202*.]

The Irish are one step ahead of us, because the Irish Government have banned the sale of Skoal Bandits. It is a pity that they are not banned here.

It is to this Government's shame that a foreign country is allowed to set up a factory here to produce that product and that it was given taxpayers' money to do it. I hope that the Government will make some amends for that disgraceful decision by supporting the Bill.

12.50 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I join colleagues on both sides of the House, not in the conventional congratulation of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on being successful in the ballot, but in offering him a sincere "thank you". I hope that I will not be accused of being jealous. My name has been in the hat at least 300 times for Bills and motions, but in 27 years my name has not come out once. The House will understand that I envy my hon. Friend. I have asked the "Guiness Book of Records" to include me because I have produced more Bills on this subject than any other hon. Member.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend has chosen this subject. I am also delighted that he has chosen the most important aspect of the problem, on which there is a consensus among all political parties and all shades of medical opinion. We are talking about an addiction. If that addiction is stopped when people are young, lives will be saved.

Addiction starts at an early age. A recent report shows that children of school age are spending at least £64 million a year on cigarettes or tobacco products. That is not peanuts. The figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian on the number of youngsters affected are important.

I cannot emphasise too much that the early addict is hooked for life, as the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who is chairman of the all-party group on action on smoking and health, said.

I had the privilege this year of being a member of an Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation on drug abuse. Hon. Members in all parts of the House are worried about drug abuse and the growing use of cocaine—the latest twist in the addiction spiral.

In my speech as a member of that delegation, I reported that 80 deaths in 1983 were caused by the abuse of heroin,

methadone and hard drugs. The Royal College of Physicians produced evidence that the number of premature deaths in the United Kingdom from cigarettes was 100,000. The Prime Minister's figure for 1979 was 50,000. Whether the figure is 50,000 or 100,000, it is still important for us all to recognise that people under 65 are dying prematurely from smoking, with all the consequences of that. Lorry drivers smoke more than any other group and if a lorry driver dies and leaves a widow and young children, there is an enormous social services impact. We have to manage the debris."

Addiction starts at a young age. Many hon. Members have said to me, "I wish that I could kick the habit. I wish I had never started." The Bill reflects the mood of the House, because we all wish that people would not start smoking. If we tackle the problem at the start, we can hope for a better conclusion.

One difficulty about these debates is that too many people are inclined to take a moral attitude. Our concern should be solely for the health consequences to youngsters. Over the years, hon. Members from all parties have said to me, "Laurie, I am marvellous. I have given it up." They are priggish because they have demonstrated their willpower. Other hon. Members apologise for smoking and feel guilty. It is the boy scout syndrome: don't smoke; go out and chop wood instead. On both sides of the argument there is a confusion, which is not helpful to legislation.

If there were no health hazard to youngsters, I should be pleased to issue them with chimneys on their heads and the lethal Skoal Bandits. We are not talking about whether smoking is good or bad. We are interested in the health consequences, because the community has to pay the health bill and the youngster the penalty.

More young people have taken up smoking. Thanks to the excellent reports of the Royal College of Physicians the professional and middle classes do not smoke as much as they used to. The 10-year survey of general practitioners produced interesting results. Cases of chronic emphysema, lung cancer and bronchitis plummeted in those 10 years among doctors because, after the RCP report in 1961, general practitioners stopped smoking cigarettes and started smoking cigars.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian understands that kids do not smoke cigars. We cannot switch them from cigarette smoking to cigar smoking, so that they go behind the lavatories in the school playground and puff on cigars.

Kids buy cigarettes one or two at a time. There are few prosecutions of shopkeepers who sell cigarettes to underage children. Kids do not need to have the price of a packet of cigarettes. If they are short of money, they can buy one, two or three cigarettes and continue their addiction.

The new problem tackled by the Bill is the appearance of Skoal Bandits. Lung cancer is usually our prime worry for smokers, although it is not half as bad as chronic emphysema. We must all die sometime, but those who die of chronic emphysema die in torture.

Cancer of the lip, cancer of the mouth and cancer of the throat are diseases of ghastly proportions. They produce terror and pain that even the best analgesics cannot ease. Those who die of oral cancer die painfully. Is that what the House, the country and the Government wish on young people?

Should young people be allowed to chew something they think is like chewing gum? They will get a kick from doing it but after a few years could find themselves suffering from these dread diseases. Of course we want jobs, but not at any cost. There should have been greater liaison between the Health Minister and the Employment Minister before the Skoal grant was given.

I am worried about an extension of advertising on television now that these Skoal Bandits are here. Nobody is more prone to suggestion than a young person, and no instrument of suggestion is more powerful than television. Mr. Kenneth Robinson was the first Minister of Health to ban advertising of cigarettes on television. I hope the present Minister will examine with his Home Office colleagues the danger of advertising for Skoal Bandits sneaking into some sponsored programme. I am not worried so much about the paid adverts on ITV as about the millions of pounds spent on sports sponsorship.

Youngsters like sports programmes. They are interested in football, and nothing is more exciting to them than a car race on television. In such programmes there will appear large advertisements urging people to smoke a certain brand of cigarettes. I hope that in due course the House will be able to deal with that, because it is a scandal. In the meantime I ask the Minister to examine with his officers the possibility of advertising for Skoal Bandits creeping in by this back door, whereby millions of pounds worth of advertising is obtained by sponsorships at minimal cost.

One of our great chief medical officers of health in the Department of Health and Social Security more than 20 years ago was Sir George Godber. What shook me in his annual report and what shook Members of this House was his report stating that deaths and unnecessary suffering could be stopped. Members do not want unneccessary death and suffering. Ministers and Members of all parties always reach towards prevention and not treatment. That has been my theme all the time I have been in the House. I am a National Health Service man. If we can stop people from getting ill, Ministers will not be able to boast at the Dispatch Box about the huge increase in in-patients and out-patients from the year before, and about how great the Health Service is because more people are ill and are being treated.

Sir George Godber said in his annual report—he was able to put it across as Britain's representative on the World Health Organisation—that the greatest single step that any country could take towards preventing illness was to do something about decreasing cigarette smoking. This Bill is in the tradition of prevention rather than cure because it says that if we are to prevent illness it must be prevented early. I hope the House will give the Bill continuing support.

I was impressed by the speech of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). I have known him for a long time and have a great affection for him, because he once told me that if my wife put up against one of his hon. Friends he would be prepared to vote for her. I have never forgotten that remark and have always listened to him with a great deal of interest. I shall not say which of his hon. Friends that was, but he is on the Government Front Bench now.

I know the procedures of the House well, and I noticed that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East did some dextrous footwork on his Bill. I therefore immediately went to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian and said, "What about putting the Bill through all its stages now?" You were kind enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

[Mr. Laurie Pavitt]

bearing in mind the traditions of the House, to allow the previous Bill to be considered. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian informs me that his Bill can be improved and tightened in Committee. I hope that it receives full support on Second Reading from the Under-Secretary of State and that the full resources of his Department and his legal officers will be available to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian to assist him in drafting any amendments that need to be tabled. It has been a great privilege for me to be one of the Bill's supporters and sponsors.

1.5 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): The appalling number of secondary schoolchildren estimated to be smoking—about 40 per cent.—must cause us all great anxiety. I support the Bill. Many comments have been made to me by parents, teachers, doctors and nurses in my constituency who are deeply worried. If we cannot prevent young people from taking up smoking, what hope have we that we will persuade them to give up smoking as they grow up?

Smoking is the greatest preventable cause of illness and early death in the United Kingdom. It accounts for at least 100,000 deaths a year, with enormous personal and national costs, individual suffering, lost working days and demands on Health Service resources.

I congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on introducing the Bill. For too long children have been able to buy cigarettes. Parents and shopkeepers have not been vigilant. It is a matter not only of legislation but of enforcement. It has been said that 80 per cent. of all cigarettes smoked by children have been bought by them in shops. It must be seen as a casualty of affluence. When £90 million a year is spent on cigarettes by schoolchildren, we must ask serious questions.

In considering smoking by adults, there are more finely balanced arguments about the rights of individuals and the responsibility of Government. I believe that prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to young people, especially by extending the provisions of the Bill to include oral products, such as Skoal Bandits, is greatly needed. We should all greatly appreciate the efforts of the hon. Member for East Lothian. I give him my sincere and profound support.

1.7 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I speak as a former addict of tobacco and heavy smoker, one who now finds the habit particularly pernicious. It should be confined to the privacy of the home. It is a habit that should not be encouraged among young people.

I welcome the Bill. As the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) said, the number of young smokers is a sad sign of the prevalence of this form of addiction. I want to speak briefly because I have received a number of complaints from constituents who are concerned about what I called in an earlier intervention these "infernal" Skoal Bandits.

The Bill will strengthen the law to restrict the sale of tobacco products. I believe that we should follow the example set by the Irish Government and outlaw these products. This debate, brief though it is, outlines the dangers associated with this type of addition.

I welcome the Bill, but much more must be done to dissuade young pople from indulging in this appalling habit. We require more educational programmes aimed at preventing the spread of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and other forms of abuse among young children. The Government and local authorities have a duty to warn youngsters at school of the dangers of those forms of addiction, especially that associated with cigarette smoking.

1.10 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on introducing his Bill. Where children's health is at risk, it is essential to take immediate action. There is no cause for delay. The morality of selling Skoal Bandits is highly questionable because they may lead to smoking. That will provide a tremendous extra strain on the National Health Service, as is at present the case with smokers. Moreover, it may lead eventually to death.

The morality of Skoal Bandits is particularly questionable as they are prepared in sweet form, which denies the reality of the product. We must prevent any form of pressurised selling of that product. In that regard we must particularly consider advertising.

Immediate action is required against the product because of its dangers to our young people. The Bill will provide that, so I support it.

1.11 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I offer my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on taking this initiative, and I support his proposal. I am grateful to him for bringing Skoal Bandits to the House today because it is the first time that I have seen them. It is appalling that such a dangerous product can be peddled as a sweet, either mint or cherry flavoured, to young children. The information disc inside the tins is headed:

"Getting used to Skoal Bandits."

It states:

"Like your first beer, Skoal Bandits can be a taste that may take a few days to acquire."

Overleaf it continues:

"but, whatever you do, stick with it."

That is an incitement to addition directed at young children. It is obscene, offensive and immoral, and should be banned. Skoal Bandits should not be on sale to young children, and are dangerous in their own right.

I shall not deal with the question of the money made available to the factory because the case against this offensive product has been dealt with effectively.

The House would find it hard not to accept the case for not selling the product to children. We banned the sale of fireworks to youngsters who appeared to be under the age of 16. Although fireworks are dangerous, they represent a minor hazard compared with the injury and damage resulting from the use of tobacco. I was astonished at the figure of £90 million given by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) which represents the total amount spent by schoolchildren on tobacco products. Perhaps the Minister can give us a more precise figure. The hon. Lady was correct. If the Bill is passed,

it is equally important to enforce it. If we do not have enforcement back-up, the law becomes ineffective. In that context, the procrastination that is taking place in consumer protection round the country must be disturbing. I hope that the Government will not only support the proposal, but will show their support in a practical form by ensuring that there are sufficient consumer protection officers and trading standards officers to implement the proposals.

As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian intimated, it is becoming increasingly apparent that we should reconsider not only where and when tobacco products are sold, but where they can be consumed. Tobacco has become an intrusion on the rights of non-smokers. We must reconsider a complete ban on advertising. Methods of advertising have now become so subtle that it is time to say that we have had enough and that we recognise that the present well-intentioned restrictions have not achieved our objectives. We should now go the whole hog and say that advertising of tobacco products must be stopped.

1.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on his success in the ballot, in contrast with the undeserved lack of success of his hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). I congratulate him also on using his success to provide the opportunity for this important debate and to introduce a Bill that we all support. The hon. Member has explained the purpose of the Bill admirably, so I shall be brief and not cover again the ground already discussed by so many hon. Members, who have displayed a large measure of agreement.

The Bill touches on an issue of great concern to the Government — the degree to which young people are threatening their future health by the use of tobacco. Cigarettes pose by far the biggest threat to health. We recently published disturbing figures, which have been quoted by hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). It is estimated that about £90 million a year is spent on tobacco products by children under the age of 16. Another alarming statistic is that 30 per cent. of fifth formers were identified as regular smokers — regular being defined as 50 cigarettes a week. The figures are increasing among the under-16s, but I am glad to say that in the adult population the incidence of smoking continues to decline at an encouraging rate. However, none of us is complacent.

Tobacco in any form is potentially hazardous, so it is essential that we should do everything possible to ensure the protection of our youngsters. It must be our objective to try and deter young people from using tobacco of any kind in view of the established health risks. Today's Bill will help towards achieving that aim by strengthening the prohibition on the sale of tobacco products to children, specifically to include smokeless tobacco products such as Skoal Bandits. It would amend the law on tobacco sales to make it an offence to sell any tobacco product to a person under the age of 16 years in any circumstances.

A tightening of the law is especially desirable to reduce the possibility of children being able to buy smokeless tobacco products, such as Skoal Bandits, which are now being promoted. The widespread anxiety about the appeal of that type of product to youngsters has been reflected in the debate. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) quoted with some effect the type of promotion employed by the company. Skoal Bandits pose the risk of oral cancer and may lead youngsters to smoke cigarettes and encourage dependence on nicotine.

Existing legislation, which was drafted long before Skoal Bandits became available, is clearly unsatisfactory. It is currently not an offence to sell such products to children if the tobacconist reasonably believes that they are for someone else. That makes it easy for a child to buy such products on the pretext that they are for a parent or an older brother or sister. It would be extremely difficult to obtain a conviction under the present law because of the defences available to the seller. By removing those defences, the Bill would remedy an obvious weakness in the law.

The Government already have a voluntary agreement with manufacturers which restricts the marketing of Skoal Bandits in ways which are intended to protect young people. The Bill would reinforce that agreement by tightening the rules affecting the point of sale and closing an apparent loophole. Although it is obviously less likely that children will try to buy pipes and cigars for their own use, it seems sensible to cover them in the Bill, thus putting all tobacco products on the same footing as cigarettes.

Simplifying the law thus would help the tobacconist. There would no longer be room for doubt about whether he was within his rights in knowingly selling tobacco goods to somebody aged under 16. I believe that, in many cases, the shopkeepers will welcome the clarification. If the Bill became law, the Government will want to consider means of publicising the new provisions so that tobacconists are made fully aware of them.

I should like to renew my congratulations to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and to assure him and the House that the Bill has the Government's full support. I strongly hope that it will be given sympathetic consideration today.

1.21 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am most grateful to the Minister, and others who have spoken, for their support. We hear much about rowdyism and how everybody is supposed to oppose everybody in the House for no good reason, but today we have had a succession of constructive debates on constructive proposals. This is the House of Commons at its best.

I am grateful to the Minister for indicating the Government's support for the Bill. I am also grateful for the co-operation that he and his officials have already given in the preparation of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is the chairman of the all-party group on Action on Smoking and Health. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) suggested that we should be going a lot further and banning products such as Skoal Bandits. I quite agree, but we all know that politics is the

[Mr. Home Robertson]

art of the possible, and private Members' Bills demonstrate that more than anything else. It would have been foolish to introduce a measure that would have aroused strong opposition from those interested in the manufacture of tobacco products. Nevertheless, I would have loved to go much further. The hon. Gentleman said that Skoal Bandits have been banned in the Republic of Ireland. I agree that it would be desirable to consider a ban here. Perhaps we could explore that in the future.

I commiserate with my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). He might not be lucky in ballots for private Members' Bills, but he has been an extremely consistent and doughty fighter to protect the health of people of all ages. He is quite right—if we want to stop people suffering from the effects of a dangerous addiction, the best action is to prevent them getting addicted. Prevention is obviously better than cure, and that is what we are trying to achieve today.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) spoke in an earlier debate, in which she demonstrated her concern for the welfare of young people. She spoke principally about cigarettes and the danger of cigarette smoking. She also drew attention to the fact that, in a year during which an estimated £90 million was spent on cigarettes by people under 16, there were only 42 prosecutions for selling those products. The sale of such products to young people is supposed to have been illegal since 1933 in England and Wales and since 1937 in Scotland. Obviously, someone is driving a coach and horses and much more through the legislation. I hope that the debate and the Bill will encourage a further examination of the position.

Section 7(1) of The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, and section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, whose terminology is identical, are circuitous, to put it mildly. They offer on a plate a range of defences against possible prosecutions for selling cigarettes and other tobacco products to young people. The primary purpose of the Bill is to clarify that prohibition. I hope that, if the Bill becomes law, we shall have much more effective control of the trade. My secondary purpose is to make it crystal clear that Skoal Bandits or anything like them are included in the prohibition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow spoke with all the zeal of a convert. I welcomed with mixed feelings the support of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), because last year I spent 10 happy days in his constituency trying to ensure that someone else won the seat. Nevertheless, I am grateful for his support. He referred to advertising. We should pay tribute to the Independent Broadcasting Authority for saying that it will not accept advertisements for Skoal Bandits. However, as someone else said, direct advertising is not the whole story. There is also the problem of the sponsorship of sports and other such indirect advertising.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) had not intended to speak in the debate, but, when I was rash enough to show him the product that we are discussing, he expressed his strong abhorrence to it.

We have clearly achieved the rare commodity of unanimity in the House. I am grateful for the support of the Government and hon. Members of all parties, and I commend my Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.26 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House will know that the original promoter of the Bill was my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), who has now been appointed to the Government and is thus disqualified from the exquisite pleasures of private Members' business on Friday mornings. I know that the House will join me in congratulating my hon. Friend on his appointment and wishing him well in his difficult task at the Northern Ireland Office.

It is most appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squires) should have taken on the Bill, since he was responsible for the original Act which the Bill seeks to extend. It is a necessary and constructive extension, and I hope that the House will approve its Second Reading so that it can be modified, perhaps only slightly, in Committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he is speaking on behalf of the hon. Member whose name appears on the Bill as one of its sponsors?

Mr. Mates: I am speaking on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch, who authorised me to move the Second Reading, on his behalf today.

1.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to respond to the telling speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), and I associate myself with his remarks concerning the elevation of my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney). I recognise the contribution that has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squires) to this important matter.

The Bill seeks to provide for greater public access to meetings of joint consultative committees of health and local authorities, and to related reports and documents. This is a commendable objective, and I wish to make it quite clear from the start that the Government have no objection to the Bill on policy grounds. Joint consultative committees exist to advise district health authorities and local authorities in carrying out their statutory duty to collaborate in serving the community. We would welcome a greater public awareness of the existence and functions of those bodies, and would like to see their proceedings as open as possible. We feel that the degree of public accountability which such openness would entail would help strengthen the committees and emphasise the importance of their role in successful joint planning that we all seek.

Strengthening the joint consultative committees in that way was one of the recommendations of the working group on joint planning whose report "Progress in Partnership" was published at the end of November. That working group was set up by the local authority associations, the National Association of Health Authorities and my Department to look for ways of improving joint planning. Its establishment was prompted largely by a widespread feeling that over the country as a whole, services would better match the needs of users and be delivered more cost-effectively if all the opportunities for joint planning of services had been taken.

Some time before the Bill was first presented, we were preparing draft guidance to health and local authorities, aimed at implementing the working group's recommendations. We are now in the process of distributing it for consultation. In it, we strongly recommend that the meetings of joint consultative committees should be made open to the public and stipulate that minutes of meetings should always be made publicly available and that the press and the public should be kept informed of progress.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I am interested in what the Minister is saying. I have been trying to persuade the Government that it would be a good idea to include new town development corporations in the Bill's provisions. Will he consider widening the Bill to include new town development corporations?

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman seeks to widen the role of the Bill much further than it is at present drafted, and outside the realm of my Department. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment will have taken careful note of the point that he made.

If the Bill were enacted it would, of course, give the force of law to the recommendation that we have adopted. I am sorry to say, however, that I am advised that technically the Bill is defective. The defect is that the Bill seeks to apply the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to joint consultative committees. That cannot be done, because the 1985 Act is itself an amending Act inserting provisions in earlier Acts. The Bill would need to be redrafted so as to amend the earlier Acts before its purpose could be achieved.

In the circumstances, if the Bill receives its Second Reading today, it will need to be amended in Committee.

We have no objection to the principle of the Bill. We are keen to heighten the degree of public awareness of the existence and function of the bodies with which it deals.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills.)

HORTICULTURAL PRODUCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

1.33 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I beg to move that the Bill be read a Second time.

I confirm that I am acting on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells).

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 3rd February, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Moore relating to Supplementary Estimates 1985-86 have not been disposed of by Seven o'clock or one and half hours after they have been entered upon, whichever is the later, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put forthwith any Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the said Motion.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Rate Support Grant (Sutton)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

1.34 pm

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a subject which is of great importance to my constituents—the rate support grant settlement and the London borough of Sutton. It is interesting—I hope it will be an illuminating experience—to be on this end of an Adjournment debate, having sat for many hours on the Front Bench over the past six years.

I am encouraged and honoured by the excessive presence of the worthies from the Department of the Environment who have just joined us in the Box. I have great admiration and a lot of affection for them after my years with them, so I am glad that they are here today and I am sure that they will be able to assist us in many ways.

The rate support grant settlement was debated fully on 20 January, but, with hindsight, it seemed to many of us, not only in the House but outside in the wider world through the media, that there was a tendency for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and indeed others, to concentrate on the problems facing the shire counties. I do not make that for one moment as an accusation against my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment. That is the way that it was largely presented. It absorbed much of the media's attention throughout those few days, as it tended to in December when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his announcement on 18 December about the settlement for 1986-87.

That is why many of us who represent outer London boroughs feel that the problem is just as acute there as it is in the shire counties and it is to that to which I wish to turn my attention. I have every confidence that my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), the Under-Secretary of State who is to reply, is well in tune with outer London politics and equally well in tune with outer London Government finance. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), who is anxious to have a few moments in which to speak in this debate and hopes to catch your eye Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I have sat down — with the full recognition of my hon. Friend the Minister — has just the same problems. We both represent the London borough of Sutton. I want to express my warm thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister for the way in which she received a large delegation from both of us a fortnight ago, including various officials of the London borough of Sutton. That provided an opportunity for a detailed survey on Sutton's finances.

Sutton's financial control has been well in accordance with prudence and has reflected the Government's demands since 1979. Sutton has for many years complied with Government guidelines and target requirements. It has also given the fullest support to Government policies in connection with the abolition of the GLC and has co-operated more than fully in setting up the consortium arrangements to handle waste disposal in south London in spite of receiving a transfer station far larger than required. That is an important dimension for us in the overall assessment.

No charges of profligacy can be laid at Sutton's door, as opposed to the other inner London authorities which

have for many years been locked in battle. I need not enumerate those except to say that we all know where they are and we all know what they have done to the ratepayers of Greater London. Indeed, many of the inner London boroughs and the outer London boroughs that make up the metropolis are in an identical position.

I did not support the Government's proposal on Monday 20 January, because the whole settlement is inequitable. I ask my hon. Friend to give urgent consideration to our problem with my right hon. Friend so that we may achieve a more equitable distribution. I am heartened by the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who received a delegation of outer London Members of Parliament in the same week, and for that we are grateful. But I hope that there will be more to come from some of the comments and observations that he made.

A feature of the 1986-87 settlement is that it is supposed technically to benefit metropolitan areas, but the increased benefit for London is concentrated almost exclusively on the inner London boroughs. Having worked for some years in the Department of the Environment I am well aware of the problems in the inner cities, but we must ensure that our programme is not to the detriment and exclusion of the outer London boroughs which, in many respects, are facing problems similar to any other capital city.

It must be said that most of the metropolitan areas receive, justifiably, all forms of other additional Government support through the inner city partnership, urban development grants and derelict land grants. There is a whole series of additional sources of funding which we tend not to see in the outer London borough of Sutton.

I want first to look at grant-related expenditure assessments. That has assumed a far greater importance in 1986-87 because previously rate support grant penalties commenced for expenditure in excess of target. Now, withdrawal commences in relation to GRE level. Thus the more GRE received, the higher is the grant. Indeed, an analysis of the total percentage GRE change in London, excluding GRE related to services transferred from the Greater London Council shows that inner London receives an increase of about 15·4 per cent. Outer London, on average, receives an increase of 8·2 per cent., but in Sutton the increase is only 6·4 per cent. The figures including transferred services are: for inner London an increase of 51·7 per cent., outer London 21·8 per cent., on average, and for Sutton merely 20·5 per cent.

Officials in Sutton are concerned that details of individual GREA components for existing services were not made available to Sutton until after the debate on the settlement in the House of Commons. I know the reasons for that policy over the years, but the timing is difficult. Without access to data, any conclusions drawn fom the information available so far can be based only on assumption. That places us in all sorts of difficulties at this critical time with just a few months to go before the end of the financial year.

Pre and post-abolition GREs have been provided for former GLC services and one area where Sutton seems to have suffered is in the post-abolition highways maintenance GRE. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will say something about that when she winds up because that is just one of several features that concern my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington and myself.

I must make it clear to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that we understand that we cannot expect detailed and specific answers to all the points we might hope to make during the debate, but I hope that in the immediate future it may be possible to have some follow-up guidance so that we can relate it to our colleagues in the London borough of Sutton.

I also want to make it clear that the electorate wholeheartedly approves the Government programme to reduce expenditure. We also applaud the containment of inflation, which is a key factor in all of this. It is also worth pointing out to hon. Friend that, on all services, Sutton had the lowest net cost per capita in 1984-85. Sutton is an efficient local authority. It had the third lowest rate rises in outer London and between 1981 and 1985 rate rises were contained at just over 10 per cent. when the RPI increase was 28 per cent. for the corresponding period. That speaks volumes for Sutton's financial management. Indeed, I venture to suggest that many other local authorities should follow that. So far, we have had some recognition from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State towards our problem, but I should like some answer. Can my hon. Friend say whether the reduced budget for the London Residuary Body helps Sutton and by how much can it help?

From the correspondence I have received in recent months it seems surprising to ratepayers that the benefits derived from abolition do not seem to be followed by a good grant distribution. Accordingly, we need specific details. I expected, as a firm supporter and believer of the abolition of the top tiers of Government in this country —the seven metropolitan authorities—that there would be such a distribution.

During his speech on 20 January my right hon. Friend used the phrase "grant recycling". I do not think that I would have chosen that phrase myself, but I know what he means and it is a graphic description. He spoke about grant recycling for low-spending authorities, meaning that those that have been in penalty will be required to help low-spending authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington and I are curious to know, as will other outer London borough Members who are in similar positions, how that will help the boroughs and, more specifically, how it will help Sutton. Can my hon. Friend be specific on that?

Third, is the all-important question of GLC balances —which my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington and I discussed before, when we went to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and her officials at the Department — and their future distribution, based on the population of each borough? It is important for us to know precisely what that means. It is an important concession that the distribution of GLC balances might be on a fairly equal basis throughout the population of each borough. Have any studies been pursued by my hon. Friend's officials? If not, can they get in touch with officials in the London borough of Sutton? We need to know what the help will be. Again, the timing is crucial, bearing in mind the fact that it is only a couple of months until the year end.

Those are critical points for my constituents in Sutton and Cheam, Belmont and Worcester Park. Sutton's problems are not unique, but we are talking about specifics in this debate. I fully understand that my hon. Friend might not be able to reply to all the points that I have raised, but

[Mr. Neil Macfarlane]

I should be grateful if, in the fullness of time—within a couple of weeks, I hope—she will provide answers to the more detailed points that I have raised.

1.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I associate myself wholeheartedly with the well-expressed arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), with whom, over the past few weeks and months, I have been engaged in an extensive lobbying exercise of Ministers. I should like to place on record my gratitude to the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), for their courtesy and the helpful way in which they listened to our representations and sought to respond to them.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam said, we cannot expect definitive and detailed answers this afternoon. None the less, the debate gives us yet another opportunity to emphasise, if emphasis be necessary, the importance of the issues to our constituents throughout the London borough of Sutton.

My hon. Friend referred to the three concessions resulting to some extent from the representations that we have made. We are grateful for that. However, it is important—indeed, vital—that numbers be attached to those concessions as soon as possible so that the ratepayers and councillors of the London borough of Sutton know exactly where they stand at the earliest possible date, and so that they can then come forward with the low rate increase that I know they would like.

The three concessions that my hon. Friend mentioned are equally important in the long run. There is a distinction between the concession on the London Residuary Body budget and the concession on the GLC's balances and their distribution, on the one hand, and the concession on grant recycling, on the other hand. The distinction is that, in the third category of grant recycling, we are talking about something that is dependent upon the best estimates that the Department can make of the overspending that might occur. There is a certain logical problem because that overspending is something which the Government are dedicated to contain and if possible avoid through the various machanisms to deal with the overspenders. It is ironic — this has not escaped my constituents in the London borough of Sutton — that to some extent the benefit that we expect to derive as a low-spending and responsible authority has to flow inexorably from the misbehaviour of local authorities elsewhere — mainly Labour-controlled—whose action we deplore.

In the short term, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam and I need the best possible settlement for the London borough of Sutton, to take account of its exemplary financial record, but wider issues arise than those of local government finance narrowly defined. If we can get a satisfactory settlement on those key issues, it will enable the people of Sutton to continue to enjoy living in a local authority which, over many years, has benefited from low rates, and which has attracted much new industry and activity to the borough.

A local authority with an exemplary education policy in terms of results would be put at risk if the arguments about local government finance went awry. The borough has one of the lowest unemployment rates in London and the south-east. We are naturally pleased about that because of the tragically high unemployment rate nationwide.

My hon. Friend the Minister must understand that there is more at stake than the simple technicalities of local government finance and arrangements for RSG. Broader issues are involved to do with the future quality of life for our constituents. I hope that the Minister and her colleagues in the Department of the Environment will give a high priority to what we regard as our convincing arguments.

1.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) for the kind words with which they began their contributions. I am also grateful to them on behalf of the civil servants who worked in Marsham street for many a long year with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam.

I do fully understand my hon. Friend's arguments about the manner in which the London borough of Sutton has conducted its affairs over a number of years. My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington paid tribute to the local authority's good management and spoke of how such good management affects people who live and work in that outer London borough. I sympathise and I do not want anything that we do to be to the detriment of such boroughs.

My hon. Friends will accept that the rate support grant system is at the best of times undeniably complex. This settlement has been more complex because of the additional task of accommodating the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan authorities. I welcome the opportunity to try to reassure my hon. Friends and their constituents about the borough's position.

First, I shall deal with how the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement might have affected Sutton if we had not made any changes to the grant system. Like all other outer Londer authorities the borough would have lost block grant because we have reduced the proportion of overall spending which is met by the Exchequer grant, of which block grant is a part. We have followed that policy because we wanted to reduce the Exchequer support to local government in an attempt to improve local accountability. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam accepted that. The loss of grant for this reason amounted to over £1·5 million. Sutton would have lost a further £333,000 due to increased rateable values. It would have gained about £800,000 because we have moved resources between various services.

With some other smaller losses and gains, overall Sutton would have received about £900,000 less in grant than in 1985-86 if we had simply rolled the old system forward to 1986-87.

However, we could not leave the basic grant system alone. The most important feature of the settlement next year is that we have removed targets and holdback. At the same time, we have increased the effects of the existing mechanism so as to continue the constraints on spending. Sutton gained £1 million in grant from that move.

We have also continued the development of grant-related expenditure as an objective measure of spending

need. Sutton gains a further £1·2 million in grant from those changes which mainly affect its education and concessionary fares provision. As I said, we have abolished the GLC, which means that Sutton has gained a further £1·5 million of grant towards the services that it has taken on as a consequence of abolition.

The net result of all the changes to which I have referred is that if Sutton were to spend at a level equal to its own 1985-86 spending and include its share of the GLC's 1985-86 spending — increased by 3·4 per cent. — its block grant would increase by £2·8 million to £27·8 million—an increase of 11·3 per cent.

Many outer London boroughs have claimed that profligate inner London boroughs have been rewarded rather than penalised, as the outer boroughs would wish. However, many inner London boroughs are subject to lower expenditure limits next year. For example, Greenwich is being required to reduce its expenditure by 10 per cent. in real terms, Hackney by over 12 per cent. and Lewisham by 14 per cent., all as a direct consequence of rate capping.

Such demands are difficult to achieve, as I know to my cost. It is hard for a local authority to achieve much more than a 3 per cent. direct cut in expenditure during the rollover of one financial year. However, we are required to operate the block grant system on general principles which have to be consistent. We have no power to single out authorities for favourable or unfavourable treatment. The rate support grant system is based on the principles of need and resources equalisation. The aim is for authorities to provide similar services at broadly the same rate poundage cost to their ratepayers, regardless of differences in their needs and rateable resources.

Although we are not here today to decide the future of the local government finance system, it would be appropriate for me to mention that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has just launched a major Green Paper which addresses the fundamental issues of equalisation and the extent to which it should continue under a new financial system for local government. We shall certainly welcome all thoughts and contributions from local authorities in the coming months. I hope that my hon. Friends will take that message back to their local authority.

The abolition of the GLC is particularly important to the London borough of Sutton. My hon. Friends will recall that we intended that the financial effects of abolition would be neutral—there would be neither gainers nor losers arising out of the abolition. We have not built into the rate support grant settlement any assumption about what savings can be made by the successor authorities.

Our aim has been that, taken as a whole, London will receive the same level of grant to which it would have been entitled if the GLC had continued to exist and to spend at the level assumed in the settlement. We have done that by allocating the GLC's grant-related expenditure and its 1985-86 budget to the successor authorities on the most objective assumptions that we could find, after a full process of consultation with the local authority associations.

We have also extended the London rate equalisation scheme to replace the equalising effect of the GLC precept. That was necessary to avoid windfall gains to the central boroughs at the expense of ratepayers outside London.

It is important to understand that not only do authorities inherit expenditure obligations from the GLC, and the grant-related expenditure to go with them, but they inherit an obligation to raise some of the resources to meet those needs from their own ratepayers, just as the GLC did by precepting. That means that there is no uniform relationship between GRE increases and grant increases due to abolition.

However, in Sutton's case the grant entitlement on our spending assumption of an increase of 3·4 per cent. would suggest a rate rise of only 2·5 per cent. If Sutton could repeat last year's use of balances, the rise could be even lower—perhaps even zero.

My hon. Friends asked me to touch on Sutton's grant related expenditure. I know that Sutton is unhappy about several aspects of that. It lost about £500,000 from figures provisionally announced in October 1985, mainly due to new data on traffic flows affecting the highway maintenance grant-related expenditure. We made it clear that such changes were possible. The concessionary fare GRE does not match what Sutton believes it will be required to spend according to the statutory scheme, although the new GRE methodology is better for Sutton than the old one. I assume my hon. Friends that we are, looking at whether we can help on this aspect for future years. We are acutely aware of the problems that arise from continually looking at the grant-related expenditure assessment. That throws up problems not only for Sutton, but for other authorities, and one has to be careful about how one changes the assessments.

I know that Sutton has been worried about the costs associated with the abolition of the GLC. The likely reduction of the proposed London Residuary Body levy from £180 million to around £60 million, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred in the RSG debate on 20 January, represents a saving to Sutton of over £3 million.

My hon. Friends may also know that no less than £200 million of the provisional charges, London-wide, circulated by the LRB in November, related to housing debt that the boroughs already pay for. To add this as a new expense due to abolition would be mistaken. It would result in double counting, and this may help to explain some of the figures for rate increases put about by boroughs generally, although I know that Sutton has not made that mistake.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend announced that the GLC's balances will now be distributed on a population basis. Sutton will get £250,000 instead of £150,000 for every £10 million of balances distributed. I hope that takes care of that point.

I should like to refer to a mistake that has occurred in the split of the GLC's highway maintenance expenditure to the boroughs when the RSG settlement was being prepared. I recognise how difficult it is for anyone not immersed in this system, which is known for its Byzantine complexity, not to become confused, but this error is different from the changes of highway maintenance and other GREs between provisional announcement and settlement which I talked about earlier. It has to do with the calculation of the expenditure to be taken on by each borough from the GLC, which is necessary so that limits are set on the gains and losses of grant as a result. These limits—safety nets—were needed to achieve the neutral effect that I mentioned before. The grant loss to Sutton is almost £800,000.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

I am urgently considering how this can be corrected within the grant year. There are various ways in which we might do this. I am committed to consulting the local authority associations with a view to producing a solution which will correct this error before boroughs have to make a rate.

I know that the council's latest forecast for next year's expenditure, taking account of some of these changes, is now about £1·5 million less than when I met my hon. Friends with a deputation from the borough of Sutton. But at £71 million, it is still almost £2 million above our settlement assumption. It would be about 9 per cent. up on last year — a far bigger increase than can be accounted for by inflation. On these figures Sutton could lose about £3 million of grant overall. I hope Sutton can find ways of reducing that forecast.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State used the phrase "grant recycling." Last year, penalties incurred by overspending authorities went back to the Treasury. This year, grant lost by those spending above the settlement assumptions will be recycled to all by the traditional process of close ending. My right hon. Friend showed to the House in the RSG debate the effects of distributing a pool of £400 million. Sutton would have received nearly £1·25 million as a result. How much of this is a grant gain will depend upon how much Sutton contributed to the pool by spending above the assumptions we have made. If it can keep its own spending down, it will maximise the benefits for ratepayers.

I think it is fair to say that Sutton has not had a bad settlement. I would be fairer to say that Sutton had rather a good settlement. If its overall spending goes up in line with inflation—4·5 per cent.—we estimate that its rates need only go up by 5·2 per cent. That will be as little as 2·7 per cent. if Sutton can repeat last year's use of balances. If it can get its spending below that figure, rates rises could be even lower.

I hope that I have provided additional information which I am sure my hon. Friends can take back to help mitigate some of the differences between the borough's estimate of expenditure next year and our own. Therefore, the message I should leave with my hon. Friends is to urge the council to keep up its record of exemplary housekeeping. The rewards for its ratepayers will be great.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Two o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 20 January 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Trespass

Mr. Stern asked the Attorney-General if he has any plans to seek to amend the law of trespass, to speed up the process of eviction of illegal itinerant occupiers of private or public-owned land.

The Attorney-General: No. It is considered that there is already available both in the High Court and county courts a summary procedure which enables an order for recovery of possession of land to be made very quickly in such cases.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cormorants

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the number of applications for licences to kill cormorants received in 1984 and 1985; and what was the number granted, the number of cormorants allowed to be killed, and the number of cormorants killed, with, in each case, the location and the reason for the killing.

Mrs. Fenner: Twelve applications for licences to kill cormorants were received by Agricultural Departments in England and Wales in 1984, of which four were granted. In 1985, five applications were received, of which one was granted. Details of licences granted in 1984 and 1985 are as follows:

Location	*Nature and extent of damage*	*Maximum number permitted to be killed*	*Number actually taken*
1984			
Blithfield reservoir, Staffs	Serious damage to trout stocks	10	*
Withington pools, Wilmslow, Cheshire (2licences)	Serious damage to trout stocks	(i) 10 (ii) 5	4 4
Maldon, Essex	Serious damage to trout stocks	10	9
Wales: Cefni reservoir, Anglesey	Serious damage to trout stocks	6	*
1985			
Maldon, Essex	Serious damage to trout stocks	10	†

* Nil.
† Nil to date (Licence expires November 1986).

Trout

Mr. Key asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the question from the hon. Member for Salisbury on 18 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *275*, whether his Department has concluded its survey to assess levels of antimicrobial agents in the edible tissues of trout; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The survey to assess levels of antimicrobial agents in the edible tissues of trout is still in progress.

Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the contribution of the Greater Manchester and Merseyside county councils to the revenues of the Lancashire and Western sea fisheries joint committee in 1985-86 in cash and as a proportion of the total precept-borne revenue.

Mr. Gummer: I understand from the Lancashire and Western sea fisheries joint committee that the contributions to its revenue in 1985-86 of Greater Manchester and Merseyside metropolitan county councils were £94,043 and £56,024 respectively and that these represented 32·6 per cent. and 19·4 per cent. of the total precept-borne revenue.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the future of the Lancashire and Western sea fisheries joint committee following the abolition of the Greater Manchester and Merseyside county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The effect of the abolition of the Greater Manchester and Merseyside county councils on the future of the Lancashire and Western sea fisheries joint committee will depend upon the outcome of consultations which are at present taking place with the district councils in these areas, which will inherit the relevant powers of the metropolitan county councils.

Fish (Mercury Levels)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present safety limit for concentrations of mercury in the flesh of fish caught for human consumption; and when that limit was last revised.

Mrs. Fenner: There are no statutory levels for the presence of mercury in food in the United Kingdom. The World Health Organisation in 1972 recommended that the tolerable level of intake for methyl mercury from all sources is 0·2 milligrams per week. As part of its programme of control of pollution of the aquatic environment the EC laid down in 1982 a specific limit of 0·3 milligram per kilogram of mercury in fish flesh.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average concentration of mercury present in fish caught in the sea areas regulated by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: 0.27 milligrams per kilogram.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Exploration

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library details of the recipients, and prospective recipients, of licences to prospect for lignite and petroleum in Northern Ireland together with a map of the areas of exploration.

Dr. Boyson: On 10 December 1985 I announced the intention of the Department of Economic Development to award two petroleum licences and three prospecting licences for lignite. Details of these prospective licensees and of the holders of two existing petroleum licences and one lignite prospecting licence were included in a press release. I have made arrangements for the Library to receive a copy of this press release together with a map of Northern Ireland showing the areas which are currently licensed for petroleum or lignite exploration and the areas for which the Department's intention to award licences has been announced.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what ports of entry will be used for spent fast reactor fuel for the reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Goodlad: The planning application from the UKAEA and BNFL to construct a demonstration fast reactor reprocessing plant at Dounreay has been called in by the Secretary of State for Scotland and will be the subject of a public local inquiry starting on 7 April.

I am advised that the applicants have, at his request, informed the reporter to the inquiry that their present preferred port options are (in alphabetical order):

Cromarty Firth (Alness/Invergordon/Nigg)
Scrabster.

They have, however, told the reporter that in view of the fact that transport would not commence until the 1990s they would not require to make a decision as to their final choice of port for some years. That decision would be made in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much prototype fast reactor fuel has been recovered at Dounreay since 1979 from the prototype fast reactor core and from the prototype fast reactor blanket; how much was reprocessed each calendar year; and how much plutonium was extracted from each in each year.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised that the prototype fast reactor (PFR) fuel reprocessing plant first reprocessed PFR fuel in 1980 and throughput has kept pace with the arisings from the reactor. The amount of PFR core sub-assemblies reprocessed and the plutonium output from that reprocessing for each calendar year since 1980 is as follows. None of the breeder blanket sub-assemblies has been reprocessed.

Year	Uranium + Plutonium (kg)	Plutonium Output (kg)
1980	1,181	0
1981	814	173
1982	1,206	179
1983	0	142
1984	539	124
1985	2,422	365
Total	6,162	983

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what quantity of the prototype fast reactor fuel recovered at Dounreay was processed elsewhere; how much of the plutonium and uranium recovered was recycled into new prototype fast reactor fuel rods; and what is the weight of plutonium and uranium in each fuel rod and each fuel sub-assembly before and after irradiation.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised that prototype fast reactor (PFR) fuel has been reprocessed only at Dounreay. Except for relatively small amounts used in experimental work associated with the PFR fuel cycle, all plutonium so recovered at Dounreay is transferred to British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) Sellafield for fabrication into new sub-assemblies for use within the PFR fuel cycle. The uranium recovered is retained in store at Dounreay. The weight of plutonium and uranium in each sub-assembly before and after irradiation varies with experimental and operational requirements and with the zone in which it is placed in the reactor.

Waddilove Committee

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he will be publishing the Government's response to the Waddilove committee on compensation for subsidence damage; and if he will give the reasons for the delay;

(2) how many representations he has received seeking publication of the response to the Waddilove committee on compensation for subsidence damage; and what responses he has made.

Mr. David Hunt: The Waddilove report raised a number of complex issues which deserve — and are receiving — full and careful consideration; the Government's response will be published as soon as possible. I have replied on these lines to a number of interested parties, including Members of this House and representatives of agricultural and commercial bodies, whose inquiries I welcome and who continue to keep me informed of their views.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Members' Bills

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to the answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *441*, about the allowance to hon. Members for assistance in drafting private Members' Bills, he has any plans to increase the allowance.

Mr. Biffen: I have no present plans to propose any increase in this allowance. During the last four Sessions there have only been five applications from hon. Members for this form of assistance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women and Children (Assaults)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he derives from health sources about the incidence of assaults on women and children.

Mr. Mellor: None at present. For the purpose of research on the incidence of such assaults, it has been found more useful and practicable to make use of data from the British crime survey and, for offences against children, the NSPCC's child abuse registration system.

Prisons (Maintenance)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which major prison works developments have been held up as a result of the prison department's decisions communicated to prison governors in August 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The letting of contracts for the following major capital building schemes was deferred in order to keep within the cash limit on the relevant vote sub-head:

Prisons	*Building Schemes*
Albany	Fire precautionary measures in woodmill
Aylesbury	Wing segregation
Birmingham	Commissioning of staff facilities
Brockhill	New visits and reception unit
Bullwood Hall	Security fence
Channings Wood	Additional living unit
Durham	Staff mess
Erlestoke	Further redevelopment
Frankland	Staff facilities and car park extension
Manchester	New hospital
Onley	Extension to visits, reception and administration units
Pentonville	Conversion of bathhouse to showers
Risley	Additional car parking
Stocken	Commissioning work
Thorn Cross	Commissioning work

Contracts for some of these schemes have now been let; the remainder will follow during the next few months.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what types of maintenance and improvement work in prisons have been delayed as a result of the prison department's decision communicated to prison governors in August 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The non-urgent maintenance and improvement work delayed as a result of the measures taken to deal with the increased levels of the prison population included schemes of the following kinds:

(a) House block renovation, and repairs to the fabric of other prison buildings, including workshops and ancillary accommodation.
(b) Improvements to boiler houses and plant rooms and other electrical and mechanical work.
(c) Repairs to roads and paths.
(d) Upgrading and repair of drainage, water mains and sewage works.
(e) Repairs to security walls and fences.
(f) Upgrading and repair of staff facilities.
(g) Other miscellaneous items.

All the projects that have been deferred will be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity once funds become available.

Police Car Accidents

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* all accidents involving the death of a police officer or a member of the public as a result of police car accidents for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available centrally. We have asked that for the future we collect information on police vehicle accidents involving death or serious injury, and proposals as to the precise means of doing so are being considered by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Nationality Division

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his estimate of *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the income of the nationality division in 1986-87;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost in 1986-87 of providing extra advice, information and publicity to people whose right to registration under the British Nationality Act 1981 expires at the end of 1987.

Mr. Waddington: Detailed estimates including estimates for the cost of publicity are currently being produced in the light of the overall planning assumptions announced in the White Paper on Public Expenditure published on 15 January.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers seeking admission as visitors were required to submit to further examination by nationality and outcome of the case at terminal 3 Heathrow during the latest three-month period.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not readily available in the form requested. In the period 1 October to 31 December 1985 the total number of passengers who were *(a)* required to submit to further examination and *(b)* subsequently refused entry at terminal 3 Heathrow was as follows:

	(a) Further examination	*(b) Refused*
October	1,462	996
November	1,203	706
December	1,392	783

At terminal 3 in 1985 some 75 per cent. of all passengers required to submit to further examination and 68 per cent. of all passengers refused entry initially sought entry as visitors.

Criminal Injury Compensation Policy

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the objectives of his Department's criminal injury compensation policy; how he is monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy is to make available public funds for the compensation of innocent victims of violent crime by way of the criminal injuries compensation scheme. Under the terms of the scheme, the Criminal

Injuries Compensation Board is exclusively responsible for the consideration and determination of individual applications for compensation. The board's annual report, however, enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to keep the general working of the scheme under review.

Warsaw Pact Sailors (Shore Leave)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many individuals came ashore from Warsaw pact ships during 1985 at Ullapool, Aberdeen, Stornoway and Leith;

(2) what steps are taken as a matter of routine to seek to ensure that crewmen from ships of Warsaw pact nations are properly documented and recorded when disembarking for shore leave in British ports.

Mr. Waddington: Under section 8 of the Immigration Act crew members are normally exempted from the provision to obtain formal permission from an immigration officer before going ashore. They are required to leave the port with the ship. The master is required to provide a crew list and to report any deserter. These provisions apply at all United Kingdom ports and they apply to non-British crew members of all nationalities, without distinction. Records are not kept of seamen coming ashore in this way. Warsaw pact ships are visited for the purpose of checking crews, but it would not be appropriate to disclose the detail or frequency of these arrangements.

Women Police Officers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the increase in absolute and percentage terms in women police officers employed by each police force in each year since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is as follows:

Number of women police officers in England and Wales

On 31 December	*1979*	*1980*		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*30 November 1985*		*Variation since 1979*	
	strength	*strength*		*strength*		*strength*		*strength*		*strength*		*strength*		*actual*	*per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	180	+8	188	+9	197	−4	193	+7	200	—	200	+1	201	+21	+11·66
Bedfordshire	80	+5	85	−4	81	+5	86	+9	95	+7	102	—	102	+22	+27·50
Cambridgeshire	91	−6	85	+4	89	+6	95	−2	93	+5	98	+7	105	+14	+15·38
Cheshire	184	+14	198	+11	209	−1	208	+4	212	−7	205	+3	208	+24	+13·04
Cleveland	152	−1	151	+5	156	−11	145	+2	147	+2	149	−2	147	−5	−3·28
Cumbria	71	+2	73	+2	75	−4	71	+6	77	—	77	+3	80	+9	+12·67
Derbyshire	177	+7	184	−9	175	+2	177	−1	176	−2	174	+4	178	+1	+0·56
Devon and Cornwall	185	+22	207	+1	208	+32	240	+8	248	+14	262	+2	264	+79	+42·70
Dorset	106	+3	109	+3	112	+3	115	−1	114	−5	109	+5	114	+8	+7·54
Durham	95	−4	91	—	91	−5	86	−6	80	−7	73	+12	85	−10	−10·52
Dyfed Powys	62	+5	67	−2	65	—	65	+4	69	+5	74	+10	84	+22	+35·48
Essex	203	+28	231	−2	229	+5	234	+4	238	+15	253	−11	242	+39	+19·21
Gloucestershire	79	+13	92	+6	98	+3	101	—	101	−5	96	+10	106	+27	+34·17
Greater Manchester	801	+65	866	−19	847	+1	848	−23	825	−27	798	+12	810	+9	+1·12
Gwent	59	+1	60	+4	64	+7	71	−5	66	+3	69	—	69	+10	+16·94
Hampshire	185	+21	206	−1	205	+20	225	+5	230	+4	234	+18	252	+67	+36·21
Hertfordshire	157	+14	171	+11	182	−5	177	−4	173	−3	170	+3	173	+16	+10·19
Humberside	160	+6	166	−3	163	−15	148	+9	157	−10	147	+2	149	−11	−6·87
Kent	288	+19	307	−2	305	+4	309	−11	298	+2	300	−12	288	—	—
Lancashire	212	+10	222	+15	237	−1	236	−1	235	−5	230	−11	219	+7	+3·30
Leicestershire	155	+21	176	−2	174	+1	175	−2	173	+2	175	+7	182	+27	+17·41
Lincolnshire	73	+2	75	−3	72	+2	74	+1	75	−3	72	+7	79	+6	+8·21
Merseyside	503	+11	514	+2	516	−8	508	−3	505	−1	504	+8	512	+9	+1·78
Norfolk	64	+7	71	+6	77	+4	81	+11	92	−1	91	—	91	+27	+42·18
Northamptonshire	53	+1	54	+8	62	+4	66	+13	79	+5	84	+3	87	+34	+64·15
Northumbria	215	+1	216	−2	214	−7	207	+15	222	+11	233	−1	232	+17	+7·90
North Wales	96	+7	103	—	103	−3	100	−5	95	+8	103	−7	96	—	—
North Yorkshire	97	−5	92	−2	90	+3	93	−7	86	+5	91	+18	109	+12	+12·37
Nottinghamshire	152	−6	146	—	146	—	146	−4	142	−11	131	+5	136	−16	−10·52
South Wales	141	—	141	−6	135	+21	156	+7	163	+22	185	—	185	+44	+31·20
South Yorkshire	262	+20	282	—	282	−6	276	+1	277	+6	283	−4	279	+7	+2·67
Staffordshire	148	+31	179	+8	187	+7	194	+11	205	+20	225	+8	233	+85	+57·43
Suffolk	84	+6	90	−4	86	+6	92	−1	91	−4	87	+4	91	+7	+8·33
Surrey	133	+28	161	+3	164	+5	169	−5	164	+5	169	+6	175	+42	+31·57
Sussex	202	+15	217	+12	229	−9	220	+4	224	+13	237	+7	244	+42	+20·79
Thames Valley	195	+62	257	+11	268	+23	291	+20	311	+4	315	−1	314	+119	+61·02
Warwickshire	79	—	79	+6	85	−3	82	−4	78	—	78	−4	74	−5	−6·32
West Mercia	180	+24	204	—	204	−1	203	+6	209	—	209	+13	222	+42	+23·33
West Midlands	748	+113	861	+33	894	+12	906	−7	899	−41	858	+15	873	+125	+16·71
West Yorkshire	466	+39	505	+13	518	—	518	−12	506	−20	486	−10	476	+10	+2·14
Wiltshire	94	+4	98	−14	84	+2	86	−1	85	—	85	+1	86	−8	−8·51
City of London	70	+8	78	+2	80	—	80	−2	78	—	78	+1	79	+9	+12·85
Metropolitan	1,735	+337	2,072	+242	2,314	+148	2,462	+21	2,483	+1	2,484	+60	2,544	+809	+46·62
TOTAL	9,472	+958	10,430	+342	10,772	+243	11,015	+61	11,076	+7	11,083	+182	11,265	+1,793	+18·92

European Court of Human Rights (Right of Petition)

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's Government intend to restore the right of individual petition by people resident in the Isle of Man to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Her Majesty's Government have asked the Isle of Man Government whether they wish Her Majesty's Government to make a declaration on the Island's behalf recognising the right of individual petition to the European Commission of Human Rights. Their reply is awaited.

Corporal and Capital Punishment

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for a referendum on the issue of corporal and capital punishment.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Television Licences

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many colour television licences were issued in Wales in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information about the number of colour television licences issued in Wales in the course of a particular year is not readily available, but the number of such licences which were in force in the area covered by the Wales and Marches Postal Board as at 31 December 1979 was 779,667. The comparable figure for 30 November 1985 was 981,875.

Ms. Sue Pitman

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an urgent investigation into the circumstances that resulted in the physical injuries to Ms. Sue Pitman, at the site of the Carmarthen district council peacetime emergency control centre on Saturday 11 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inquiry into the incidents at Carmarthen on 11 January, in which a member of CND-CYMRU was injured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I was sorry to hear of the injury suffered by Ms. Pitman. I understand that allegations have been made to the police in respect of the incident and these are being investigated. It would not be proper for me to comment further while the investigation is proceeding. However, I have asked the chief constable to provide me with a report when this investigation is concluded.

Community Radio Stations

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to assess local public opinion on competing applications for community radio station licences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend's selection of the successful applicants for the experimental community radio licences will be made in the light of advice from the advisory panel on community radio, which has taken account of the level of public support that different stations might attract. The aim of the experiment is to test the viability of and scope for a range of different types of community radio stations set up and financed in different ways, so that other considerations are also relevant to selections in individual areas.

Park Rangers (Wirral)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has now been able to confirm the byelaws to give park rangers greater control over dogs and dog owners using parks in Wirral.

Mr. Mellor: The byelaws adopted by Wirral council to regulate their parks were confirmed on 26 September and came into operation on 9 October.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a date has now been set for the abolition of the district command structure and the transfer of responsibilities to the area and division headquarters in the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No firm date has yet been fixed for the formal dismantling of the district structure, but this is expected to take place in the spring. An essential preliminary to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities and functions when the districts are finally abolished has been the setting up of the new area headquarters. Almost all the commanders designated for area posts have now moved to their new locations. Where this has involved transferring commanders from districts, the posts thereby vacated are not being filled but a chief superintendent has in each case been appointed to take responsibility for district-related functions whilst the districts remain.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 21 November 1985, *Official Report*, column 272, whether he is now in a position to give the information requested in relation to any of the squads and units referred to; if he expects consultation to be completed and decisions made before the districts are abolished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply shortly.

Security Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek powers for the licensing of security guards employed by private security organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Shaw: No. The Government continue to support the steps which have been taken by the British Security Industry Association and the International Professional Security Association towards self regulation of the private security industry.

Immigration

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when immigration officers will be issued with

instructions concerning British citizen children, seeking to enter the United Kingdom from Bangladesh, being required to prove paternity by blood tests; and if he will publish these instructions.

Mr. Waddington: There is no such requirement.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to introduce any requirement to obtain prior entry clearance on those settled in Bangladesh who wish to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 5 December at col. *311*.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards acceptance of blood tests as offering conclusive evidence of family relationships;

(2) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards acceptance of the genetic finger printing test as conclusive evidence of family relationship.

Mr. Waddington: The weight of evidence before the courts is a matter of the courts and not for Her Majesty's Government.

In the context of immigration, conventional blood tests do not in general offer conclusive evidence of family relationships. The newly-developed DNA test offers the prospect of such evidence. Preparations are accordingly being made to assess the acceptability and feasibility of using it in immigration cases.

SCOTLAND

A1 Road

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish information on the volume and speed of traffic on the A1 road in East Lothian for the last 10 years.

Mr. Ancram: The following table provides the most up to date information available on vehicle counts on various sections of the A1 trunk road in East Lothian:

	Vehicles per day
Cockburnspath to Dunbar	
August 1975	5,922
August 1978	6,706
August 1979	6,353
October 1984	4,892
Dunbar to Haddington	
August 1975	9,137
August 1979	11,315
June 1981	6,356
Haddington to Macmerry	
August 1976	10,676
August 1979	11,439
Tranent to Wallyford	
August 1975	14,481
August 1977	12,489
Wallyford to East Musselburgh	
August 1978	17,832
October 1980	18,217

There is no recording of the speed of traffic on the A1 except for ad hoc measurements, for example to assess the need for speed limits.

Macauley Institute of Soil Research (Merger)

Mr. Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any estimate has been made of savings which may be achieved by merging the Macauley Institute of Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation on the Macauley site in Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the estimated savings expected to be achieved by the proposed merger of the Macauley Institute of Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation on a combined site in Edinburgh;

(3) what is the estimated cost for transferring staff of the Macauley Institute of Soil Research from Aberdeen to Edinburgh for employment at the Hill Farming Research Organisation site;

(4) what is the estimated site value of land and buildings of the Macauley Institute of Soil Research at Aberdeen.

Mr. John MacKay: No detailed estimates have yet been made of the costs and savings likely to be involved through location of the new institute at either of the two main possible sites. The feasibility study will require to include assessments of the costs of staff transfers, the value of land and buildings and other financial, administrative and scientific aspects relevant to the consideration of the most appropriate location for the new institute.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations have been held with the Macaulay Trust on the proposed merger of the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation on a site in Edinburgh.

Mr. John MacKay: None so far, but consultation with representatives of the Council of Management of the Institute, which holds in trust the land occupied by the institute, will be undertaken in the further studies which have now been launched.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff will be employed by a combined Macaulay Institute of Soil Research and Hill Farming Research Organisation on a site in Edinburgh and how many staff will be transferred from Aberdeen.

Mr. John MacKay: No decisions can be taken about the number of staff to be employed by the new amalgamated Institute, or how many staff of the existing Scottish agricultural research institutes will be required to transfer from their existing place of employment until agreement has been reached on the precise remit of the new institute, on other questions relating to the location, organisation and staffing of the new institute, and on the allocation of the present work of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research to the Scottish agricultural colleges and the Scottish Crop Research Institute.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he will have with trade union representatives of those employed at the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research in Aberdeen on conditions for staff involved in the proposed merger with the Hill Farming Research Organisation in Edinburgh.

Mr. John MacKay: A meeting has been arranged between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants to discuss a number of issues arising from the paper "Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development". Further discussions with trade union representatives will be arranged on specific issues as appropriate.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the remit of the feasibility study into the proposed merger of the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation on a site in Edinburgh; and if a merger on the Macaulay site in Aberdeen will be considered.

Mr. John MacKay: The arrangements for the feasibility study, including the remit, are under active consideration with the various interests concerned. The study will include an assessment of the relative merits of both the Bush Estate, Edinburgh and Aberdeen as a location for the new institute.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the personnel who will conduct the feasibility study into the proposed merger of the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation on a site in Edinburgh.

Mr. John MacKay: Ths study will be conducted by officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland reporting to a Steering Committee comprising the directors of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, the Hill Farming Research Organisation, the Scottish Crop Research Institute and the Secretary-General of the Council of Scottish Agricultural Colleges, as well as senior officials of the Department.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Postal Services (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he discussed with the chairman of the Post Office at their meeting of 24 October the state of postal services in Gwynedd.

Mr. Pattie: No, that is an operational matter for the Post Office Board.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, during the recent visit to the United Kingdom of the Iraqi Foreign Minister, he had any discussions concerning loans or credits to Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: We had no discussion of any substance on this subject.

Soviet Union (British Books)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many British books have been republished in the Soviet Union during the last five years; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in this regard.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Statistics on the numbers of British books republished in the Soviet Union are not collected. In the United Kingdom-USSR educational, scientific and cultural agreement of 1959, the two Governments agreed, inter alia, to encourage co-operation in the field of publishing and the exchange of books. Her Majesty's Government continue to support co-operation in this and other fields on the basis of mutual benefit.

Scotch House Group (Trade Mark)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what basis a trade mark based on the lion rampant symbol has been granted to the Scotch House retail group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Trade marks embodying lions rempant in various forms have been registered to the Scotch House group and various other concerns over many years. The registrations cover a variety of goods. They have been made on the basis that a lion rampant is in itself registerable as a trade mark, subject to the general rules governing registration. The fact that a lion rampant may sometimes appear as part of a national emblem or flag does not disqualify a device of this type from registration in its own right.

Trade Marks

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the criteria governing decisions on applications for the registering of national symbols as trade marks.

Mr. Pattie: In the United Kingdom, there is a statutory bar to the registration as trade marks of the royal arms, royal crowns and the royal and national flags. Similarly, these may not be included as elements of registered trade marks. The United Kingdom also observes the Paris convention for the protection of Industrial Property. This provides, inter alia, that emblems of the states subscribing to the convention shall not be registered as trade marks nor shall trade marks be registered in which those emblems appear as elements. The registrar ensures that these prohibitions are observed.

Applications for the registration in their own right of commonplace elements which sometimes figure in national symbols eg a lion or unicorn or thistle or leek are considered on their merits against the more general criteria for registration. There is no statutory bar to their registration.

Financial Institutions (Investment Practices)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *717*, if he will indicate the nature of the investigations which took place into the investment practices of the financial institutions as part of his Department's recent review of regional policy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In their recent review the Government invited views on a wide range of regional industrial policy issues, and received almost 500 submissions in response. The investment practices of financial institutions were the subject of little or no comment in these responses.

Lloyd's

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will publish the date of the

commencement of the inquiry into Lloyd's; and if he will give an assurance that the inquiry will be completed before the Financial Services Bill completes all its parliamentary stages;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the members of the inquiry into Lloyd's.

Mr. Howard: While the inquiry will begin work as soon as possible, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. and learned Friend said in the House during the Second Reading debate on the Financial Services Bill on 14 January and in my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 15 January.

GEC-Plesseys (Takeover)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received opposing the takeover bid by the General Electric Company for Plesseys.

Mr. Howard: It is the normal practice to treat as confidential representations on merger matters, and it would therefore not be appropriate to comment on them.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now refer the proposed takeover of Plesseys by the General Electric Company to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the official record of his meeting with Sir Raymond Lygo of 8 January was submitted to him for approval before it was finalised; and why the minute of the meeting on 8 January was not signed until 10 January.

Mr. Brittan: The record was read to me over the telephone. The meeting concluded at 17.40 on 8 January, the note was dictated on 9 January, and signed, dated and circulated about lunchtime on 10 January, following confirmation by all those present from the Department that it was an accurate record.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the draft manuscript notes of 8 January, taken by officials, recorded at his meeting with Sir Raymond Lygo.

Mr. Brittan: No.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what other minutes or records were made by officials in his Department of his meeting with Sir Raymond Lygo on 8 January other than the single published record sent to the private secretary of the Minister of State, dated 10 January.

Mr. Brittan: The record prepared by my private secretary, and published on 15 January, was circulated following confirmation by all those present from the Department that it was an accurate record.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if at any time in his conversation with Sir Raymond Lygo on 8 January the question of British Aerospace's withdrawal from the European consortium on Westland helicopters was discussed.

Mr. Brittan: No.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he proposed at his meeting on 8 January to Sir Raymond Lygo, following his statement that the European consortium bid might affect sales of the A 320.

Mr. Brittan: I said I was ready to act immediately in defending British Aerospace's interest.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has had any discussions with representatives of the United States Government about whether the involvement of Fiat in the offer to Westland would bring the company within the United States trade embargo with Libya.

Mr. Brittan: No.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what access Mr. Jeffrey Archer has been given to his Department's papers relating to Westland.

Mr. Brittan: None.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he expected to be consulted by British Aerospace prior to its joining the European consortium on Westlands.

Mr. Brittan: I did not expect to be consulted. I said it might have been helpful if British Aerospace had spoken to me.

British Telecom

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the number of British Telecom shareholders now holding *(a)* between one and 399 shares, *(b)* between 400 and 700 shares, *(c)* between 800 and 1,599 shares and *(d)* between 1,600 and 1 billion shares; and if he will state for each of the categories *(a)* to *(d)* (i) what is the number of shares, and (ii) what percentage of the total shares, including the Government's, that represents.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie: While this is properly a matter for British Telecom, I understand that the latest information available, showing the pattern of shareholdings at 30 November 1985, is as set out in the table. Figures for category (ii) are only available for holdings between 400 and 799 shares.

Size of holdings	*Number of holdings*	*Percentage of total*	*Number of shares held (millions)*	*Percentage of total*
(i) 1-399	472,025	28·6	93	1·6
(ii) 400-799	793,786	48·1	362	6·0

Size of holdings	Number of holdings	Percentage of total	Number of shares held (millions)	Percentage of total
(iii) 800-1,599	356,772	21·6	289	4·8
(iv) 1,600-1,000 million and above	27,139	1·7	5,256	87·6
Totals	1,649,722	100	6,000	100

Category (iv) includes the Government shareholding of 2,988 millions shares, or 49·8 per cent. of total shares.

Privatisation

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East on Wednesday 15 January, *Official Report*, column 1060, he will list those businesses which are intended to be wholly returned to the private sector during the current Parliament.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders aims to sell its remaining warship building yards by 31 March 1986. It is my right hon. and learned Friend's intention that, subject to market conditions, Rolls Royce should be returned to the private sector within the lifetime of this Parliament. Decisions on the method and timing of returning other businesses to the private sector will be announced when they have been taken.

House of Fraser

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any discussions took place between representatives of the Sultan of Brunei and his Department on the takeover of the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No such discussions took place.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, pursuant to the answer of 16 January to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) his Department received any other representations apart from the request from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, seeking an extension of the period for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report on the merger reference of Lonrho and House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry received no other representations on the question of extension of the period for the MMC report.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information was available to his Department as to the interests of Mohammed Fayed or representatives of the Sultan of Brunei in the takeover of the House of Fraser before his predecessor's statement on the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 14 March 1985 that on the information before him he had decided not to refer the proposed acquisition of House of Fraser by Alfayed Investment Holdings plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is the normal practice to treat as confidential representations on merger matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will seek the permission of Mr. R. W. Rowland, chief executive of Lonrho, to publish in the *Official Report* the letter to him from Mr. Rowland of December 1985 regarding the takeover of the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* his reply to the letter he received in December 1985 from Mr. R. W. Rowland, chief executive of Lonrho, regarding the takeover of the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Counterfeiting

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new measures he proposes to combat the counterfeiting of manufactured goods in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *591*]: The existing laws covered trade descriptions, trade marks, copyright, patents, designs, and passing-off provide an effective framework of protection to deal with counterfeit manufactured goods in the United Kingdom. Some proposals for change have been put forward by the Anti-Counterfeiting Group, which represents firms in a range of industries, and these form the subject of current discussions between the Group and my officials. I shall carefully consider what action could or should be taken in the light of these discussions.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the share of the total world market which has been held by the United Kingdom aerospace industry in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *632*]: Information on the share of the total aerospace market, as distinct from the share of total aerospace exports, is not readily available. The United Kingdom industry's share of exports of aircraft and associated equipment by the non-communist world for 1975-1984 has been as follows:

Year	United Kingdom share of world exports percentage
1975	9
1976	8
1977	9
1978	10
1979	9
1980	12
1981	10

Year	United Kingdom share of world exports percentage
1982	11
1983	12
1984	11

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the share of the total European aerospace market which has been held by the United Kingdom aerospace industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *632*]: Because many countries do not provide a complete breakdown of trade by region for aerospace goods, it is not possible to estimate reliably the United Kingdom industry's share of the aerospace exports of non-communist countries to western Europe.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Project Aid

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the current projects which will involve official aid totalling more than £10 million.

Mr. Raison: Current projects involving bilateral aid funds of over £10 million as at the end of 1984 are as follows.

Country	Title
Overseas Development Administration direct	
Bangladesh	Ashuganj power station
Bangladesh	Pumps for deep tubewells
Bangladesh	Tea rehabilitation
Bangladesh	Dhaka power distribution system
Botswana	Moropule power station
Brazil	Jacui power station
Egypt	Cairo wastewater project
Gibraltar	Dockyard conversion
India	Forestry Mysore papermills
India	Orissa family welfare
India	Fertiliser education for farmers
India	Karnataka social forestry
India	Amlori coal mine
India	Hazira fertiliser plant
India	Housing and urban development corporation
India	Coal-mining projects Nos. 1 and 2
India	Thal Vaishet fertiliser plant
India	Agricultural refinancing development corporation
India	Rihand power station
India	BALCO power project
Indonesia	Mrica hydro-electric project
Kenya	Upper Tana reservoir extension
Kenya	Private natural resources development
Kenya	Kiambere hydro-electric power
Kenya	Thuchi-Nkubu road
Nepal	Dharan/Dhankuta road
Pakistan	Port Qasim
Pakistan	Salinity control (SCARP VI) in irrigation systems
Pakistan	Railway development
Sri Lanka	Victoria dam and hydro-electricity
Sudan	Electricity and water: Power III
Tanzania	Songea/Makambako road
Turkey	Beypazari lignite mine
Through the Commonwealth Development Corporation	
Cameroon	Cameroon Development Corporation
Costa Rica	Electric power dams
Indonesia	Tree Crops—nucleus estates/smallholders VI
Indonesia	Tree Crops—nucleus estates/smallholders VII
Papua New Guinea	Cape Rodney cocoa estates
Sri Lanka	Pelwatte Sugar
Thailand	Rubber replanting programme
Zambia	Chingola copper mine expansion

Comparable information for the end of 1985 will be available within the next two months.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amount of aid allocated to each country over the past 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Raison: Figures of total aid to each individual country for 1984 are set out in detail in table 18 of "British Aid Statistics 1980-1984", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Figures for 1985 are expected to be published in July.

Nicaragua

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions he gave to the German executive director concerning the report to the executive board of the Inter-American Development Bank meeting on 15 January about the proposed loan for agriculture to Nicaragua; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Raison: Discussion of this report has been postponed until 5 March, at the request of the executive director representing Nicaragua. It is not our policy to disclose the nature of instructions to the executive director of the constituency which contains the United Kingdom.

WALES

Re-Chem International (Panteg Site)

10. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of representations to that effect received from Torfaen district council and Gwent county council, he will make it his policy to hold a public inquiry prior to deciding on the request for a grant from Re-Chem International in respect of its Panteg site.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. An offer of a grant has already been made.

Pwllpeiran Experimental Hill Farm

13. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit Pwllpeiran experimental hill farm in Cwmystwyth, Cardiganshire, during 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have visited the farm on several occasions in the past but have no plans to visit it again at the present.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total numbers registered as unemployed in Caernarfon and Wales in 1979 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 December 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Bangor and Caernarfon travel-to-work area totalled 5,261. The figure for Wales was 181,496. Comparable 1979 figures for the Bangor and Caernarfon travel-to-work areas are not available because of changes to area boundaries. The December 1979 figure for Wales was 78,476.

17. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in Wales; how many were unemployed in 1979; and by how much unemployment has increased, both as a total and as a percentage.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 December 1985 there were 181,496 unemployed claimants in Wales. The corresponding figure in December 1979 was an estimated 78,476 and the increase between the two dates is 103,020 or 131·3 per cent.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

16. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the pupil-teacher ratio overall in maintained schools in Wales; and what was the corresponding figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The pupil-teacher ratio overall, for all maintained schools in Wales, excluding special schools, was 17·6 in 1984-85. The corresponding figure for 1978-79 was 18·2.

Infant Mortality

18. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage reduction there has been in infant mortality rates in Wales in each of the last four five-year periods; and what information he has on comparable figures in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Sweden.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I welcome the evidence in the following figures that Wales has shared in the very substantial reduction in infant mortality in western Europe.

The percentage reduction in infant mortality rates, ie deaths under 1 year per 1,000 live births is as follows:

	1960 to 1965	*1965 to 1970*	*1970 to 1975*	*1975 to 1980*	**1980 to 1984*
Wales	19·8	7·9	22·5	21·4	22·8
England	12·5	3·7	13·7	23·6	21·7
Scotland	12·5	15·2	12·2	29·7	14·9
West Germany	29·3	1·3	16·5	36·0	†18·3
France	20·1	16·9	24·2	27·5	‡6·0
Sweden	19·9	17·3	24·5	16·9	7·2

* Information for 1985 not yet available.
† Information for 1984 not yet available.
‡ Information for 1983 and 1984 not yet available.

Farmers (Severe Weather Aid)

19. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will consider granting assistance for those farmers whose farms were badly affected by the weather last summer but which lay outside the boundaries of the parishes which qualify for aid.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Although most farmers were affected by the bad summer, I am not prepared to go back on the difficult decisions that were taken and announced in November, which concentrated assistance on those in the most disadvantaged areas.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the Government's assumption for the percentage increase in pay within local government services in Wales when the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86 was first published; and what is his latest estimate of the increase in pay within local government in Wales for the same period.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Government do not make specific assumptions about pay for local authority employees. If local authorities, as employers, concede excessive pay settlements, they cannot expect the Government to provide additional resources. Pay awards should not lead automatically to higher spending nor should they result in higher rate bills. Councils should seek to absorb any additional costs through better use of resources and by achieving better value for money. The increase in expenditure on pay during 1985-86 will not be known until authorities submit their revenue outturn returns later this year.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what correction he has published following the error contained in his briefing notes for editors (Ref. FD/S/40/D7) published by his Department in relation to the rate support grant settlement of 18 December 1985, which wrongly calculated the potential for rate reduction in the Arfon area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The rating projections for Arfon contained in the Briefing Note for editors issued in relation to the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement did not take full account of the increase in rateable value resulting from the opening of Dinorwic power station. Allowing for this gives a projected rate increase of 1·6 per cent., if the authority spends 5 per cent. more than this year.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an assurance that targets for local authority spending in Wales will not be re-introduced in 1987-88.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans at present to re-introduce targets in 1987-88. Decisions about the rate support grant mechanisms for that year will be taken towards the end of the year.

Water Supplies

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the most recent figures for the nitrate levels found in public drinking water supplies in Wales compared with acceptable standards.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh water authority annual report and accounts 1984-85—a copy of which is in the Library — indicates that all supplies of water passing into the distribution system were well below the 50mg/1 nitrate limit set by the EC Directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC).

Expenditure Plans

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an analysis of the expenditure shown in table 3.17 of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89", Cmnd. 9702 II, on a similar basis to tables 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14 of the same publication.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is set out in the following tables. In all the tables the totals have been derived from unrounded figures and thus the components may not always add exactly to the totals shown.

Table 16.1 Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	*1981-82 Outturn*	*1982-83 Outturn*	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Estimated Outturn*	*1986-87 Plans*	*1987-88 Plans*	*1988-89 Plans*
INTERVENTION BOARD FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND OTHER EC EXPENDITURE									
Market Regulations and Production Support	5	12	9	19	23	44	26	30	30
Agency Payments	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	—	—
TOTAL IBAP AND OTHER EC EXPENDITURE	5	12	9	20	24	45	27	30	30
DOMESTIC AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD									
National Market Support	6	—	—	—	2	2	2	—	—
Structural Measures for Agriculture	46	41	52	58	52	58	44	50	50
Animal Health	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Agriculture and Food Services	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Support for the Fishing Industry	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	—	—
TOTAL DOMESTIC AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD	55	42	53	59	55	61	50	50	50
TOTAL AGRICULTUR, FISHERIES AND FOOD (WALES)	60	54	62	79	79	106	77	80	80

Programme 16.2 and 16.3 Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	*1981-82 Outturn*	*1982-83 Outturn*	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Estimated Outturn*	*1986-87 Plans*	*1987-88 Plans*	*1988-89 Plans*
INDUSTRY—CENTRAL GOVERNMENT									
Regional and general industrial support	7	5	11	16	52	89	99		
OTHER PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (WDA and DBRW)									
Voted in Estimates	70	80	62	46	44	43	44		
Other	3	5	3	8	6	9	9		
TOTAL OTHER PUBLIC CORPORATIONS	72	86	65	53	51	52	53	—	—
TOTAL INDUSTRY	79	90	76	69	103	141	152		
EMPLOYMENT—CENTRAL GOVERNMENT									
Careers service grant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Tourism	4	5	5	5	6	7	8		
TOTAL CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	5	6	6	6	7	8	9	—	—
LOCAL AUTHORITIES (CAREERS SERVICE)									
Relevant Current Expenditure	3	2	2	3	3	3	3		
Non Relevant Current Expenditure	—	1	1	1	1	1	1		

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
TOTAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES	3	3	3	4	4	4	4		
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	8	9	9	10	11	12	13		
TOTAL INDUSTRY, ENERGY, TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT	87	99	85	79	114	153	165	140	140

Programme 16.4 Roads and Transport

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT									
National Roads System									
Current	5	12	9	12	12	14	15		
Capital	88	95	110	136	93	88	99		
Freight Facilities and Other Grants	1	0	0	1	0	1	1		
Research and Development	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Road Safety	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Total Central Government	94	108	119	149	105	103	115	140	150
LOCAL AUTHORITIES									
Relevant Current Spending									
Local Transport*	76	97	89	97	99	103	114	110	110
Local Authority Capital									
Local Transport	54	51	71	64	57	69	69	60	60
Total Local Authorities	130	148	159	161	155	172	183	180	180
OTHER PUBLIC CORPORATIONS									
Newtowns	0	2	2	1	3	1	2		
Total Roads and Transport Programme 16.4	224	258	280	311	263	276	300	320	320
National Bus Company EFL—Programme 16.11	5	5	6	7	7	7	—		
Total Roads and Transport	229	263	286	318	270	283	300	320	320

* Excludes, up to and including 1985-86, the National Bus Company EFL which is relevant current local authority spending.

Programme 16.5 Housing

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
CURRENT EXPENDITURE									
Subsidies to revenue deficits on local authority, new own and housing association housing	82	53	25	11	13	12	13		
Housing associations and administration: current	0	1	1	1	1	1	2		
Local authority administration	5	5	5	6	6	7	7		
TOTAL CURRENT EXPENDITURE	87	59	31	18	20	20	22	20	20
GROSS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE—									
PUBLIC SECTOR PROVISON									
Renovation of local authority/new town stock	23	25	48	50	44	43			
New provision for rent: by local authorities	62	44	42	47	35	26			
byhousingassociations(including low cost home ownership)	29	33	46	49	43	43			
by new towns	4	2	5	3	4	3			
TOTAL PUBLIC SECTOR PROVISION	118	104	141	149	126	115			

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
GROSS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE—									
SUPPORT TO PRIVATE SECTOR									
Renovation and clearance	17	21	43	111	85	64			
Home ownership: local authority and new town	10	6	8	9	6	7			
Homeloan and option mortgage schemes	0	0	0	0	0	0			
TOTAL SUPPORT TO PRIVATE SECTOR	27	27	51	120	91	71			
Gross Capital Expenditure	145	131	192	269	217	186	201	200	200
Capital Receipts	−27	−69	−98	−92	−98	−79	−83	−80	−80
Net Capital Expenditure	118	62	94	177	119	107	118	120	120
TOTAL HOUSING PROGRAMME	205	121	125	195	139	127	140	140	140

Programme 16.6 Other Environmental Services

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn*	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
Local Environmental Services excluding urban programme:									
Current Expenditure	138	152	164	168	173	179	185		
Capital Expenditure	56	53	50	57	39	59	46		
Local Authority Rate Collection (Current Expenditure)	6	6	8	7	8	8	7		
Records and Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Current Expenditure)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Urban Programme	6	8	18	15	19	23	29		
Derelict Land Reclamation	—	—	10	11	7	9	12		
Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments	2	2	2	2	2	4	4		
Grants to Environmental Bodies	3	3	3	3	3	3	5		
Environmental Research	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Water Research and Other Water Services	2	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Civil Defence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
New Towns	7	4	2	2	1	−10	2		
Total Other Environmental Services— Programme 16.6	220	230	258	268	254	277	293	290	290
Welsh Water Authority EFL— Programme 16.11	22	24	23	19	24	20	16	10	10
Total Other Environmental Services	242	254	281	287	278	297	309	300	300

* Estimated.

Programme 16.7 Education

£ million

		1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT										
Schools										
Primary, Secondary and other	Capital	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Other	Current				1	1	1	1		
Higher and Further Education										
Voluntary	Current	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		
Adult Education (incl. awards)		1	2	1	1	2	2	2		
Miscellaneous Education Services and Research										
Youth Services		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Other Education Services							1	1		
Support for the Welsh Language			1	1	1	1	1	2		
TOTAL CENTRAL GOVERNMENT		4	6	6	7	8	9	10	10	10

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
LOCAL AUTHORITIES									
Relevant Current Spending—Schools									
Under 5's	25	26	27	28	29	30	30		
Primary	137	150	158	164	169	176	180		
Secondary	183	204	218	232	239	248	252		
Special Schools	16	16	18	20	21	22	22		
Other (Incl. Supporting Services)	3	5	6	5	5	6	6		
Transport	19	20	21	23	24	24	25		
Meals and Milk	23	24	27	28	29	23	24		
Further Education									
FE	63	70	80	85	88	91	93		
Awards to Students	6	7	7	8	9	9	9		
Miscellaneous Education Services									
Youth Services	4	4	5	6	6	6	6		
Other Education Services	4	5	5	6	6	6	6		
Administration	24	27	29	31	32	33	33		
TOTAL RELEVANT CURRENT SPENDING	507	558	601	636	657	674	686	690	690
Local Authority Capital	35	30	34	35	32	27	34	30	40
TOTAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES	542	588	635	671	689	701	720	720	720
TOTAL EDUCATION	546	594	641	679	696	710	730	730	730

Programme 16.8 Arts and Libraries

£ million

		1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT										
National Library of Wales	Current	2	2	2	2	2	2	3		
	Capital	1	1			1	1	1		
National Museum of Wales	Current	5	5	6	6	6	7	7		
	Capital		1	1	1	1	1	1		
Total Central Government		8	9	9	9	10	11	12	10	10
LOCAL AUTHORITIES										
Relevant Current Spending										
Libraries		12	13	15	15	16	16	16		
Museums & Galleries		1	1	1	2	2	2	2		
Total Relevant Current Spending		13	14	16	17	17	18	18	20	20
Local Authority Capital										
Libraries		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Museums & Galleries					1					
Total Local Authority Capital		1	1	1	2	1	1	1		
Total Local Authorities		14	15	17	19	19	19	19	20	20
Total: Libraries, Museums, & Arts		22	24	26	28	29	30	31	30	30

Programme 16.9 Health and Personal Social Services

£ million

	1980-81 Outturn	1981-82 Outturn	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Estimated Outturn	1986-87 Plans	1987-88 Plans	1988-89 Plans
HEALTH SERVICES—HOSPITAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	425	479	517	544	585	628	676		
—Charges	1	1	1	1	2	2	2		
—Net	424	478	516	543	583	626	674		
Capital Expenditure	31	41	45	49	51	50	46		
FAMILY PRACTITIONER SERVICES									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	142	162	188	202	221	225	237		
—Charges	11	13	15	17	18	19	19		
—Net	131	149	173	185	203	206	218		
Capital Expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	1	1		
CENTRAL HEALTH AND MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES									
Current Expenditure	13	15	17	19	21	23	24		
Capital Expenditure	—	—	—	—	1	1	1		
TOTAL NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	580	656	722	765	827	876	937		
—Net	568	642	706	747	807	855	916		
Capital Expenditure	31	41	45	49	52	52	48		
PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES—CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES									
Current Expenditure	—	—	—	1	3	6	9		
LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	105	115	126	137	142	150	164		
—Charges	18	21	23	24	25	26	28		
—Net	87	94	103	113	118	124	136		
Capital Expenditure	6	5	5	5	6	6	6		
TOTAL PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	105	115	126	138	145	156	173		
—Net	87	94	103	114	120	129	145		
Capital Expenditure	6	5	5	5	6	6	6		
TOTAL HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES									
Current Expenditure									
—Gross	686	771	848	904	973	1,031	1,110		
—Charges	30	35	39	42	45	47	49		
—Net	656	736	809	862	928	984	1,061		
Capital Expenditure	37	46	50	54	58	58	54		
TOTAL H & PSS CURRENT AND CAPITAL NET	693	782	859	916	986	1,042	1,115	1,160	1,210

Singleton Casualty Unit

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will investigate the circumstances relating to the alleged failure to provide treatment to an accident victim near the now closed Singleton casualty unit on Monday 13 January, details of which have been sent to him.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No. Any formal complaint about treatment in this case should be addressed to West Glamorgan health authority.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctica

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards each of the resolutions on Antarctica passed at the United Nations at the close of 1985 and towards their implications for the Antarctic treaty system.

Mr. Eggar: We and all the consultative parties to the Antarctic Treaty saw each of the resolutions as potentially prejudicing the peaceful operation of the Antarctic Treaty

system. The treaty is consistent with and supports the principles of the United Nations. We, in common with others, took the unusual step of registering disapproval of these Resolutions by not participating in the vote on them at the 40th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Hong Kong

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of people who will become stateless during the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: None. We have already undertaken that no former Hong Kong British Dependent Territories citizens will become stateless as a result of the Sino-British agreement on Hong Kong.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government or the Hong Kong Government propose to introduce direct elections to the Legislative or Executive Council at any time before sovereignty for the whole territory is transferred in 1997.

Mr. Eggar: It was announced by the Hong Kong Government in their white paper on the further Development of representative government in Hong Kong in 1984 that there would be a review in 1987 of the future development of representative government in Hong Kong, and that this would include the question of the introduction of direct elections. I cannot anticipate the outcome of that review.

Terrorism (Convention)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the accession of that Government to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism; and when he expects that accession to take place.

Mr. Eggar: The Government of the Republic of Ireland are well aware of our views on this subject. They announced in the joint communiqué of November 1985 (Cmnd. 9657) their intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism as soon as possible.

Republic of Ireland (Extradition)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with the present arrangements for the extradition from the Republic of Ireland of those suspected of having committed criminal offences within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Extradition arrangements between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom provide for a comparatively simple and expeditious procedure based on the endorsement in the second jurisdiction of warrants of arrest in the first. Over a broad band of criminal offences some 25 persons per year on average are extradited from the Republic to the United Kingdom. In the joint communiqué issued at the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement on 15 November 1985 (Cmnd. 9657), the Government of the Republic of Ireland expressed their intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism as soon as possible. Irish accession to the convention should improve the position as far as security-related offences are concerned.

Atlantic Fisheries

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects an announcement to be made of the scope and nature of a multilaterally based fisheries conservation and management regime in the south west Atlantic.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation is at present carrying out a technical study of the south west Atlantic fishery. We hope this will lead on without delay to discussion and agreement on multilateral fisheries conservation and management arrangements for the area. We fully support the FAO's initiative and have urged all the governments involved to co-operate actively.

Westland plc

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what directions were conveyed by him to Her Majesty's ambassador in Rome to seek to discourage the Italian Government from giving public support to the European consortium's bid for Westland Helicopters; when these directions were sent; and what form they took.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make public the text of the communications sent to Her Majesty's Government's embassy in Rome referred to by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in the debate on Westland plc on Wednesday 15 January.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the instruction issued to his officials in Italy about Italian involvement in the Westland consortium.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On 7 January the Italian Prime Minister issued a statement which said, among other things, that the Italian Government hoped it would still be possible to choose the European option. This was the first public statement on the matter by the Italian Government.

It is not our policy to publish the texts of confidential telegrams. However, following this statement, on 8 January Her Majesty's ambassador in Rome was instructed to point out to the Italian Prime Minister's office that the British Government's position on Westland's prospects for European collaboration had been set out in the Prime Minister's letter of 1 January to Sir John Cuckney.

This letter had been published. Lord Bridges was instructed also to emphasise that Westland was a private company and that it was for the Board of Westland and the shareholders to decide on the relative merits of the proposals made by Sikorsky-Fiat and by the European consortium. It was not helpful for Governments to make public statements about matters of this kind which were internal to the United Kingdom and the concern of the private sector.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning any part played by his Department, and specifically Her Majesty's embassy in Rome, in relation to plans to assist Westland plc.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Interested posts abroad were informed of the Government's policy on Westlands. So far as Her Majesty's embassy in Rome is concerned, on 7 January the Italian Prime Minister issued a statement which said, among other things, that the Italian Government hoped it would still be possible to choose the European option. This was the first public statement on the matter by the Italian Government.

Following this statement, on 8 January Her Majesty's ambassador in Rome was instructed to point out to the Italian Prime Minister's office that the British Government's position on Westland's prospects for European collaboration had been set out in the Prime Minister's letter of 1 January to Sir John Cuckney.

This letter had been published. Lord Bridges was instructed also to emphasise that Westland was a private company and that it was for the Board of Westland and the shareholders to decide on the relative merits of the proposals made by Sikorsky-Fiat and by the European consortium. It was not helpful for Governments to make public statements about matters of this kind which were internal to the United Kingdom and the concern of the private sector.

Immigration

Mr Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether those applicants in Bangladesh, seeking entry to the United Kingdom on the basis of being British citizens, will continue to enjoy priority when new tests to ascertain family relationship are introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Present queueing arrangements will be unaltered. As at present those with a potential claim to the right of abode will be placed in queue 1.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what authority he has introduced a fee of £25 for those seeking entry clearance to settle in the United Kingdom; on what authority he has introduced a fee of £12 for those seeking entry clearance to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The new fees were introduced by means of The Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1985 No. 1984 made under the Consular Fees Act 1980, as was required by that legislation. The Act does not provide for any parliamentary procedure in relation to orders made under it.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in those cases where applicants seeking entry clearance to settle in the United Kingdom are shown on a single passport, each applicant will be required to pay the new fee of £25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: When Members of a family are travelling on a single passport and made a joint application, only one fee is payable.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if any news release was issued in Bangladesh, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, concerning the announcement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) about blood tests being required by British citizen children seeking to enter the United Kingdom from Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultation took place between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Bangladesh prior to the announcement made in Bangladesh by the Parliamentary under-Secretary of State concerning the requirement of British citizen children, seeking to enter Britain from Bangledesh, to undergo blood tests to prove paternity.

Mr. Eggar: No news release was issued. Prior to the announcement I had disclosed to the Bangladesh Home Minister and Home Secretary and said that we were intending to carry out an experimental scheme in Dhaka using the DNA fingerprinting techniques.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information was issued by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State during his visit to Bangladesh, concerning the requirement of British citizen children to prove paternity by blood test; on what date; and in what form.

Mr. Eggar: Children with an established claim to British citizenship do not require entry clearance.

At my press conference at Dhaka airport on 10 January I said that we were intending to introduce an experimental scheme using DNA techniques. The technique would establish parentage in entry clearance applications where this is at issue. In response to questions I emphasised that the results of the experimental scheme would be assessed before any decision was taken to introduce the technique more generally. I stressed that participation would be entirely voluntary.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to make available the text of the announcement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State concerning the requirement of British citizen children, seeking to leave Bangladesh to join their fathers in the United Kingdom, to prove paternity by undergoing a blood test.

Mr. Eggar: This was not a formal statement and there is no official verbatim record of the press conference.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on what facilities exist in Bangladesh for carrying out blood tests to prove paternity, the average cost of such tests and what qualifications will be required by Her Majesty's Government of those carrying out such tests; and what information he has as to how many such people are available in Bangladesh.

Mr. Eggar: An experimental scheme only is envisaged. Blood samples will be taken by qualified medical personnel. A British doctor will be joining the high commissioner's staff later this year. The samples will be tested in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) from what date British citizen children, seeking to enter the United Kingdom from Bangladesh, will be required to prove paternity by blood tests;

(2) whether any tests to prove paternity, taken by British citizen children seeking to enter the United Kingdom from Bangladesh, will be taken on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Eggar: The parentage tests will be carried out on a voluntary basis. A definite date has not yet been fixed for the start of the experimental scheme. It is hoped that it may take place in April.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, following the return from Bangladesh of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State he will make a statement concerning the announcement that British citizen children, seeking to enter Britain from Bangladesh, will be required to prove paternity by blood test.

Mr. Eggar: No children will be required to prove parentage by means of a DNA test.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the announcement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State during a visit to Bangladesh, that British citizen children in Bangladesh seeking to join their fathers settled in the United Kingdom will be required to prove paternity by blood test, represents Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, and I are agreed that it is desirable that a DNA experimental scheme should be carried out in Dhaka to establish the acceptability of DNA fingerprinting as a means of establishing parentage for immigration purposes. If this scheme were to be successful a decision will be taken on the further use of this technique.

Diplomatic Service (Personal Attacks)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the diplomatic service have been victims of terrorist attacks in each of the last 10 years; in each instance, in which country the attack took place; and if the attackers were apprehended.

Mr. Eggar: Three members of the diplomatic service and an assistant cultural attache have been victims of terrorist attack in the period 1976 to 1985. The table shows the date and location of the attacks. None of the attackers was apprehended.

Diplomatic service: Terrorist attacks

Date	*Country*	*Type of attack*
21 July 1976	Irish Republic	Ambassador's car attacked by command wire bomb device. The ambassador, Mr. Ewart-Biggs killed together with passenger. Other passenger and driver injured.
22 March 1979	Netherlands	Ambassador, Sir Richard Sykes and footman killed at residence entrance by small arms fire. Driver wounded.
28 March 1984	Greece	Assistant cultural attache, Mr. K. Whitty (a member of the British Council) and local employee killed in car by small arms fire.
27 November 1984	India	Deputy high commissioner, Bombay, Mr. P. Norris, killed in car by small arms fire.

EMPLOYMENT

Political Levy

Mr. Lawrence asked the Paymaster General whether he is proposing to take any action to seek to ensure that every trade unionist is informed of his right to contract out of paying the political levy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Trade unions which have held ballots to retain their political funds are obliged by statute and by their own rules to inform members of their right to contract out of paying the political levy. Any trade unionist who has not been so informed may complain to the court, which has power to require the union concerned to meet its obligations.

I shall be doing all I can to ensure union members are aware of their rights and remedies on this matter.

It should be just as much each trade union's intention as it is the Government's that members should not contribute to a political levy through ignorance either of its existence or of the simple procedure to object to paying.

A member may contract out by submitting to his union a standard exemption notice, obtainable from the union itself or from the certification officer, or by simply notifying the union in writing.

If a member pays the union subscription by deduction from earnings, the employer must cease deduction of the political levy on receipt of notice from the employee that he is exempt from, or has applied to contract out of, paying such contributions.

Youth Training

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a breakdown of places covered in the north west region by the following schemes *(a)* the community programme, *(b)* community industry, *(c)* the enterprise allowance and *(d)* the youth training scheme, showing mode A and B placements.

Mr. Trippier: The information at the end of November is estimated as follows.

	Number
Community industry	1,095
Community programme	27,600
Enterprise allowance scheme	9,926
Youth Training Scheme	
Mode A	33,795
Mode B	11,865

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General how many 16 to 18-year-olds are *(a)* on the unemployment register, *(b)* in employment, excluding special training schemes and *(c)* in special training schemes, by scheme; and what percentage of the relevant age group these represent.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information comes from different sources and refers to different dates, as follows:

(a) The number of persons aged 16-19 claiming unemployment benefit in Great Britain on 10 October 1985 was 535,697 (14·8 per cent. of all persons aged 16-19).

(b) The 1984 labour force survey estimates that the number of persons aged 16-19 in employment, excluding those on special employment and training measures, in Great Britain in spring 1984 was 1,651,000 (45·5 per cent. of all persons aged 16-19).

(c) The number of persons aged 16-19 covered by the most relevant special employment and training measures in Great Britain at the end of November 1985 is estimated as follows:

	Numbers (thousands)	*As per cent. of all persons aged 16-19*
Youth training scheme	301	8·7
Young workers scheme	58	1·7
Community programme	40	1·2
Community industry	7	0·2
Enterprise allowance scheme (aged 18-24)	13	n/a

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General how many people are now on each of the following schemes: full-time job release, part-time job release, young worker's scheme, job-splitting scheme, community programme, community industry, enterprise allowances scheme, youth training scheme, and the training opportunities scheme; and if he will provide comparable figures where applicable for each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is as follows:

	November 1985	*November 1984*	*November 1983*	*November 1982*	*November 1981*	*November 1980*
Community Industry	8,000	8,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	6,300
Community Programme*	168,000	129,000	114,000	32,000	23,000	—
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	51,000	39,000	17,000	1,600	—	—
Job Release Schemes	49,000	81,000	87,000	75,000	52,000	63,300
Job Splitting Scheme	290	1,008	700	—	—	—
Youth Training Scheme†	339,000	351,000	315,000	280,000	275,000	—
Young Workers Scheme	58,000	68,000	108,000	137,000	—	—

* Community programme started in October 1982; figures include those on community enterprise programme.
† Youth training scheme started in April 1983; figures include those on youth opportunities programme.

Information is not available in the form requested for the number of adults on the training opportunities scheme. The table following shows "starts" and "completions" on the adult training programme, which began in April 1985 and the training opportunity scheme which preceeded it.

Starts		*Completions*
April—November 1985	*117,611	†28,765
Financial Years		
1984-85	87,600	75,400
1983-84	80,100	62,000
1982-83	72,000	59,300
1981-82	71,200	61,400
1980-81	84,400	66,400

* All schemes.
† Job Training scheme only.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will provide an estimate of the number and proportion of workers aged 20 years and under in each of the following industrial divisions: footwear and clothing (SIC (1980) group 45), clothing, hats and gloves (SIC 453), retail distribution (SIC 64/65), hotel and catering (SIC 66), personal services (SIC 98) and also for all employees.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available estimates presented in the table come from the 1984 labour force survey.

Employees aged 16 to 20 in Great Britain in Spring 1984

Industry	*Number (thousand)*	*Per cent.*
All industries	2,332	100
Footwear & Clothing (Industry class 45)	56	2·4
Clothing, hats and gloves (Industry group 453)	42	1·8
Retail distribution (Industry class 64/65)	494	21·2
Hotels and catering (Industry class 66)	136	5·8
Personal services (Industry class 98)	63	2·7

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each of the last 25 years for which data are available *(a)* the total size of the female work force, *(b)* the proportion it represents within the total work force, *(c)* the proportion it represents within the female population of employable age and *(d)* the size of the female work force over 16 and under 25 years, over 25 and under 35 years, over 35 years and under 45 years, over 45 and under 55 years and over 55 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available data are given in the table.

Economically active† women in Great Britain*

	1961	*1966*	*(a) 1971*	*(b) 1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*
Economically active women‡, aged 16 and over									
(a) thousands	7,601	8,732	9,085	9,332	9,439	9,606	9,781	9,826	10,117

	1961	1966	(a) 1971	(b) 1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
(b) as a proportion of all economically active persons aged 16 and over (per cent.)	32·1	35·5	36·5	37·5	37·8	38·2	38·7	38·8	39·4
(c) as a proportion of female population aged 16 and over (per cent.)	37·3	42·3	43·0	43·9	44·3	44·9	45·6	45·7	46·8
Economically active women‡ aged:									
16-24 (thousands)	2,089	2,270	2,142	2,188	2,133	2,098	2,093	2,104	2,283
25-34 (thousands)	1,236	1,268	1,452	1,523	1,630	1,761	1,868	1,926	2,049
35-44 (thousands)	1,523	1,796	1,815	1,883	1,924	1,968	2,035	2,045	2,065
45-54 (thousands)	1,613	1,890	2,054	2,104	2,152	2,232	2,288	2,237	2,192
55 plus (thousands)	1,139	1,508	1,622	1,634	1,599	1,546	1,497	1,514	1,528

Economically active† women in Great Britain*

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Economically active women‡, aged 16 and over									
(a) thousands	10,327	10,373	10,413	10,561	10,590	10,570	10,555	10,940	11,092
(b) as a proportion of all economically active persons aged 16 and over (per cent.)	39·9	40·0	40·0	40·3	40·4	40·6	40·8	41·4	41·6
(c) as a proportion of female population aged 16 and over (per cent.)	47·5	47·5	47·4	47·7	47·6	47·3	47·0	48·4	48·9
Economically active women‡ aged:									
16-24 (thousands)	2,366	2,459	2,549	2,681	2,671	2,682	2,677	2,747	2,791
25-34 (thousands)	2,160	2,170	2,170	2,172	2,187	2,145	2,134	2,255	2,299
35-44 (thousands)	2,105	2,132	2,171	2,200	2,227	2,319	2,384	2,536	2,605
45-54 (thousands)	2,156	2,127	2,098	2,091	2,089	2,075	2,070	2,102	2,107
55 plus (thousands)	1,540	1,485	1,424	1,418	1,417	1,349	1,289	1,300	1,290

* Broadly speaking, those either actively seeking work or in paid employment.

† Figures for 1971(b) to 1984 are based mainly on the Labour Force Survey and Census of Population, adjusted to a mid-year basis. The data for 1961 and 1966 are extracted directly from the Census of Population, and are not strictly comparable with these later figures. A direct Census of Population figure for 1971(a) has also been given, to enable comparisons over time to be made. The figures for 1985 are projections.

‡ The minimum age used throughout is 16, for consistency, even though the minimum school leaving age was 15 up to 1973.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 17 December 1985 to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, *Official Report*, column *125*, he will now publish in the *Official Report* the 50 parliamentary constituencies in which unemployment has been reduced by the greatest number since September 1984, giving the percentage reduction in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the fifty parliamentary constituencies in which unemployment has been reduced by the greatest number between September 1984 and December 1985, giving the percentage reduction in each case. The change will be affected by seasonal factors.

Parliamentary Constituency	*Percentage reduction*
Glanford and Scunthorpe	10·03
Nuneaton	12·16
Basildon	9·22
Lanbaurgh	7·17
Sunderland, South	6·78
Bristol, West	8·02
Gillingham	10·59
Birmingham, Ladywood	5·51
Halton	6·65
Hamilton	8·27
Redcar	5·84
Cheadle	16·90
Tynemouth	7·58
Dudley, West	7·39
Hartlepool	5·25
St. Helens, South	6·39
Coventry, North-East	5·69
Leicester, East	8·37
Bolton, South-East	7·30
Harlow	10·86
Warley, East	6·80
Aberavon	9·75
Sutton Coldfield	12·05
Crosby	8·16
Medway	8·68
Newcastle upon Tyne, Central	7·57
Congleton	13·98
Leeds, North-West	10·36
Bradford, West	5·34
Leicester, South	6·20
Worcester	9·39
Corby	7·91
Blaenau, Gwent	8·07
Bosworth	12·36
Cannock and Burntwood	8·03
Gower	11·48
Solihull	11·45
Dudley, East	5·42
Rugby and Kenilworth	9·42
Aldridge-Brownhills	9·89
Hazel Grove	11·68
Newport, East	8·24
West Bromwich, East	6·93
Leicester, West	6·01
Bolton, North-East	7·62
Rutland and Melton	11·84
Knowsley, North	4·33

Parliamentary Constituency	Percentage reduction
Motherwell, South	7·53
Swansea, East	6·85
Walsall, South	5·54

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the technical and vocational education initiative and on its cost to local authorities.

Mr. Trippier: The initiative is now in its third year. In 1983, 14 local education authorities in England and Wales mounted the first TVEI projects, involving 144 schools and colleges. In 1984 the Government asked the Manpower Services Commission to extend the initiative and there are currently 74 projects in England, Scotland and Wales with 500 schools and colleges participating. Projects have proved to be popular and many have been over-subscribed. A further 28 proposals are currently being considered for a 1986 start.

All projects starting in 1984 and 1985 and due to commence in 1986 are funded up to a ceiling of £2 million over five academic years by the Manpower Services Commission. The provision of any additional funding for projects is a matter for the individual authority.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received seeking to extend to two years the youth training scheme for all 18-year-old school leavers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have not received any such representations. Our main concern has been with the training and prospects of 16 and 17-year-old school leavers, and that concern will be met by the expansion of YTS from April this year. It will offer two years' high quality training to 16-year-old school leavers and one year for 17-year-old leavers, and the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification. This represents a major step forward for the age group.

There will be 18-year-olds on YTS, even though 18-year-old school leavers are not catered for; 18-year-olds have access to a range of Government schemes; and all our adult training programmes are open to people aged 18 and over.

Wages

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest average weekly gross wages for men aged 21 years and over working *(a)* in the food processing industry and *(b)* generally in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information for full-time manual and non-manual male employees on adult rates in the food processing and manufacturing industry relates to April 1985, and is published in tables 4 and 5 of the report, "New Earnings Survey, 1985, part A", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Gas Safety (Exhibition)

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to gas safety to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The exhibition will take place from 3 to 8 February. I expect to open the exhibition on 4 February.

British Holidaymakers

Mr. Terlezki asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the number of British people who took their holidays abroad in 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of the number of holiday visits abroad by United Kingdom residents are prepared regularly from the results of the international passenger survey and published in the Business Monitors on Overseas Travel and Tourism (table 7 in the quarterly issue MQ6 and table 14 in the annual issue MA6). Copies of the 1979 and 1984 publications are available in the Library.

Tourist Organisations

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General, further to his reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *724*, if he will bring forward structural changes to the United Kingdom tourist organisations in order to assist in the promotion abroad of regional tourist attractions.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority already works closely with the English regional tourist boards in its overseas promotional campaigns and the regional boards are free to mount their own overseas promotions if they wish. I am aware that the first report of the Trade and Industry Committee 1985-86, "Tourism in the UK" includes recommendations for changes in the present tourist boards structure. The Government will give a considered reply to this report in due course.

Deregulation Programme (Health and Safety Implications)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy to publish in tandem with all deregulation proposals made by Her Majesty's Government a health and safety impact assessment of those proposals.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Deregulation is intended to reduce the burden of Government requirements on business and not to make new proposals for regulations. The Government have made clear that it remains committed to maintaining necessary health and safety protections.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General whether he will make it his policy under deregulation programmes to seek to ensure that current health and safety standards are maintained.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Government are committed to maintaining necessary health and safety protection and has no intention of down-grading standards.

Scottish Tourist Board

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Paymaster General whether he proposes to gather the views of

Scottish hon. Members on the abolition of the Scottish Tourist Board proposed in the first report of the Trade and Industry Committee 1985-86, HC 106-I; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's considered reply to the specific recommendations of the first report of the Trade and Industry Committee 1985-86 106-I will be delivered to Parliament in due course and will encompass the views of departments, including the Scottish Office, with a direct interest in the report's conclusions and recommendations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be glad to consider the views of right hon. and hon. Members in Scotland in reaching his own views on the matters the report raises.

Rosyth, Plymouth and Fife (Vacancies)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies there are in *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Plymouth for (i) electricians and (ii) emploment relating to ship repair.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table shows, for the latest available months, the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the Dunfermline, which covers Rosyth, and the Plymouth jobcentre areas.

	Dunfermline	*Plymouth*
Vacancies by occupation—September 1985		
Electricians: plant and machinery	0	1
Electricians: premises and ships	2	2
TOTAL	2	3
Vacancies by Industry—November 1985		
Shipbuilding and repair	9	0

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies there are in engineering posts in *(a)* Plymouth, *(b)* Fife and *(c)* Rosyth.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table shows, for 3 November 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in engineering industries for the areas requested.

	Number
Plymouth jobcentre area	23
Dunfermline jobcentre area (includes Rosyth)	4
Fife*	31

* Unfilled vacancies in those jobcentre areas (including Dunfermline) which closely correspond to the Scottish Region of Fife.

Rosyth, Plymouth and Fife (Training)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what opportunities his Department provides for training in *(a)* engineering, *(b)* electrical skills, *(c)* computer science and *(d)* ship repair in (i) Plymouth, (ii) Rosyth and (iii) Fife.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Northern Arts

27. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Minister for the Arts what is the proposed level of funding for Northern Arts for 1986-87; and what were the comparable figures for the five preceding years.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the level of funding of individual regional arts association. The 1986-87 funding level for Northern Arts has not yet been announced. The table, shows comparable figures for the five preceding years.

	£ million
1981-82	1·3605
1982-83	1·5648
1983-84	1·7028
1984-85	1·8100
1985-86	1·9845

ENVIRONMENT

Cherwell (Parish Boundaries)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he anticipates a decision being made concerning the recent review of parish boundaries within the Cherwell district council administrative area.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a decision shortly on proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission in respect of Cherwell district council's parish review.

Travelling People

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of travellers' caravans on *(a)* authorised and *(b)* unauthorised sites in Greater London; and how this compares with similar estimates over the past five years.

Mr. Tracey: The Department collects information from a voluntary census carried out twice-yearly by London borough councils. The numbers of gypsy caravans recorded in the last five years are as follows:

Caravans

	Unauthorised sites	*Authorised sites*
January 1981	358	528
July 1981	321	450
January 1982	298	480
July 1982	292	365
January 1983	295	488
July 1983	280	514
January 1984	294	585
July 1984	300	440
January 1985*	209	407
July 1985*	277	380

* In January 1985 seven Boroughs did not make returns; in July 1985 four Boroughs did not make returns.

Planning Circulars

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many circulars on planning matters have been issued by his Department in each year since 1970.

Mr. Tracey: The numbers of planning and related circulars issued by my Department in each year since its formation in 1970 are as follows:

	Number
1970	2
1971	4
1972	10
1973	10
1974	12
1975	3
1976	15
1977	19
1978	11
1979	5
1980	2
1981	9
1982	7
1983	6
1984	10
1985	15

Tent and Caravan Camping Sites

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any intention of introducing any further changes to the law relating to the licensing of tent sites or caravan camping sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although it remains my intention to introduce legislation to unify site licensing controls on touring caravanning and tented camping at a suitable opportunity, I cannot say when this will happen or precisely what form the legislation will take. Further public consultation is likely before any fresh proposals are introduced.

Council House Sales

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will list details of the total numbers of completed sales of council housing to sitting tenants in each year between 1979-80 and 1984-85 in the Corby district;

(2) how many completed sales of council housing to sitting tenants have been made in the Corby district during 1985-86;

(3) whether he will list details of completed sales of council housing to non-sitting tenants in each year between 1979-80 and 1984-85 in the Corby district;

(4) how many completed sales of council housing have been made to non-sitting tenants in the Corby district during 1985-86;

(5) how many outstanding applications to buy local authority dwellings there were in the Corby district at the latest convenient date.

Sir George Young: Reported numbers of sales by Corby district council of dwellings to sitting tenants and of vacant dwellings appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library:

Year	Issue Number
1980-81	62
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84 } 1984-85 }	75

In the first half of 1985-86, Corby district council reported 199 sales to sitting tenants and 12 other sales, and Corby new town reported two sales to sitting tenants.

The corresponding breakdown for 1979-80 is not available, but the district council reported selling a total of 126 dwellings.

The district council has reported that 234 accepted applications under the right to buy were outstanding at 30 September 1985: corresponding information is not available about other applications to buy.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the funding of voluntary projects by the London Docklands Development Corporation for the financial year 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The Secretary of State has received one such representation, from the London borough of Newham.

Fish Farming

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish legislative proposals covering fish farming.

Mr. John Patten: Proposals for legislation on fish farms were published in the consultation paper on the review of inland and coastal fisheries in England and Wales, issued jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office in July 1981. The Government intend to resolve the water abstraction difficulties associated with fish farming when the parliamentary timetable allows.

Water and Sewerage Law

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a report from the working party on water and sewerage law.

Mr. John Patten: I have received a report on the working party's findings which I am considering.

Housing (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to pay an official visit to Leeds in order to inspect the condition of the city's housing stock.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so. However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction is planning to make such a visit to Leeds in the near future.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what provision exists under the financial guidelines relating to management agreements under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for compensation to agricultural or forestry employees who are made redundant as a result of the designation of a site of special scientific interest or subsequent management agreement;

(2) whether records are kept of redundancies resulting directly from the designation of sites of special scientific interest by his Department or by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mrs. Rumbold: Management agreements entered into by the Nature Conservancy Council with owners or occupiers of land in sites of special scientific interest may include provision for payments in respect of financial losses directly attributable to changes in management practices required to conserve the scientific interest of the land. The Nature Conservancy Council would expect in appropriate circumstances to take account of losses arising from redundancy payments in negotiating an agreement.

Neither the Department nor the Nature Conservancy Council is aware of any redundancies arising from management agreements. In general, management of land to maintain or enhance its conservation interest tends to require greater use of labour intensive methods.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the Asha women's group, for which the Greater London council applied on 23 October 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the All London teachers against racism and fascism for which the Greater London council applied on 17 May 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the London advice and counselling service for youth for which the Greater London council applied on 17 September 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the North Lewisham law centre welfare rights unit for which the Greater London council applied on 30 October 1985;

(5) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the West London Fair Housing Group for which the Greater London council applied on 4 December 1985;

(6) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the Barking and Dagenham Link employment centre for which the Greater London council applied on 28 October 1985;

(7) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the London interpreting project for which the Greater London council applied on 31 October 1985.

Mr. Tracey: These cases are applications for my right hon. Friend's consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 and are receiving careful consideration.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the Chinese information and advice centre for which the Greater London council applied on 26 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend gave consent to this grant on 16 January.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 13 January, *Official Report*, column 469, if he will give details of his response of 10 December to the London Co-ordinating Committee regarding section 137 limits.

Mr. Tracey: My Department's reply to the London Co-ordinating Committee indicated that we have no present plans to amend local authorities' section 137 limits, pending the report of the Widdicombe inquiry, without firm evidence of immediate difficulties in meeting commitments and funding worthwhile projects; and that we are keeping the position under review.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Greater London council clinical waste incinerator at Edmonton will continue to be used for the disposal of clinical waste after abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The future of the facilities for the disposal of clinical waste at the Edmonton incinerator is a matter for the North London waste authority. I understand that this is presently under consideration by that authority.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has received a copy of the third report of the review group on the disposal of clinical wastes in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department was sent a copy of this Report on 23 December 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to a loan to Spitalfields Housing Co-operative for which the Greater London council applied on 19 August 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to landscape works in parks for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the rebuilding of a London Fire Brigade training centre for which the Greater London council applied on 31 July 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to Dial-a-ride leasing computers for which the Greater London council applied on 31 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Further consideration will be given to these applications when the council responds to the Department's request for further information.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the Polytechnic of Central London for a study on decentralisation of services in London boroughs for which the Greater London council applied on 25 October 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to a grant to the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults for which the Greater London council applied on 31 October 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to Palmers Green station car park for which the Greater London council applied on 22 November 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to Hounslow West station car park for which the Greater London council applied on 11 December 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Each application needs to be considered carefully on its merits. Decisions will be reached as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to an anti-speeding campaign for which the Greater London council applied on 14 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 15 January 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the formulation of the Roundhouse as a limited company for which the Greater London council applied on 15 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: No application has been received from the GLC for consent to the formulation of the Roundhouse as a limited company.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the Battlebridge basin refurbishment scheme for which the Greater London council applied on 20 August 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given on 26 November 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *469*, if there have been any variations in the destination of Greater London council functions and responsibilities since they were set out in his Department's guidance note of 16 July 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I understand that the boroughs have agreed that the Inner London Education Authority will take on responsibility for the supplies department. On waste disposal, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) at column *255-7*. Otherwise, the destinations of functions remain as in annex A to the guidance note.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to update the estimates of savings and costs regarding Greater London council and metropolitan county council abolition given by Ministers during the passage of the Local Government Act 1985 and included in the explanatory and financial memorandum to that Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No.

St. Mary's House, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received, and from whom, concerning the proposed demolition of the listed building, St. Mary's house, Portsmouth.

Mr. Tracey: I have received no representations concerning the proposed demolition of this listed building.

Cornwallis Crescent, Portsmouth.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make his decision on the closure of three rights of way through Cornwallis Crescent, Portsmouth.

Mr. Tracey: The city council submitted the closure order to the Secretary of State for confirmation in October, but only completed the necessary documentation last week. It will not be possible to estimate when the decision can be expected until the objectors decide whether they wish to proceed by written representations or a local inquiry.

Housing Revenue Account Dwellings

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of Exchequer subsidies and rate fund contribution, separately, to local authorities housing revenue account dwellings, on a per dwelling basis, for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, and the estimate for 1986-87, and the number of local authority housing revenue account dwellings on which these figures are based.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *663-64*]: The number of local authority housing revenue account dwellings on which the figures are based is set out as follows.

Year	*Dwellings (millions)*
1978-79	4.90
1979-80	4.90
1980-81	4.95
1981-82	4.91
1982-83	4·64
1983-84	4.78
1984-85	4.56
1985-86	4.55

TRANSPORT

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what system of public accountability he plans to introduce after assuming responsibility for the operation of the Woolwich ferry;

(2) what estimates he has made of the financial and manpower implications for his Department resulting from his decision to assume responsibility for the operation of the Woolwich ferry.

Mr. Ridley: Provision will be taken in the annual Supply Estimates. Those for 1986-87, to be published in March, will include provision based on costs incurred by the GLC in past years. The ferry will be included in the Appropriation Accounts presented to Parliament annually and subject to the scrutiny of the Comptroller and Auditor General. It is my intention that an agent borough will employ the staff to operate the ferry.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation he undertook and what other options he considered before deciding to assume responsibility for the operation of the Woolwich ferry.

Mr. Ridley: I consulted both generally beginning with my consultative document of July 1984 "Reallocation of Transport Responsibilities in London following Abolition of the GLC" and with the two riparian boroughs about future responsibility for the ferry. My decision about the most appropriate arrangement took account of all views expressed to me.

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional examiners have been authorised by his Department in the past year for testing and inspecting public service vehicles; and if he will list the traffic areas to which they have been allocated.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Recruitment of 24 additional examiners has been authorised.

They are allocated as follows:

	Number
Metropolitan traffic area	2
South Eastern traffic area	2
Eastern traffic area	4
South Wales traffic area	1
Western traffic area	2
West Midlands traffic area	2
North Western traffic area	3
North Eastern traffic area	6
Scottish traffic area	2
	24

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Transport why he appointed one additional examiner to cover the London metropolitan area to test and inspect public service vehicles.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Two additional posts are located within the metropolitan traffic area. One, at the regional headquarters, Acton, will cover additional new vehicles certification work throughout the southern half of the country. The other, at the Guildford heavy goods vehicle test station, will deal with the additional work arising from deregulation in the metropolitan traffic area outside London and in the adjacent part of the south-eastern traffic area.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1984-85, in Wales, by operator group;

(2) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1984-85, in Great Britain, by operator group.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer these questions shortly.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about London Regional Transport's bus and tube services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I receive a number of representations from time to time on LRT's bus and underground services. Detailed matters concerning services are referred to LRT as the responsibility of management.

Dangerous Substances

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if 3-amino-(1H)-1, 2, 4-Triazole, Aminotriazole has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road or *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Ridley: This substance is not regarded as dangerous in transport and vehicles carrying it are not required to display hazard warning panels.

Cars (Dim-dip Lighting)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will suspend the dim-dip lighting regulations due for introduction on 1 October in view of the decision by the European Economic Community to take the matter to the European Court of Justice;

(2) what is his estimate of the current cost per car of installing dim-dip equipment; and how this compares with his original estimate;

(3) whether he is satisfied with the technical standards of proposed dim-dip installations specified for fitment on all cars sold in the United Kingdom from 1 October.

Mr. David Mitchell: The lighting regulations require dim-dip devices on most vehicles whih are both manufactured from 1 October 1986 and first registered from 1 April 1987. I understand the European Commission is preparing an application to the European Court arguing that our regulations should include an exemption for those vehicles that satisfy the requirement of the lighting installation directive. This is not, in my view, a reason for suspending the regulations.

Such development work done by manufacturers over the last three years, about which I have information, has confirmed our original view that dim-dip can be provided quite simply and at a cost which will generally amount to a few pounds per vehicle.

The Department is satisfied that the technical requirements will ensure adequate conspicuity without the risk of glare, thus increasing road safety in well lit streets, in dull weather and in twilight.

Wheelclamps (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any request from the London borough of Camden to permit the use of Denver Boot wheelclamps within the area of that authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

M4 (Coach Crash)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the crash on the M4 near Reading on 15 January, involving a double-decker bus.

Mr. David Mitchell: Officers of my Department have already examined the vehicles involved in the accident and are continuing to help the police with their inquiries. The coach was fitted with a speed limiter device and a tachograph, and the latter may assist further in determining the circumstances of the crash. Eleven of the 43 passengers on the coach received injuries sufficient to require hospital treatment.

Railway Passenger Services (Wortley)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he recieved an application from the British Railways Board for authority to discontinue all railway passenger services between Wortley North and Wortley South; on what date he announced his decision; what was his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have not received any such proposal from the British Railways Board.

Pavement Parking Ban

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent he plans to monitor the enforcement of the pavement parking ban under section 15 of the GLC (General Powers) Act 1974 after the Greater London council is abolished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: When responsibility for the ban transfers to the London borough councils, it will be for them to decide what monitoring is appropriate.

Public Corporations (Investment)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *772*, if he will publish the criteria for assessing whether the submissions of public corporations

relating to public sector investment decisions are commercially confidential; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Investment submissions from public corporations frequently contain information of commercial value to their competitors.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Family Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the net weekly spending power of a man with a wife and two children aged eight and 11 years, whose gross earnings are *(a)* £120, *(b)* £130, *(c)* £140 and *(d)* £150 per week and whose rent and rates are £20 and £7 respectively (i) when he is working and (ii) if he was unemployed, assuming that he and his wife were both earning £4 per week disregarded income and in each case were receiving all benefits to which they were entitled.

Mr. Newton: The net weekly spending power of a man with a wife and two children aged eight and 11 years if his gross earnings were *(a)* £120, *(b)* £130, *(c)* £140 and *(d)* £150 a week would be £86·15, £88·42, £87·50 and £92·48, respectively.

If the family's only income, apart from benefits, was from part-time earnings and both the man and his wife had £4 of their part-time earnings disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes, the net weekly spending power would be £85·17.

Water rates of £1·65 are assumed to be included in the rates figure of £7. It is assumed that current benefit and national insurance contribution rates are in force and that fares to work are £5·95 a week. All other assumptions are as in the April 1985 tax/benefit model tables, copies of which are in the Library.

It should be noted that it is estimated that only about 1·8 per cent. of married supplementary benefit claimants have part-time earnings. The proportion where both the claimant and spouse work is not known but must be less than 1·8 per cent.

Wythenshawe Hospital

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why Wythenshawe hospital was closed to all medical admissions for 24 hours on three occasions in recent months;

(2) why emergency chest medicine patients have recently been turned away from Wythenshawe hospital and subjected to long ambulance journeys to other hospitals;

(3) why seriously ill chest patients have frequently had to be admitted to beds in gynaecological or surgical wards at Wythenshawe hospital;

(4) why at least 70 requests for admission from family doctors were refused by Wythenshawe hospital because of the acute shortage of beds there.

Mr. Whitney: I regret we do not hold such information centrally. The right hon. Member may like to make his inquiries of the chairman of South Manchester health authority, which is responsible for the management of Wythenshawe hospital.

Schoolchildren (Smoking)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he proposes to introduce to eliminate smoking by schoolchildren under the permitted age, following the report recently published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are concerned that, despite the well-known risks to health, young people are continuing to take up smoking in large numbers. We are funding a £1 million advertising campaign to discourage the habit among teenagers and other initiatives are being taken by the Health Education Council. They include the distribution of new health education material on smoking to all secondary schools.

South Manchester Health Authority

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now increase the resources presently available to the south Manchester health authority, and the authority's permitted level of expenditure for 1986-87.

Mr. Hayhoe: Making individual district health authorities' allocations from north-western region's growing share of resources is the responsibility of the North-Western regional health authority. The right hon. Member may care to address his inquiry to the chairman of the regional health authority.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of regular family income supplement payments in the north-west; and what proportion of the eligible population this represents.

Mr. Major: At 29 October 1985, the latest date for which information is available, there were 36,000 families in receipt of family income supplement (FIS) in the north-western social security region, which covers Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria and part of Derbyshire.

It is not possible to estimate what proportion of the eligible population in the area this represents but the estimate of take-up of FIS in Great Britain as a whole is about half.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to give extra publicity to the new levels of family income supplement, in view of the incorrect figure published in existing child benefit books.

Mr. Major: The main purpose for including a slip in child benefit order books is to make recipients aware of the existence of family income supplement and one-parent benefit and to refer them to leaflets and posters which can be seen at post offices and local social security offices. Both the leaflets and posters on display do publicise the correct current rates of benefit. The outdated order book slips will be replaced by the end of this month with slips giving current rates. I regret that it was not possible to insert them in child benefit order books earlier.

Benefit Reform

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the

distribution of gains and losses among working families with children as a result of *(a)* the proposals for family credit and *(b)* all changes affecting working families with children as set out in Cmnd. 9691, assuming a take-up of (i) 50 per cent. and (ii) 40 per cent. for family credit.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 20 December at columns *435-36*.

Child Abuse

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has now decided whether information on child abuse should be reported centrally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) on 9 December at column *496*.

"Reform of Social Security"

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state all the circumstances in which the family premium proposed in the "Reform of Social Security" will be paid in addition to other premiums.

Mr. Newton: A family premium will be paid to all those with children on income support and can be paid in combination with any one of the client group premiums proposed in the White Paper. In addition, an extra family premium will be paid for each disabled child in a family.

DHSS Local Offices (Birmingham)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit single payments were made by the local offices in Walsall road and Soho road, Birmingham in 1985; and if he will give figures for payments *(a)* less than £50, *(b)* £50 to £100, *(c)* £100 to £500, *(d)* £500 to £1,000, *(e)* £1,000 to £1,500 and *(f)* over £1,500.

Mr. Major: During the year ending on 17 December 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the Birmingham (Perry Barr) office made 10,433 single payments and the Birmingham (Handsworth) office made 24,650 single payments.

Information about the individual value of those payments is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Vessa Sprint Wheelchairs

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to satisfy himself of the safety of Vessa Sprint wheelchairs supplied by artificial limb and appliance centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Vessa Sprint is based on a standard departmental design modified to allow a higher degree of activity by users who, on medical assessment, show a reasonable level of co-ordination and reaction, and whose lifestyle will be enhanced by such a wheelchair. It has satisfactorily undergone safety tests normally carried out on wheelchairs supplied by the Department, including those for strength, fire retardancy and stability.

Residential Care

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning different methods of treating income and capital of people in residential homes and their spouses who are supported by both supplementary benefit and a local authority through topping-up payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Representations have been made by a few local authorities and voluntary bodies. Basic differences in the local authority and supplementary benefit systems have given rise to difficulty in some cases, but where a person's means have already been assessed for supplementary benefit purposes a local authority is not obliged to make a separate assessment when topping up. We shall be considering with the local authority associations how differences in the respective systems can best be reconciled.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he gives concerning their place of ordinary residence for the purposes of the National Assistance Act 1948 to people in residential care sponsored by a local authority, other than that in which the home is situated, responsibility for whose financial support is transferred to his Department.

Mr. Whitney: The local authority responsible for providing services under the National Assistance Act would be the authority in whose area the person concerned was ordinarily resident immediately before the need for the provision arose. Which local authority this is, is a matter to be determined on the facts in each case. If the right hon. Member has a particular case in mind, he may care to write to me.

Social Security (Reform)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what consideration he has given to the effect of his proposals in "Reform of Social Security: Programme for Action", on the medical rehabilitation services; if they will provide any disincentive to treatment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the effect of his proposals in "Reform of Social Security: Programme for Action", on the employment medical rehabilitation services; if they will provide any disincentives to rehabilitation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available about the impact on claimants in Newham arising from the proposals for the reform of social security.

Mr. Newton: None. The sample data used for the illustrative figures in the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) are not broken down by local authority.

Disablement Premium

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of earnings a man with a wife and two children who qualified for a disablement premium

under income support would receive an equivalent net income from earnings and family credit; and what the figure would be if the disablement premium was included in the threshold adopted for family credit.

Mr. Newton: Assuming that no benefit on account of disablement was payable when the man or wife was in work, or if it was payable that it was disregarded in the family credit calculation (as would be the case with attendance allowance or mobility allowance), then on the basis of the illustrative amounts in para 2.4 of the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) the level of earnings would be £36·95 net, or £38·90 gross. Since, in the illustrative figures, this amount would be below the family credit threshold, and maximum family credit would therefore be payable, it would not be affected by adding a disablement premium to the threshold.

If any other benefit was payable which had to be taken into account in the family credit calculation then the level of earnings would vary depending on the amount of that benefit.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of disabled people aged 16 to 59 years who are not incapable of work but who are in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit; and how many of these would qualify for the proposed disablement premium.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the claimants likely to fall within the category described are not identified separately within existing statistical records and an estimate could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Those in this category who are blind will be passported on to the disablement premium through that route.

Paracetamol

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths have been directly attributed to the taking of paracetamol during each of the past five years for which figures are available; what representations he has received about the dangers of using paracetamol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information given in the table is taken from death certificates issued in England and Wales. The 1984 figures are provisional. Paracetamol is included in a number of widely-used combination analgesics, often in combination with dextropropoxyphene. Where such a product was mentioned in a death certificate, the death is included in the "with other drug" figures. Deaths reported as suicide are included. The figures in parentheses relate to deaths where use of alcohol was mentioned.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines has received no reports of death associated with the use of paracetamol at normal doses.

I am advised that paracetamol is a very safe drug if taken in accordance with the usage instructions set out on the labels of all paracetamol, or paracetamol-containing, products. The dangers of overdose are well known and patients are told on product labels not to exceed the stated dose. No recent representations about paracetamol have been received.

Deaths attributed to paracetamol—England and Wales

	Accidental	*Suicide*	*Unknown*
1980			
Paracetamol	25(10)	97(12)	30 (5)
With other drug	55(28)	225(47)	77(20)
Total	80(38)	322(59)	107(25)
1981*			
Paracetamol	15 (6)	47(14)	13 (4)
With other drug	48(19)	257(33)	70(19)
Total	63(25)	304(47)	83(23)
1982			
Paracetamol	31 (6)	94(12)	37 (5)
With other drug	43(21)	207(36)	58(12)
Total	74(27)	301(48)	95(17)
1983			
Paracetamol	23 (7)	104 (9)	37 (2)
With other drug	46(20)	240(44)	57(15)
Total	69(27)	344(53)	94(17)
1984			
Paracetamol	24 (4)	102 (9)	50 (6)
With other drug	33 (9)	185(37)	66(16)
Total	57(13)	287(46)	116(22)

* 1981 figures were affected by industrial action taken by Registrars.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many households *(a)* in total, *(b)* by tenure (council tenants, home owners and others) and *(c)* by household type (pensioners, families with children and others) are expected to receive (i) more and (ii) less housing benefit by up to £1 a week, £1 to £1·99 a week, £2 to £2·99 a week, £3 to £3·99 a week, £4 to £4·99 a week, £5 to £7·49 a week, £7·50 to £9·99 a week and £10 a week or more as a result of the following changes to the housing benefit scheme outlined in the White Paper: (1) the requirements that all households should meet at least 20 per cent. of their rates, (2) the changes to the needs allowance and taper formulae and (3) the treatment of capital; and if he will identify the gains and losses attributable to each of these changes individually and to the cumulative impact of all three;

(2) what is the number of households *(a)* in total, *(b)* by tenure and *(c)* by household type (pensioners, families with children and others) who will cease to qualify for any housing benefit as a result of the following changes to the housing benefit scheme outlined in the White Paper: (i) the changes to the needs allowance and taper formulae, and in the assessment of income and (ii) the treatment of capital.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Hearing Aids

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time which people have to wait for a hearing aid on the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The Department no longer collects this information centrally. Responsibility for supplying

hearing aids in England and Wales was transferred to Mersey regional health authority on 1 April 1985. Information collected from hearing aid centres by the authority includes the number of outpatients waiting for appointments for fitting or exchanging hearing aids.

My hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the health authority direct.

Ear, Nose and Throat Appointments

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for ear, nose and throat appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. Information on waiting times for outpatient appointments is not collected centrally.

Stanley Royd Hospital

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he received the report on the food poisoning outbreak at the Stanley Royd hospital; and if he has yet arranged for an exact date of publication.

Mr. Hayhoe: The report was received on 6 December and will be published very shortly.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations from individuals seeking to reveal the addresses of supplementary benefit claimants for the purpose of private litigation to recover outstanding debts.

Mr. Major: Requests of this kind have been received from time to time. For reasons of preserving confidentiality, addresses of claimants are not provided to other individuals for the purpose of pursuing private litigation in which the Department does not have a direct interest.

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek powers to introduce a scheme whereby his Department deducts specific amounts from supplementary benefit claimants who have changed addresses and cannot be traced by individual creditors.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to do so.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken for severe weather payments to be made to assist with winter fuel bills.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 6 December 1985 at columns *400-1*.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take the necessary steps to arrange for statistics relating to breast cancer screening to be collected centrally.

Mr. Hayhoe: Not at present. This will be considered when future policy on breast cancer screening is reviewed in the light of the report by the working group on breast cancer screening.

Speech Therapists

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the current situation in relation to the scale of remuneration for speech therapists.

Mr. Whitney: Agreement has been reached on increased salary scales with effect from 1 April 1985, and this was notified to health authorities on 27 November 1985. The new scales represented an increase of 4·81 per cent. on previous rates. The agreement did not provide for increases in allowances and the overall value of the settlement was 4·7 per cent. This was the value of all agreements reached for National Health Service staff whose remuneration is negotiated on Whitley councils.

Benefits (Appeals Advice)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements are made by the president of the Social Security Appeal Tribunals to provide appellants at those tribunals with addresses of local agencies offering advice and representation at the appeal hearing.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 23 July at column *520*.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made to provide people whose claims for social security benefits are refused with the addresses of local agencies offering advice and information about social security benefits.

Mr. Major: Forms notifying decisions on claims to benefit are being revised to include the following paragraph, which has been approved by the president of social security appeal tribunals:

"Help or advice

An advice centre like the Citizens Advice Bureau, or a local law centre can give you free advice. If you appeal, they will sometimes go to the tribunal with you.

You can find a list of their addresses in the 'phone book, at the front of the Yellow Pages or at the library.

It will help the advice centre if you take this letter to show them."

Officials are currently discussing with interested groups whether arrangements might be made to provide specific localised information.

AIDS

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance Her Majesty's Government gives to those screening for acquired immune deficiency syndrome as to the extent to which they may pass on details of the tests or the results other than to the patient and his medical advisers, the form in which such information may be disclosed and the extent to which the information disclosed may identify the patient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The advice my Department has issued on the confidentiality of information relating to people who have AIDS or are infected with HTLV III antibody is contained in the document "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—AIDS Booklet 2—Information for doctors concerning the introduction of the HTLV III Antibody Test", a copy of which is in the Library. That states:

"The strictest confidentiality must be maintained when an HTLV III antibody positive individual is identified . . . Unless

the patient has given his consent, personal health data relating to him must not be disclosed to anyone for any purpose other than the health care of that patient, except where the disclosure is necessary to prevent the spread of infection."

Such exceptional circumstances are a matter of professional judgment by a doctor in the light of the circumstances of a case.

Sheltered Workshops

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect the proposals in the White Paper on the reform of social security will have on the sheltered industry; and what steps he will take to protect the position of sheltered workshops for the blind and disabled.

Mr. Newton: At present, where someone is awarded a supplementary benefit single payment for household effects or furniture, and the item is known to be available at a reasonable price from a local sheltered workshop, staff are instructed to explain this to the claimant and to offer to arrange for its supply with the claimant's agreement and on his behalf. The White Paper proposes that single payments should be replaced by loans or grants from a new, discretionary social fund. We recognise the valuable work done by sheltered workshops and are examining whether comparable arrangements for the supply of workshop goods could be made under the social fund, consistent with the role of the fund as outlined in the White Paper.

Nicorette

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies have been carried out by his Department into the effectiveness of Nicorette in helping smokers giving up.

Mr. Whitney: The effectiveness of nicotine chewing gum as part of the treatment offered by general practitioners to help people stop smoking is being examined in a Government-funded study currently in progress at the Maudsley hospital.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for State for Social Services what recent guidance he has given to health authorities in England and Wales on the interpretation of the regulations governing the registration of nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: For England health circular HC(84)21 was issued in October 1984. A copy is in the Library. It notified health authorities of changes in the legislation governing the registration and inspection of private nursing homes and hospitals that came into force on 1 January 1985, gave guidance on the new provisions, and commended to health authorities a handbook on registration and inspection produced by the National Association of Health Authorities. Advice on registration both as a residential care home and as a nursing home was included.

Guidance to health authorities in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for State for Social Services how many people died of food poisoning in National Health Service hospitals in 1979 and each succeeding year, distinguishing between patients and others.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *605*]: The numbers of deaths occurring in National Health Service hospitals in England and Wales, where the underlying cause of death was food poisoning,* are shown in the table for each available year since 1979.

These statistics are for place of death. The location of the deceased at the time of the acquisition of the infection is not known to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. It is not possible from these statistics to distinguish between patients and others.

Number of Deaths from Food Poisoning in National Health Service Hospitals, England and Wales 1979 to 1984*

Year	*Number*
1979	50
1980	36
1981	36
1982	62
1983	44
1984	53

* ICD Codes: 003 Other salmonella infections
005 Other food poisoning (bacterial)
988 Toxic effects of noxious substances eaten as food
(Excludes typhoid, paratyphoid and dysentery.)

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how the United Kingdom compares internationally in the nature and scope of the support given to students in higher education.

Sir Keith Joseph: The United Kingdom is much more generous. We spend on average between three and five times as much per student as is spent in the Netherlands and West Germany and much more still compared to Denmark, France and Italy. The United Kingdom devotes a much higher proportion of its GNP to student support than other major developed countries. The following table compares two measures of student support (excluding fees) as a percentage of gross national product and per student:

	Student support averaged over all students† 1982* *a*	*Student support as a percentage of GNP 1982* *b*	*Type of support* *c*
United Kingdom	£1,367‡ £862‖	0·25 per cent.	Grant only
Denmark¶	£66	0·03 per cent.	Loan and Grant

	Student support averaged over all students† 1982* *a*	*Student support as a percentage of GNP 1982* *b*	*Type of support* *c*
France●	£66	0·03 per cent.	Loan and Grant
Germany, Federal Republic of	£230	0·09 per cent.	■Loan and Grant
Italy•	£32	0·02 per cent.	Grant only
Japan#	£0	0·00 per cent.	Loan only
Netherlands	£281	0·13 per cent.	Loan and Grant
United States of America•	£104	0·09 per cent.	Loan and Grant

* National currencies converted to £sterling using indices of equal purchasing power—ie an international form of Retail Price Index which allows for exchange rates and differences in the cost of living between countries.

† Expenditure on student support has been divided by all higher education students (97 per cent. of full-time students receive awards in the United Kingdom) not simply by those in receipt of grants or loans.

‡ Figure based on full-time home students.

| Figure based on full-time and part-time students.

' 1980 data (at 1982 values for column a).

● 1980 data for Metropolitan France (at 1982 values for column a).

■ Loans only from 1983.

• 1979 data (at 1982 values for column a).

Loans are available but take up is negligible.

Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook.

London University (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, further to his answer on 22 October 1985 to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes, *Official Report*, columns 112-18, he will give a breakdown by project of the capital expenditure medical (subhead A3) listed as £4,630,047 for London university in the table headed 1984-85 grants to universities and colleges.

Mr. Walden: Capital grants to London university from the medical subhead of the Universities' Vote for 1984-85 were as follows:

	£
Royal Free Hospital—	
On call residences	67,368
Developmental stages II and III	21,551
The National Hospital for Nervous Diseases—	
Redevelopment in Queen square	61,600
The National Hospital for Nervous Diseases—new main contract	608,011
Hospital for Sick Children—cardiac block	142,027
British Postgraduate Medical Federation—	
Cardiothoracic Institute	9,000
King's College Hospital School for Medicine and Dentistry—	
Animal house	9,031
Newham Nucleus Hospital—Phase I (residential)	3,918
St. George's Hospital Medical School— redevelopment	1,650,718
St. Charles Hospital—Psychiatric and Psychogeriatric Units	4,168
Charing Cross Hospital—north block	10,154
St. Mary's Hospital Medical School—redevelopment	101,827
Eastman Dental Hospital—redevelopment	508,753
Royal Dental Hospital, School of Dental Surgery—	
Department of Prosthetic dentistry—alterations to clinical teaching facilities	443
Royal Postgraduate Medical School—	
Cycloron building—foundation repairs	296,407
Rheumatology unit—new accommodation	3,000
Whittington Hospital—	
Endrocrinology unit and diabetes unit	104,603
St. Mary's wing—library conversion	36,080
Queen Mary's College—BLQ project	21,260
The London Hospital—clinical block—phase I	43,252
St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School—	
Rationalisation of department of surgery	9,876
Total	4,630,047

Teacher Wastage

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the net wastage rate for teachers under 60 years of age in the last five years for which figures are available; how this compares with figures for the previous five years; and what proportion left the profession under schemes of early retirement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The proportion of full-time teachers under 60 years of age leaving the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in England and Wales was 6·7 per cent. in 1983-84, the latest year for which figures are available. The proportion of wastage accounted for by teachers who left under schemes of early retirement was 20·3 per cent. Figures for 1983-84 and the previous five years are as follows:

(1) *Year ending 31 March*	*(2)* *Wastage rate including early retirement* *per cent.*	*(3)* *Early retirement as proportion of wastage in column (2)* *per cent.*
1979	6·8	2·0
1980	7·2	6·0
1981	6·9	12·1

(1) Year ending 31 March	(2) Wastage rate including early retirement per cent.	(3) Early retirement as proportion of wastage in column (2) per cent.
1982	6·4	18·5
1983	6·5	20·2
1984	6·7	20·3

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the cost of teachers salaries as a proportion of total expenditure on education, including and excluding Government spending on the independent sector, in each year since 1978-79 to the latest available date, the amount spent by local education authorities on books and equipment over the same period at 1984-85 prices and indexed using 1978-79 figures as a base, and the amount of capital expenditure over the same period by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local education authorities at 1984-85 prices and indexed using 1978-79 figures as a base.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information for the schools sector is as follows:

England

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Teachers salaries *as a percentage of Total Expenditure on Schools	61 per cent.	60 per cent.	62 per cent.	63 per cent.	63 per cent.	63 per cent
Local authority expenditure on school books and equipment (£m 1984-85)	279	260	239	236	245	248
Index	100	93	86	85	88	89
Capital Expenditure on Schools by						
(a) Central Government (£m 1984-85)	43	55	49	47	37	35
Index	100	128	114	109	86	81
(b) Local authorities (£m 1984-85)	470	431	445	300	291	296
Index	100	92	95	64	62	63

* The exclusion of Government spending on the independent sector has no effect on the percentages.

Pupils (Travel Expenses)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the levels of spending on travel expenses by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* central Government for children at (i) public sector schools and (ii) independent or independent-assisted schools for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available, at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Dunn: The expenditure on transport between home and school for pupils in maintained schools in England is as follows. The corresponding information is not available for independent schools.

	£ million 1984-85 real terms*
1974-75	157·0
1975-76	171·3
1976-77	182·3
1977-78	183·1
1978-79	195·5
1979-80	192·4
1980-81	192·0
1981-82	185·3
1982-83	183·2
1983-84	184·7

*Real terms are the cash expenditures for each year repriced to 1984-85 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

School Meals

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of school meals which have been provided free of charge to pupils in each local education authority for each year from 1975 to the latest available date;

(2) how many children received, or are expected to receive, school meals in each of the last five years to 1986-87.

Mr. Dunn: Of the figures requested by the hon. Member, information is available up to 1984 only. This can be found in the annual reports of the School Meals Census, copies of which are in the Library.

PICKUP Programme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the targets of moneys directed by his Department via the PICKUP programme, together with the total cost of the programme so far, including and excluding *(a)* administration fees and *(b)* incidental costs.

Mr. Walden: The overall aid of the DES PICKUP programme is to increase and improve the provision of adult updating and training for employees provided by colleges, polytechnics and universities. The programme started in 1982 and the Department's annual expenditure, excluding administrative costs has been:

	£
1982-83	289,000
1983-84	763,996
1984-85	1,084,795
1985-86*	5,696,000

* Estimated

The PICKUP budget for 1985-86 is being deployed on:

Research and development (including for example, the PICKUP short courses directory, the Coventry consortium, a learning pack on marketing PICKUP.

The local collaborative projects programme (a programme of projects jointly funded by DES, MSC, WOED and SED to initiate or improve the identification of local training needs and provision to meet them).

The PICKUP university initiative (which aims to improve the response of universities to industry's training needs).

The staff development scheme (which supports the provision and organisation of FE staff development courses to update staff in their professional knowledge and skills relevant for PICKUP work).

Further education unit (a programme of curriculum projects and co-ordination and management of the PICKUP regional development agents).

Education support grant (to help local education authorities develop PICKUP activities).

The total expenditure to 31 March 1986 excluding the Department's administrative costs is estimated to be £7,833,791 and including those costs £8,351,269.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total value of all full-value awards granted by local authorities to students over 19 years for the last five years for which data are available at outturn and at 1984-85 prices, and indexed using 1979 as a base; and what was the total value of mandatory awards according to the same categories.

Mr. Walden: Such information is not collected according to the student's age. Students in receipt of a full-value mandatory or discretionary award are normally aged at least 19, although a small number may be younger. The information relates to maintenance expenditure in respect of all students in receipt of a full-value award.

	Mandatory awards			*All full-value awards*		
	Maintenance expenditure £ million	*In 1983-84 real terms £ million*	*Real term indexed £ million*	*Maintenance expenditure £ million*	*In 1983-84 real terms £ million*	*Real term indexed £ million*
1979-80	37	486	100.0	382	558	100.0
1980-81	398	490	100.9	451	555	99.5
1981-82	443	496	102.0	499	557	99.9
1982-83	472	493	101.5	531	555	99.3
1983-84	502	502	103.4	566	566	101.4

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of new discretionary awards made each year since 1979 *(a)* in full and *(b)* in part; and what proportion they represent within total awards made.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	Number of new full-value discretionary awards	*As percentage of all new awards*	*Number of new lesser value discretionary awards*	*As percentage of all new awards*
1979-80	29,279	15	50,034	25
1980-81	27,682	14	47,005	24
1981-82	28,362	13	57,923	26
1982-83	29,609	13	60,701	27
1983-84	31,557	13	67,136	28

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total cost, or the estimated total cost, to parents of the assessed contributions to student grants in each year since 1974 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1984-85 prices; and if he will provide forecasts for future years.

Mr. Walden: The information relates to all full-value mandatory and discretionary awards.

	Assessed parental contributions (£ million)	*Index of assessed parental contributions deflated by increases in retail prices (1974-75 = 100) at September of each entry year*
Academic year		
1974-75	62	100
1975-76	84	109
1976-77	101	114
1977-78	102	99
1978-79	99	89
1979-80	92	71
1980-81	107	71
1981-82	137	82
1982-83	167	94
1983-84	184	98

	Assessed parental contributions (£ million)	Index of assessed parental contributions deflated by increases in retail prices (1974-75 = 100) at September of each entry year
1984-85*	237	121
1985-86†	277	133
1986-87†	292	‡
1987-88†	306	‡
1988-89†	316	‡

* Estimated
† Forecasts
‡ Not available

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to re-introduce his special review of student grants.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend announced on 12 November 1985, at column 113, that, since the possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans had been ruled out at the present time by the Government, he did not consider that any useful purpose would be served by the publication of a consultative paper on student support.

Overseas Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of overseas students studying in higher education in European Economic Community member states, the United States of America, Japan and the Soviet Union, and the percentage they represent within the indicated full-time student population as a whole, for the latest year available.

Mr. Walden: The available information is as follows:

	Year	Overseas students in higher education (thousands)	Percentage of all higher education students*
Japan†	1983	9·5	0·4
Soviet Union‡	1978	62·9	1·2
United States of America‖	1981	326·3	2·6
Belgium¶	1983	12·5	12·5
Denmark	1982	3·1	2·8
France●	1983	130·2	13·7
Germany, Federal Republic of	1982	71·4	5·1
Greece	1980	7·7	6·3
Ireland	1981	2·9	4·9
Italy	1982	29·2	2·7
Luxembourg	1983	0·1	8·5
Netherlands	1982	4·6	1·2
Portugal	1981	1·7	1·8
Spain	1980	11·0	1·6
United Kingdom■	1983	48·1	•5·4

* Including part-time students.
† Includes private sector and correspondence courses.
‡ Includes evening and correspondence courses.
‖ Includes private sector.
¶ Universities and equivalent degree granting institutions only.
● Universities only.
■ Excludes private sector institutions.
• This percentage increases to 8·3 based on full-time students.

Open University

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total cost to Open University students of summer school fees together with the number of students embarking on a summer school course, by subject, for each of the last five years for which data are available.

Mr. Walden: The Open University's income from school fees, and student numbers by faculty, are given in the table. Information on student numbers by subject is not available.

		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total income from summer school fees	£ million	2·043	2·442	2·858	3·332	3·436	*3·443
Number of summer school attenders by Faculty							
Arts		7,115	7,159	7,770	8,355	6,767	6,355
Social Sciences		5,976	5,777	6,669	6,347	6,230	5,562
Mathematics		4,904	5,000	5,622	6,324	6,162	5,565
Education		185	129	106	96	73	94
Science		5,532	5,834	6,641	7,799	7,720	7,150
Technology		6,322	6,233	6,472	7,094	7,509	7,546
'U' courses†		‡—	‡—	860	1,408	1,367	1,295
Total summer school student numbers		30,034	30,132	34,140	37,423	35,828	33,567

* Estimate
† Interdisciplinary courses
‡ No school leavers in these years

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost of an Open University ordinary degree in each of the last five years for which data are available at *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Walden: The cost is composed of three elements: tuition fees, summer school fees and ancillary costs such as books and travel. The first two are known but ancillary costs can only be estimated. An average student attends four summer schools. On the basis the costs sought are as follows:

	Cash	1984-85 prices
	£	£
1981	1,278	1,490
1982	1,454	1,584

	Cash	1984-85 prices
	£	£
1983	1,552	1,619
1984	1,[illegible]	1,654
1985	1,768	1,684

Higher Education (Staff)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* teaching staff and *(b)* research staff were employed in higher education in May 1979 and for each year since.

Mr. Walden: The available information on numbers of teaching and research staff in British universities and in public sector higher education in England since 1978-89 is as follows:

thousands

	Universities Great Britain*		Maintained institutions England†	Direct grant and voluntary institutions England‡
	Full-time only		Full-time equivalent	Full-time only
	Teaching staff	Research staff	Teaching staff	Teaching staff
1978-79	33·4	7·4	25·8	3·5
1979-80	34·1	8·2	26·0	3·3
1980-81	34·1	8·9	25·4	3·1
1981-82	33·7	9·2	25·7	3·0
1982-83	31·8	10·2	26·2	2·9
1983-84	31·4	10·6	25·9	2·8
1984-85	31·2	11·3	27·8	‖

* As at 31 December.
† Estimated, as at January of each year.
‡ Including a small non-advanced component, as at March of each year.
‖ Provisonal.
‖ Not available.

Information on research staff in public sector higher education in England is not available on the same basis. The numbers funded by sources other than the local education authority were 400 in 1983-84 and 450 in 1984-85.

O-Level Pupils

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, at the latest date for which figures are available, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of pupils with five or more O-levels or O-level equivalent remaining in full-time education *(a)* on initial entry and *(b)* for one or more years, in each local authority in England, and in England as a whole.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in the form requested. The proportions of maintained school leavers in England with five or more higher grade O/CSE passes who had either stayed on at school for sixth form study or who had left at the minimum school leaving age, intending to continue full-time education elsewhere are as shown:

Leavers from maintained schools in England with five or more higher grade(1) passes at O-level or CSE.
Total of leavers aged 15 who intended to pursue full-time courses of further education and leavers aged 16 or over, as a percentage of all leavers with five or more higher grade(1) passes at O-level or CSE.

	Data averaged over the academic years 1981-82 to 1983-84
Barking	81·9
Barnet	95·9
Bexley	89·3
Brent	95·4
Bromley	88·4
Croydon	90·4
Ealing	91·5
Enfield	91·6
Haringey	91·1
Harrow	93·6
Havering	86·9
Hillingdon	90·1
Hounslow	92·7
Kingston-upon-Thames	95·5
Merton	90·4
Newham	86·0
Redbridge	90·9
Richmond-upon-Thames	92·5
Sutton	90·4
Waltham Forest	94·7
ILEA	92·4
Birmingham	87·1
Coventry	88·3
Dudley	83·1
Sandwell	82·9
Solihull	88·4
Walsall	84·0
Wolverhampton	86·7
Knowsley	86·0
Liverpool	87·2
St. Helens	79·9
Sefton	90·4
Wirral	88·3
Bolton	81·3
Bury	84·3
Manchester	86·1
Oldham	84·1
Rochdale	82·3
Salford	80·8
Stockport	87·3
Tameside	75·4
Trafford	85·9
Wigan	80·5

	Data averaged over the academic years 1981-82 to 1983-84
Barnsley	83·7
Doncaster	85·5
Rotherham	77·4
Sheffield	87·3
Bradford	89·9
Calderdale	90·1
Kirklees	91·0
Leeds	88·9
Wakefield	86·0
Gateshead	85·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	92·4
North Tyneside	89·7
South Tyneside	86·8
Sunderland	79·9
Avon	87·3
Bedfordshire	85·0
Berkshire	90·7
Buckinghamshire	91·4
Cambridgeshire	88·5
Cheshire	86·9
Cleveland	83·8
Cornwall	92·6
Cumbria	83·8
Derbyshire	84·4
Devon	88·1
Dorset	88·4
Durham	84·3
East Sussex	90·5
Essex	87·8
Gloucestershire	86·2
Hampshire	88·9
Hereford and Worcester	90·9
Hertfordshire	91·9
Humberside	85·9
Isle of Wight	95·3
Kent	92·4
Lancashire	84·2
Leicestershire	91·1
Lincolnshire	88·3
Norfolk	85·8
North Yorkshire	89·8
Northamptonshire	85·0
Northumberland	88·3
Nottinghamshire	86·3
Oxfordshire	90·5
Shropshire	89·9
Somerset	85·9
Staffordshire	84·1
Suffolk	83·8
Surrey	92·4
Warwickshire	87·2
West Sussex	92·1
Wiltshire	87·9
Total	88·1

1.0 Level grades A-C, CSE grade 1
Source: School leavers survey. Data subject to sampling error.

Nursery Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentages of three and four-year-old children in each local education authority area, and in England as a whole, are *(a)* in full-time nursery education and *(b)* in part-time nursery education; and how this compares with each of the last six years.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Independent Schools (Teachers' Salaries)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average levels of salaries for teachers in the independent sector.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not collected by the Department.

Vocational Training

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the system of vocational training within educational institutions in member states of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department receives regular information on vocational education and training within the member states of the European Community from a variety of sources, including the various institutions of the Community and other international institutions such as, for example, the OECD. I would draw the hon. Member's attention, in particular, to the publications of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). Its vocational training bulletin appears three times a year and copies are available in the Library.

Academic Staff (Redundancies)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing how many academic staff in universities, polytechnics, higher education colleges and further education colleges have been made redundant or have taken early retirement since 1979; what proportion of the academic work force they represent; and how many in each category had tenured posts.

Mr. Walden: The number of academic staff in British universities made redundant or taking early retirement between 1981-82 and 1984-85 when the scheme was in operation is 3,317. This represents 7·8 per cent. of the 1979-80 staff, 7·7 per cent. of the 1980-81 staff, 7·7 per cent. of the 1981-82 staff, 7·9 per cent. of the 1982-83 staff, 7·9 per cent. of the 1983-84 staff and 7·8 per cent. of the 1984-85 staff.

Since 1979 the number of polytechnic teachers in England and Wales who had applied under the premature retirement scheme was 1,784. If this is expressed as a percentage of the full-time staff in each financial year from 1978-79 to 1983-84, the percentages are 10·6 per cent., 10·5 per cent., 10·6 per cent., 11·0 per cent., 11·2 per cent. and 11·5 per cent., respectively. Redundancies and early retirements for staff in other further and higher education colleges cannot readily be separated from the total number of redundancies and early retirements amongst all further and adult education staff and those from some independent schools.

Information on tenured posts is not available.

New School Building

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department has ceased to collect information on the numbers of new primary and secondary schools built annually in England; and how his Department surveys the progress of their construction.

Mr. Dunn: This information is no longer required for the Department's operational purposes. Local education authorities have a duty to ensure that sufficient schools are provided and progress with the construction of schools in the maintained sector is a matter for them, or, in the case of voluntary aided and special agreement schools, for the voluntary body concerned. The Department continues to maintain a record containing information about school building projects approved by my right hon. Friend.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the amount of Government expenditure on the assisted places scheme for each year since its introduction, *(b)* the percentage this represents of total education spending, *(c)* the number of children covered by the scheme and *(d)* the proportion they represent within the maintained school population.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

	Expenditure on Assisted Places Scheme (£m financial year)	*Percentage of total education spending*	*Number of Assisted Pupils (Academic year)*	*Percentage of maintained secondary school population*
1981-82	3·022	0·03	4,185	0·11
1982-83	8·691	0·07	8,616	0·23
1983-84	14·995	0·12	13,102	0·36
1984-85	22·152	0·17	17,386	0·49

School Leaving Age

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received advocating that the school leaving age should be raised for all those who do not take a place on the youth training scheme, or any other recognised training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: None. The Government are not considering raising the school leaving age and believe that the many educational and training opportunities currently available for young people are most effectively offered on a voluntary basis.

Research Projects

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by number and value the research projects which have been funded by research councils in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The number and value of research grants funded by the research councils in the academic years 1980-81 to 1984-85, in cash terms, are as follows:

£ million

Research Council	*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*	
	Number	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*
AFRC	107	4·4	134	3·9	105	2·4	142	4·8	103	5·0
MRC*	472	16·2	495	19·4	516	21·6	473	20·8	440	18·8
NERC	176	3·4	160	3·7	180	4·0	120	3·5	128	3·7
SERC	2,047	77·5	1,980	78·1	2,141	85·5	2,151	80·5	†2,269	97·0
ESRC	364	5·2	177	4·4	232	5·8	158	3·7	186	5·9

* The MRC figures relate to short term ssupport only. Information on long term upport by the MRC is not available.
† Provisional figure.

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by number and value the alpha rated research projects which have not proceeded by reason of lack of funding by a research council in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The number and value of alpha rated research grants which the research councils have been unable to fund in each of the past five years are as follows:

£ million

Research Council	*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*	
	Number	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*
AFRC	—	—	—	—	47	1·2	39	1·5	93	5·4
MRC	59	6·1	66	6·1	25	5·9	199	15·7	87	12·0
NERC	50	0·8	153	4·0	60	2·0	185	7·2	43	3·5
SERC	148	3·4	451	16·1	452	20·1	490	16·5	437	*16·9

ESRC do not use the term "alpha rated". Grant applications are either accepted or rejected.
* Provisional

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the value of pure and applied research work undertaken by universities and centres of higher education which has been funded by business and educational and charitable foundations in each of the past five years.

Mr. Walden: The income of universities in Great Britain from research grants and contracts other than from Government sources has been:

	£ million
1980-81	*77·2
1981-82	74·8
1982-83	90·7
1983-84	110·7
1984-85	†

* Data in 1980-81 not collected in same format as later years.
† Not yet available.

Comparable information for the public sector of higher education is not available.

Newcastle College of Law

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local education authorities at present do not award maintenance grants to students at the college of law and as to which authorities will not award grants for students beginning courses at the college of law in September.

Mr. Walden: The Department does not collect information on the discretionary awards policies of local education authorities.

British Antarctic Survey

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the grant proposed for the British Antarctic Survey for the financial year 1986-87; and how much was granted in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Walden: The Natural Environment Research Council, of which the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) is a component institute, has proposed an allocation of £13,340,000 for BAS in the 1986-87 financial year. The allocation in the previous years was:

	£
1983-84	10,356,000
1984-85	11,245,000
1985-86	12,790,000

Royal Research Ship John Biscoe

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has on the future of the royal research ship John Biscoe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The RRS John Biscoe is now 29 years old and although structurally sound cannot reasonably be expected to continue Antarctic service much beyond the late 1980s. Discussions are currently taking place between the Department and the Natural Environment Research Council on the future logistic and research requirements of the British Antarctic Survey. The issue of a replacement for the RRS John Biscoe is being addressed as part of those discussions.

Scientific Research

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of the establishment of the Save British Science movement he intends to review the present policies towards scientific research.

Mr. Walden: Government policies for the support of science are reviewed annually as part of the cycle of public expenditure surveys. The Government will continue to listen carefully to the views of distinguished British scientists.

University and Polytechnic Teachers and Researchers (Salaries)

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to institute a review of the salaries of university and polytechnic teachers and researchers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: None. The pay machinery for university teachers provides for a two-staged negotiating procedure. First, the staff side and university employers must agree to a proposal and, second, that proposal must then be agreed by a committee consisting of representatives of both sides and of the Government. Pay negotiations are in progress between the staff side and university employers.

The salaries of polytechnic teachers are considered by the Burnham further education committee. Negotiations which provided for increases phased between April and December 1985 were completed last November.

Research and Development

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the sums allocated in 1984-85 for civil and military research and development.

Mr. Walden: Details of Government expenditures on research and development are given in the annual review of Government funded R and D, which is available in the Library.

Clinical Academic Staff (Salaries)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet come to a decision on the maintenance of parity between the salaries of clinical academic staff and those of their professional colleagues in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend is not yet able to make a statement about the pay of clinical academic staff.

Grove School, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will use his discretionary powers to halt the closure of Grove school, Portsmouth until a survey of all schools and education needs is carried out in Portsmouth.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend approved Hampshire local education authority's proposals to cease to maintain the Grove middle school, Portsmouth, in October last year. He has no power to reverse or withdraw this decision.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue

Mr. Cartwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of unanswered letters in Inland Revenue offices at the most recent convenient date; what is the average delay in replying to letters; and what steps he is taking to seek to reduce these delays.

Mr. Moore: The Inland Revenue estimates that there were 1,100,000 unanswered letters on hand on 10 January 1986. It has insufficient information from which to determine the average delay in replying to letters. On 12 November 1985, the Inland Revenue announced measures to clear its backlog of work and I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 15 November 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker).

Indexation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 12 February 1985, *Official Report*, columns *145-46*, he will update and publish the table detailing the breakdown costs or yields of reinstating the indexed 1978-79 tax regime, taking the 1985-86 income tax base.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Revenue

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 14 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *288*, he will publish and update the table on direct revenue effects for 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: The information is as follows:

£ million

Income tax receipts	*At current prices*	*At 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	18,748	18,748
1979-80	20,599	17,620
1980-81	24,295	17,520
1981-82	28,725	18,810
1982-83	30,474	18,640
1983-84	31,280	18,330
1984-85	32,642	18,290
1985-86†	35,000	18,650

* Using the GDP deflator.
† Provisional.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 11 February 1985, *Official Report*, columns *60-61*, he will publish and update the table on total estimated tax revenue, broken down into the headings shown, for 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: Estimates based on the Autumn Statement forecast for 1985-86 are given in the table.

	£ billion	*Percentage of gross domestic product at market prices*
Income tax	35	9·9
Non-North-Sea corporation tax	7	2·1
North sea taxes*	11	3·2
Capital taxes and stamp duty	3	0·9
National insurance contributions—employees	12	3·3
National insurance contributions—employers	13	3·5
National insurance surcharge	—	—
Local authority rates	14	3·8
Taxes on expenditure	41	11·6
Total†	137	38·4

*Before advanced corporation tax set-off.
†Components do not sum to total because of rounding.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 28 March 1984, *Official Report*, column *206*, he will publish and update the table showing the real changes in revenue sources between 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Moore: Estimates based on the Autumn Statement forecast for 1985-86 are given in the table. They differ from the estimates given on 29 March 1985 (WA col. 366) because the latter were based on the FSBR forecast and on an earlier estimate of the GDP deflator (used to revalue the 1978-79 estimates of revenue).

	£ billion (1985-86 prices)
Income tax	−0·6
Non-North-Sea corporation tax	+0·2
North sea taxes*	+10·3
Capital taxes and stamp duty	+1·0
National insurance contributions—employees	+4·1
National insurance contributions—employers	+1·0
National insurance surcharge	−3·9
Local authorities rates	+2·8
Taxes on expenditure†	+12·4
Total change	+27·3

* Before advanced corporation tax setoff.
† Including the gas levy: in the Answer of 28 March 1984 the gas levy (of nil and £0·5 billion respectively in 1978-79 and 1984-85) was included in "North Sea taxes" instead.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether, in the manner of the answer given on 4 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *397*, he will publish and update the table on mortgage interest tax relief by income group for 1985-86;

(2) whether, in the manner of the answer given on 4 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *397*, he will *(a)* publish and update the table on restructuring mortgage interest relief to different rates of taxation for 1985-86, *(b)* report how many mortgagors receive relief at rates in excess of the basic rates of income tax and *(c)* report how many persons currently pay tax only at standard rate would pay tax at a higher rate if mortgage tax relief were removed from higher rates of tax; and what would be the additional income to the Exchequer.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxpayers

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, he will publish and update the table on the number of taxpayers for 1984-85 and 1985-86 on the same basis as the answer given on 25 January 1984, *Official Report*, columns *607-8*.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Debt Default

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contingency provisions exist to assist United Kingdom banks in the event of default by major debtors of those banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Should such cases arise, each case would need to be considered on its merits.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the use of the business expansion scheme for the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families; and whether the use of the scheme for this purpose is limited to people designated as homeless under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *651*]: The business expansion scheme is designed to encourage investment in unquoted United Kingdom trading companies. Whether or not a company which provides bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families will satisfy the conditions of the scheme will depend on the particular circumstances.

PRIME MINISTER

Mrs. Groce and Mrs. Jarrett

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Prime Minister what formal expressions of regret have been sent by Her Majesty's Government to the families of Mrs. Groce and the late Mrs. Jarrett; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No formal expressions of regret were sent but I understand that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary expressed his personal sympathy to Mrs. Groce's family for the injury she had suffered. I also take this opportunity to express sympathy to the families.

Commission for Racial Equality (Investigation)

Sir John Farr asked the Prime Minister what are the relative priorities in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards industry accorded to *(a)* co-operation with investigations by the Commission for Racial Equality, *(b)* the encouragement of greater efficiency through a reduction in costs and *(c)* the recruitment to industry of a higher proportion of the most able candidates.

The Prime Minister: The Commission for Racial Equality has powers to conduct formal investigations within industry under the terms of the Race Relations Act 1976.

The Government's policies on inflation and deregulation are aimed at reducing industrial costs as a basis for increasing competitiveness and jobs. Recruitment based on objective criteria is an essential requisite if employers are to select the best available candidates.

The Government are fully committed to policies which aim to promote racial equality, to increase efficiency and secure a better utilisation of human resources.

Mr. Abdul Shamji

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions on which she met Mr. Abdul Shamji of Gomba in the course of her official duties over the past four years; and what the purpose of the meeting was in each case.

The Prime Minister: It would be neither practicable nor reasonable for me to answer questions about where and when I meet private named individuals; and I do not propose to do so.

Records show that Mr. Shamji has attended official receptions at 10 Downing Street on the following occasions:

Reception	*Date*
Red Cross	19 October 1983
Commonwealth youth exchange	11 February 1985

Public Expenditure

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister, further to her reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *709*, whether she will estimate the costs associated with breaking down the Government's annual public expenditure plans by reference to each English region.

The Prime Minister: Most public expenditure is planned on a national basis as detailed in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702). For Government Departments whose spending benefits the country as a whole, it would not be meaningful to plan expenditure by region; the costs of attempting to do so would be high but cannot be precisely quantified. For those public services which are implemented by local government, detailed budgets covering the relevant areas are drawn up by the responsible authorities and details of regional spending by health authorities are available in the annual Health Estimates.

Estimates of past levels of spending by these authorities, grouped on a regional basis, are published in the Central Statistical Office publication *Regional Trends*, along with central Government regional aid to industry. Estimates are also included of past expenditure on certain social security benefits by regions. The information is given in tables 4.3, 6.2, 8.9 and 10.1 of the 1985 edition of *Regional Trends*.

Economic Sub-Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the recent revelations of Government discussions on Westland plc, she will now list the membership of the Economic Committee of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my reply of 14 November 1984 to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell).

Mr. Spearing asked the Prime Minister if she will state the terms of the decision taken at the meeting of 9 December 1985 referred to in her speech of 15 January, *Official Report*, column 1094.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to what I said in my speech on 15 January at column 1094.

Ministers (Letters)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the circumstances in which the existence of letters to Ministers or to her marked "Private and Strictly Confidential" is denied.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 17 January.

Solicitor-General (Letter)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister (1) if in the course of the inquiry into the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter of 4 January, any official of the Department of Trade and Industry has been interviewed;

(2) who is conducting the inquiry into the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter of 4 January; and what resources are being devoted to the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, (Mr. Williams) on 16 January at column 629.

Westland plc

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will authorise the publication of the notes prepared by civil servants on 8 January on the meeting between Sir Raymond Lygo and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the minute of the ministerial meeting on 9 December which discussed the possibility of a further meeting of Ministers in that week.

The Prime Minister: No. the normal rules for the release of Cabinet committee papers will apply.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if it was with her authority that an official from her office contacted the British Broadcasting Corporation and asked it not to broadcast an interview to be given by the then Secretary of State for Defence the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) on 22 December; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Against the background of a Cabinet decision on 19 December reported to the House that same day at question time, my chief press secretary, with my authority, sought to persuade neither the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry nor the then Secretary of State for Defence to participate in BBC Radio 4's "World this Weekend" programme on Sunday 22 December. In the course of this, he communicated to the BBC the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's decision to withdraw his consent to its broadcasting an interview with him which had been pre-recorded. In the event, interviews with both Ministers were broadcast.

Dr. Gilbert asked the Prime Minister if any officials in the Department of Trade and Industry have complained to either the permanent secretary or the head of the Civil Service about the accuracy of the report prepared by Mr. Mogg of the meeting between Sir Raymond Lygo and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Prime Minister if Ministers or officials of Her Majesty's Government have had discussions with members of the United States Administration about the position of Westland.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any view or advice offered by the United States Government nor of any request from Ministers and officials of Her Majesty's Government to the United States Government in relation to the position of Westland. Information about the Government's approach has been provided in the normal way.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will now authorise the publication of the document of 4 October prepared by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Westland helicopters;

(2) if she will now authorise the publication of the document of 18 October prepared by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Westland helicopters.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister (1) whether she authorised Mr. Jeffrey Archer to read the Cabinet and departmental papers relating to the Government's policy towards Westland;

(2) what access to Cabinet papers is given to Mr. Jeffrey Archer.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Jeffrey Archer has no access to Cabinet or departmental papers.

Ministers (Interviews)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the events surrounding approaches by her press officer to the BBC about the appearance of Ministers on the BBC radio programme "The World this Weekend" on 22 December 1985.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is the practice of her press office with regard to making requests to the broadcasting authorities to provide advance information concerning the identity of right hon. and hon. Members who are to be interviewed; if this procedure applies to right hon. and hon. Members of all parties; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As part of its co-ordinating function, and to amplify the information contained in the *Radio Times* and the *TV Times*, my press office has a regular two-way exchange with producers of a number of radio and television programmes. The objective is to establish the subjects the producers intend to pursue and the members of the Government they wish, or have arranged, to take part.

British Aerospace

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps urgently to seek to improve relations between Her Majesty's Government and British Aerospace; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the exchange of letters between Sir Raymond Lygo, chief executive of British Aerospace, and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry dated 17 January 1986, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

17th January, 1986

Dear Secretary of State,

As we have stated publicly, British Aerospace regrets the controversy which has developed over what was said at the meeting held in your office on 8th January, 1986 and, of course, I totally share that view. We have not sought this situation, nor at any time has the Company or I sought to question your integrity. I understand that likewise you are not questioning my own integrity either personally or as the Chief Executive of British Aerospace.

In the House of Commons yesterday, in answer to questions, the Prime Minister did not demur from the view that there must have been a misunderstanding of the remarks you made to me at the meeting. I understand that you have since expressed your assent to that general proposition. I welcome this. If, indeed, you said only that it was in the national interest that the present uncertainty over Westland's future be ended as soon as possible and not, as I previously understood you to say, that the continuing campaign on behalf of the European Consortium was against the national interest, I would accept that. I also accept that you at no time said that "British Aerospace should withdraw from the European Consortium", nor have I ever suggested that you used those words. However, in the course of our discussion of the possible risks to British Aerospace of the leading role we had recently adopted in support of the European Consortium — risks which we mutually recognised — we discussed the possibility of the Company reverting to the lower profile it had previously adopted in order to lessen those risks. I believe it may have been during this part of our conversation that an unfortunate misunderstanding arose and it may well be that you intended to infer that, in view of British Aerospace's wider interests, I personally should withdraw in the sense of lowering my profile as spokesman for the Consortium.

I notice there are certain other discrepancies in our respective records of the meeting, but these appear relatively minor.

I very much hope the matter can be left on this basis.

I have shown this letter to my Chairman, Sir Austin Pearce, who fully approves its content.

Yours sincerely,
Ray Lygo

17 January 1986

Dear Sir Raymond,

Thank you for your letter of today's date.

I am most grateful to you for writing. I believe the misunderstanding between us has now been cleared up. Certainly I do not question—and have never sought to question—your integrity, either personally or as Chief Executive of British Aerospace.

Yours Sincerely,
Leon Brittan

Gifts

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister if she will list all the gifts she has received in her official capacity above the value of £1,000 and which she has not retained personally on the grounds that their value is in excess of the permitted limit, since 1 January 1984.

The Prime Minister: There have been several such gifts. I am not, however, prepared to give details of the individual gifts which I have received; to do so would risk discourtesy to the donors. Such gifts have been dealt with according to the rules, which I referred to in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 15 January at column *578*.

DEFENCE

HMS Endurance

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the refitting of HMS Endurance; and what is the estimated cost of the refit.

Mr. Lee: HMS Endurance is to be refitted at Devonport dockyard starting in mid-1986. For planning purposes, a cost for the work of some £16 million has been assumed.

Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has made in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for the negotiation of reductions in battlefield nuclear weapons by both the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Stanley: Battlefield nuclear weapons are not currently the subject of arms control negotiations. Priority is rightly being given by the United States and the Soviet Union to reaching agreements on strategic and intermediate range weapons. However, NATO has made clear its commitment to retain only the minimum forces required for deterrence, as has been demonstrated by the withdrawal of 1,000 warheads from Europe since 1979, and the decision at Montebello in 1983 to remove a further 1,400 over the next few years.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date and location of the next meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's nuclear planning group.

Mr. Stanley: The next meeting of the NATO nuclear planning group will be held in the Federal Republic of Germany in spring 1986. Further details will be released nearer the time.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when SACEUR's team on the modernisation of United States' battlefield nuclear weapons assigned to support the British Army of the Rhine will hold discussions with his Department;

(2) whether the W-82 155mm artillery fired atomic projectile is being considered as a replacement for existing nuclear artillery shells assigned to the British Army of the Rhine;

(3) whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's modernisation plan for its battlefield nuclear weapons includes a new short-range ballistic missile and a nuclear version of the multiple launch rocket system.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 14 January, at columns *562-63*, and to the NATO nuclear planning group's final communiqué of 30 October 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

The details of SACEUR's proposals for reductions and improvements affecting NATO's nuclear forces in Europe are classified.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence's predecessor has made it clear that a report

would be made to Parliament in respect of modernisation affecting British forces when the appropriate moment comes.

Research and Development

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the proposed military research and development science budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested for 1986-87 is not yet available. Details of defence research and development expenditure for 1985-86 and earlier years are given in tables 3.2 and 3.3 of the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1985, Volumne 2" (Cmnd. 9430-II).

Apprentices (Royal Dockyards)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence, in the last two years for which figures are available, how many apprentices who completed their training in Devonport or Rosyth dockyards found work in Devonport dockyard and Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the numbers of apprentices re-employed as craftsmen on completion of training in the last two years at Devonport and Rosyth dockyards.

Year	*Devonport*	*Rosyth*
1984	242	100
1985	128	104

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed in apprentice training in Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: There are 46 instructional staff employed in the apprentice training centre at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many apprentices have been trained in Devonport in each of the last 10 years; and in what skills.

Mr. Lee: Apprenticeships normally take four years. Those completing training in each of the years in question were as follows:

Devonport Dockyard

	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Fitter Turner	64	89	112	105	78	80	91	96	91	62
Electrical Fitter	7	49	57	57	55	54	58	56	62	52
Boilermaker	10	10	4	13	13	12	9	9	7	8
Iron Caulker Riveter	0	0	3	7	7	8	6	10	12	3
Joiner	3	10	8	14	6	6	4	10	9	1
Coppersmith	5	18	7	17	11	14	12	8	12	0
Welder	1	6	5	11	12	9	12	10	11	7
Painter Glazier	7	6	9	10	5	4	4	8	7	3
Blacksmith	6	2	2	6	2	5	2	5	5	2
Plumber	4	5	11	8	14	5	10	8	7	0
Shipwright	0	0	30	35	26	30	38	51	13	2
Founder	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	3	4	0
Hosemaker	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patternmaker	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Sailmaker	2	1	4	4	3	4	8	3	4	2
Total	109	197	254	291	234	233	257	277	245	142
Technicians	24	36	32	40	20	15	20	33	28	8
Grand Total	133	233	286	331	254	248	277	310	273	150

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed in apprentice training in Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Lee: There are 61 instructional staff employed in the apprentice training centre at Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many applicants there were for the apprentice training schemes in Devonport and Rosyth dockyards in the last three years.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available. However, the numbers of applicants at each dockyard in the last three years who sat the apprentices training scheme entry examination were as follows:

	Devonport dockyard	*Rosyth dockyard*
1983	1,407	1,110
1984	1,401	1,078
1985	935	1,109

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many apprentices were trained in Portsmouth dockyard for the five years before training ceased.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the number of craft apprenticeships completed in Portsmouth dockyard in each of the five years up to 1981, when training was suspended. Apprentice training was resumed under the reformed Portsmouth fleet maintenance and repair organisation in 1984.

Year	*Number craft apprenticeships completed*
1976	136
1977	114
1978	148
1979	177
1980	177

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what apprentice courses are available in Rosyth dockyard;

(2) what apprentice courses are available in Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Lee: Apprentice courses are available at Devonport and Rosyth dockyards for training in the following trades: fitter turner; electrical fitter; boilermaker; iron caulker riveter; joiner; coppersmith; welder; painter-glazier; blacksmith; plumber; shipwright; founder; hosemaker; patternmaker; sailmaker.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many apprentices have been trained in Rosyth in each of the last 10 years and in what skills.

Mr. Lee: Apprenticeships normally take four years. Those completing training in each of the years in question were as follows:

Rosyth Dockyard

	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Fitter turner	31	38	40	48	39	47	44	37	32	39
Electrical fitter	27	34	40	37	32	29	32	39	31	38
Boilermaker	0	2	5	7	4	4	10	12	4	4
Iron caulker riveter	1	0	3	6	5	6	7	10	5	7
Joiner	6	4	3	3	5	4	6	6	5	4
Coppersmith	1	10	5	15	9	8	14	17	5	6
Welder	0	1	8	8	5	8	12	9	5	5
Painter-glazier	0	1	1	3	2	2	3	1	1	3
Blacksmith	0	0	1	2	0	2	3	3	2	1
Plumber	0	2	2	4	3	3	5	7	2	3
Shipwright	13	20	26	20	27	22	27	20	15	14
Founder	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0
Hosemaker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patternmaker	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sailmaker	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	0
Total	80	114	136	156	131	137	165	163	109	125
Technicians	27	31	38	36	29	19	27	20	19	0
Grand total	107	145	174	192	160	156	192	183	128	125

Flight Lieutenant M. J. J. Gray

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the procedures and conduct of the Royal Air Force in the time leading up to the court-martial of Flight Lieutenant M. J. J. Gray on 16 October 1985 at RAF Station Laarbruch.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Defence School of Music

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the escalation in costs of resiting the Defence School of Music at Deal.

Mr. Lee: The earlier studies on the Defence School of Music made certain assumptions about musical training requirements and methods, on which the capital cost estimates were based. More detailed studies during 1985 resulted in proposals for enhanced training and additional facilities. The estimated capital costs accordingly rose from £5·8 million to £10·6 million. We are now examining the requirement for instruction and buildings in order to bring the cost down to the original estimate.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any assessment of the cost of siting the Defence School of Music at Portsmouth, as compared with Deal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The investment appraisal carried out early in 1985 showed that the total costs of siting the Defence School of Music were greater at Eastney than at Deal. The subsequent increase in the estimated capital costs at Deal were the result of enhanced requirements and therefore would have applied equally to a Defence School of Music site elsewhere. These costs are now being re-examined.

Westland plc

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what access Mr. Jeffrey Archer has been given to his Department's papers regarding Westland.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Tuscano Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he is satisfied with progress on the Shorts Tuscano aircraft;

(2) when the first 12 Shorts Tuscano aircraft will enter Royal Air Force service;

(3) when the Shorts Tuscano will enter Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There has been some slippage in the programme, due partly to a strike at Shorts, which is expected to lead to a few months' delay in the delivery of the early Tuscano T Mk 1 aircraft. The first aircraft is forecast to be delivered in early 1987 and the first 12 by the end of 1987. We hope to be able to recover some of the slippage later in the delivery programme.

Armoured Personnel Carriers (Berlin Brigade)

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any orders have been signed for armoured personnel carriers intended for use by the Berlin Brigade of the British Army.

Mr. Stanley: No orders have been signed.

Berlin (Procurement)

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what financial limits are placed on procurement contracts which may be entered into by the Commander and Military Governor of Berlin's British sector.

Mr. Stanley: The GOC Berlin, in common with other military commanders, has limited delegated financial powers to approve local procurement of goods and services. These limits vary depending upon the commodity being purchased, but do not exceed £2,500. Orders in excess of this limit, even though they may be contracted for locally, are subject to the prior approval of HQ BAOR.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 21 January 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Production

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish statistics for each member state of the European Economic Community showing how far milk production has been restricted consequent upon the introduction of production quotas.

Mr. Gummer: The milk supplementary levy system was introduced on 2 April 1984. The table compares deliveries to dairies throughout the Community for the 1983-84 and 1984-85 marketing years. These figures show that in most member states, and in the Community as a whole, deliveries fell during the first year of implementation of quotas.

Milk Supplementary Levy: Deliveries to dairies in EC-10, 1983-84

	Deliveries 1983-84 '000 tonnes	*Deliveries 1984-85 (Provisional)* '000 tonnes
Belgium	3,269	3,093
Denmark	5,280	4,934
France	26,345	25,616
Germany	25,472	23,544
Greece	429	415
Ireland	5,436	5,600
Italy	8,289	8,285
Luxembourg	282	292
Netherlands	12,929	12,138
United Kingdom	16,573	15,361
EC—10	104,429	99,473

Source: CRONOS (extracted 17 December 1985)

ENERGY

Hinckley Point

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) pursuant to his reply of 21 November, *Official Report*, column 279, whether any steam or gases were released to the atmosphere from the steam side circuits of the boiler systems of reactor 4 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 25 October; whether any part or parts of the steam side circuits became contaminated during the incident; whether any steam or gases released may have been contaminated; and if he will estimate the radioactive inventory of any such releases;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 21 November, *Official Report*, column 279, if he will state the volume of water, in gallons, that escaped into reactor 4 of Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 25 October.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Coalmining Subsidence

Mr. Concannon asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his conclusions on the Waddilove committee report on coalmining subsidence claims.

Mr. David Hunt: The Waddilove report raised a number of complex issues which are undergoing full and careful consideration; the Government's response will be published as soon as possible.

Coal Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much coal mined in the United Kingdom was exported in each of the last 10 years; what were the main destinations; and what is his policy towards coal exports by the National Coal Board and the extent to which such exports should be profitable.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government expect the National Coal Board to maximise its long-term profitability by securing those sales which are profitable on a continuing basis in competition with other fuels. Within this the level and profitability of NCB coal exports is a matter for the board's commercial judgment.

Details of coal exports since 1976 are shown in the table.

United Kingdom coal exports

Thousand tonnes

Destination	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*	*Total*
France	460	813	950	750	1,474	2,624	1,911	1,565	778	214	11,539
Denmark	5	85	125	176	606	1,925	2,057	1,571	612	1,117	8,279
Federal Republic of Germany	253	426	495	609	1,150	1,498	789	624	122	160	6,126
Finland	1	1	6	10	8	1,168	1,102	765	114	1	3,176
Irish Republic	95	165	202	226	289	491	469	429	309	342	3,017
Netherlands	152	184	174	161	222	783	502	318	71	12	2,579
Belgium/Luxembourg	263	134	135	189	185	347	134	105	74	35	1,601
Sweden	69	37	28	115	30	218	113	201	34	43	888
Norway	100	76	79	78	62	64	45	68	24	12	608
Other countries	38	20	72	25	16	395	265	694	302	302	2,129
Total	1,436	1,941	2,266	2,339	4,042	9,513	7,387	6,340	2,440	2,238	39,942

* January to November (provisional).
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Hinckley Point

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will explain the circumstances in which potassium iodate tablets were taken by personnel at Hinckley Point nuclear power station of 29 November; what was the maximum level of individual exposures anticipated at that time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the maximum individual effective dose equivalent commitment in milli-sieverts of any person as a result of the site incident at Hinckley Point nuclear power station on 29 November; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list and describe the calculated total radioactive inventory of the gas, including any fissile particles and debris, released from reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station during and subsequent to the site incident on 29 November; what was the calculated collective effective dose equivalent commitment in man-sieverts arising from this incident; and what proportions were attributable to *(a)* personnel on the site and *(b)* members of the public outside the site;

(4) what were the quantities of carbon dioxide gas coolant released from reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station during and subsequent to the site incident on 29 November *(a)* as an unfiltered escape and *(b)* as deliberate releases, stating the degree to which these were filtered to remove fissile particles and debris; and if he will list and describe the radioactive inventory of the gas in the reactor immediately prior to the incident;

(5) if he will estimate the approximate number of days in a year on which fissile products from damaged nuclear fuel elements are present in the carbon dioxide gas coolant of *(a)* a typical Magnox power reactor and *(b)* a typical advanced gas-cooled reactor; and if he will describe the typical length of delay before a damaged fuel element is withdrawn from a reactor;

(6) if he will publish a list showing, for each type of nuclear power reactor in commercial use, and for each type of nuclear fuel element, the typical rate of failure of fuel element integrity under normal operating conditions in a reactor;

(7) if he will estimate the approximate daily cost of reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station being shut down following the site incident on 29 November; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what was the number of days in the last year on which fissile products from damaged nuclear fuel elements were present in the carbon dioxide gas coolant of each of the four reactors at Hinckley Point nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement;

(9) if he will describe the measures undertaken, in progress, or planned to inspect and test gas circulators on reactor 3 and reactor 4 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station following the site incident on 29 November, stating when such work is likely to be completed; if he will describe the precautionary measures taken before such inspection and testing is properly completed; and if he will make a statement;

(10) if he will describe the circumstances in which some minor fault or faults in a gas circulator on reactor 3 at Hinckley Point nuclear power station led to a site incident being declared on 29 November; and whether he is satisfied at present that reactors with such gas circulators are safe for continued operation.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 December 1985, c. *751-52*]. This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to introduce further measures aimed at the seizure and confiscation of the profits of drug trafficking crimes in Scotland in the light of the measures proposed by the Home Secretary in the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill.

Mr. Rifkind: Like my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I am determined that the courts should have all the powers they need to deal effectively with the crimes of drug traffickers. Scottish courts have already been given new powers, in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985, which contribute to this end: in particular, Scottish courts passing custodial sentences on indictment for such crimes must now have regard to the profits made and impose a fine as well as a custodial sentence unless satisfied that it would be inappropriate to do so. If such an offender is sentenced to imprisonment because that fine has not been paid, he will serve that additional period of imprisonment consecutively.

The measures proposed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill go beyond this, and I intend at the earliest opportunity to introduce equivalent legislation suitable for operation in Scotland. It would not be practicable simply to extend the Bill to Scotland, as there are distinctive features of our legal system which require to be taken into account in preparing a suitable legislative scheme for Scotland relating to forfeiture of proceeds of drug trafficking. For example, while the use of receivers and of charging orders in the enforcement procedures under the Home Office Bill builds on established English law, both would require novel provisions in Scotland.

The Scottish Law Commission, which has carried out some preliminary work on the general question of forfeiture in response to a reference which my predecessor gave them in 1985, agree with the view that extension to Scotland of the Home Office Bill is not a viable option. Moreover, this work has shown that the commission's normal process of consideration of and consultation on separate Scottish legislation could not be completed in time to allow for legislation in the present Parliament. Given the urgent need for legislation on the forfeiture of the proceeds of drug trafficking, I think it would be inappropriate to delay legislation on this particular issue to allow for completion of that reference. After consultation with the commission, I have suspended the reference meantime and have instructed my officials to set in hand the preparation of legislation on that topic.

I am most grateful to the commission both for its preliminary work and for its kind offer of advice on problems that may arise in relation to the preparation of such a Bill.

Meanwhile, provision will be made in the Home Office Bill to enable orders of the courts in England and Wales made under the Bill to be enforceable in Scotland through

the Scottish courts. This will ensure that Scotland does not become a haven for the assets of drug traffickers within the jurisdiction of the English courts.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the statistics for the assisted places scheme in the 1985-86 school session in Scotland, and the income scale which will apply to the scheme in school session 1986-87.

Mr. Rifkind: At the beginning of the current school session there were 2,583 pupils receiving assistance under the assisted places scheme. Additional pupils will be admitted to assisted places throughout the 1985-86 school session.

Of the 2,583 pupils in the scheme, 1,300 (50 per cent.) attended a fee paying school prior to taking up an assisted place. The corresponding proportion for the new intake of pupils joining the scheme at the beginning of the current session was 48 per cent.

The scheme continues to concentrate assistance on lower income families. In 1985-86, 1,267 pupils (49 per cent. of those in the scheme) will be receiving full fee remission because they have a family income of £6,376 per annum or less. A further 146 pupils (6 per cent.) have family incomes between £6,377 and £7,000 per annum and 242 (9 per cent.) between £7,001 and £8,000.

For school session 1986-87 I propose to lay regulations before the House in due course providing for progressive parental contributions for one assisted pupil in relation to family income as follows:

Part of relevant income to which the specified percentage applies	*Parental contribution (per cent.)*
That part (if any) which exceeds £6,640 but does not exceed £7,220	9
That part (if any) which exceeds £7,220 but does not exceed £7,810	12
That part (if any) which exceeds £7,810 but does not exceed £8,980	15
That part (if any) which exceeds £8,980 but does not exceed £10,780	12
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,780 but does not exceed £13,130	24
That part (if any) which exceeds £13,130	33

The relevant income scale is open ended, but the remission can of course be given only where the parental contribution is less than the school tuition fee.

School Examinations

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the implementation of standard grade and revised higher grade examinations.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have given very careful consideration to the revised timetable for the introduction of standard grade which my predecessor announced on 15 January last year, at column 39.

The Government remain firmly committed to the introduction of standard grade and to the consequent revision of higher grade. The new courses offer more relevant and effective education for children of all abilities and have continued to receive wide support both from within the education service and from universities, employers organisations and other users of the certificate. It therefore remains a central aim to introduce standard grade for all pupils in all subjects as soon as possible.

I recognise, however, that the boycott of curricular development which the Educational Institute of Scotland and other teachers' unions have operated since August 1984 has seriously affected the implementation of the standard grade courses which were introduced in 1984 and the development of new courses. This is in spite of the strong support of many teachers for the principles of standard grade. It has meant that relatively few schools will be able to present pupils for standard grade in 1986 and has led to serious uncertainty both about the future of standard grade and about arrangements for certification if standard grade continues to be boycotted in many schools.

My aim is to reach an early settlement of the teachers' dispute which will among other things secure the commitment of teachers to curriculum development. The Government have recognised however that there is force in the argument that in present circumstances the proposed pace of curricular change is likely to prove too fast for the education service, in particular for the classroom teacher. I also believe it is essential that avoidable uncertainty about future examination arrangements should not continue. In the light of these factors I am making the following proposals:

i. standard grade examinations for the courses introduced as phase 1 of the programme should take place as planned in 1986 and 1987 and should continue thereafter.

ii. examinations for subjects in phase 2 of the programme should be held as planned in 1988 and subsequently.

iii. standard grade computing studies should be offered for examination in 1988 as part of phase 2 rather than in phase 3 as originally planned, because of the wide support shown for the new course.

iv. otherwise, the courses in phase 3 of the programme should be offered for first examination as planned in 1989, subject to consultation on the course proposals. Development work in some subjects however has been seriously affected by the dispute and introduction of these may have to be deferred for one or more years with first examinations in 1990 or later. Precisely which of these subjects have to be deferred will be determined as soon as possible in the light of progress.

v. further consideration should be given to the position of subjects not so far included in the first 3 phases of standard grade but little progress on developing further courses can be expected until after the teachers' dispute has been resolved.

vi. the development programme for the revision of highers and post-highers should continue where possible so that the new courses can be available to follow on from standard grade as long as they can be developed satisfactorily in the present circumstances and achieve appropriate recognition.

vii. at the same time however the traditional forms of examination at ordinary grade, higher grade and for the certificate of sixth year studies should continue to be offered in parallel with the revised forms of examination. Once satisfactory progress has been made in implementing each phase of the new examinations, I would expect the traditional forms to be withdrawn but no decision on the timing of withdrawal would be taken until after the dispute is over.

I believe that these proposals will relieve the present uncertainty about future public examination arrangements for schools and allow education authorities and their schools to proceed with the implementation of standard grade as best they can in present circumstances. Authorities will wish to note that the Government's expenditure plans continue to provide for staffing in secondary schools of 6 per cent. over Red Book in order to allow for the implementation of standard grade.

My officials have written to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and to the Scottish Examination Board to seek their urgent comments on these proposals.

Road Accident (East Lothian)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many accidents occurred on the A1 road in East Lothian, involving damage to vehicles or property, injuries to people and death, respectively, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ancram: The numbers of reported road accidents involving personal injury or death from 1979 were as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Fatal	6	—	7	1	6	3
Injury only	87	81	86	75	78	83
Total	93	81	93	76	84	86

Because of technical difficulties, figures prior to 1979 are not available. Information on accidents involving vehicle or property damage only is not held centrally.

Agriculture and Veterinary Services

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what criteria were used to determine the cuts in advisory and specialist services given by Scottish agricultural colleges;

(2) what criteria were used to determine the reduction of funding for the veterinary investigation services in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Decisions on the planned reductions in the funding of the agricultural advisory services with effect from 1 April 1987 were taken as part of the 1984 public expenditure survey and reflect the Government's view that those who use and benefit from the services provided should make a contribution towards their cost.

The veterinary investigation services in Scotland are provided by the three Scottish agricultural colleges as part of the advisory services to the agriculture industry.

Food and Environment Protection

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which agency will monitor and provide inspectors for the implementation and enforcement of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 in Scotland; and if he will indicate by region how many extra inspectors will be provided.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 17 January by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the similar question he addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Council House Sales

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide for each district council the average net price paid by sitting tenants purchasing their council houses for the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table for the period 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985.

Sale of local authority houses to sitting tenants
1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985

Area	*Average price paid* £
Scotland	9,961
Borders	
Berwickshire	9,001
Ettrick and Lauderdale	9,853
Roxburgh	*9,570
Tweeddale	9,169
Central	
Clackmannan	9,258
Falkirk	9,414
Stirling	9,331
Dunfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	8,514
Nithsdale	8,600
Stewartry	8,658
Wigtown	8,757
Fife	
Dumfermline	*8,665
Kirkcaldy	8,109
North East Fife	8,295
Grampian	
Aberdeen	14,627
Banff and Buchan	9,560
Gordon	13,981
Kincardine and Deeside	14,144
Moray	10,207
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	10,610
Caithness	8,263
Inverness	10,325
Lochaber	9,304
Nairn	13,518
Ross and Cromarty	*9,735
Skye and Lochalsh	9,159
Sutherland	9,336
Lothian	
East Lothian	10,818
Edinburgh	10,122
Midlothian	11,731
West Lothian	9,461
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	10,097
Bearsden and Milngavie	12,154
Clydebank	9,706
Clydesdale	9,265
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	9,318
Cumnock and Doon Valley	8,020
Cunninghame	8,448
Dumbarton	10,197
East Kilbride	10,607
Eastwood	10,498
Glasgow	9,796
Hamilton	9,567
Inverclyde	9,982
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	8,415
Kyle and Carrick	*8,751
Monklands	8,808
Motherwell	9,835
Renfrew	9,934
Strathkelvin	10,773
Tayside	
Angus	9,912
Dundee	8,090
Perth and Kinross	9,886
Orkney Islands	*8,883
Shetland Islands	13,094
Western Isles	9,170

* Excludes returns for quarter ended 30 September 1985.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide for each district council the average valuation of council houses sold to sitting tenants in the last full 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table for the period 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985.

Sale of local authority houses to sitting tenants 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985

Area	*Average valuation* £
Scotland	19,017
Borders	
Berwickshire	15,312
Ettrick and Lauderdale	17,871
Roxburgh	*18,150
Tweedale	17,733
Central	
Clackmannan	17,711
Falkirk	17,661
Stirling	18,007
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	16,506
Nithsdale	16,772
Stewartry	16,471
Wigtown	15,558
Fife	
Dumfermline	*16,496
Kirkcaldy	15,712
North East Fife	15,475
Grampian	
Aberdeen	26,762
Banff and Buchan	17,244
Gordon	23,961
Kincardine and Deeside	25,155
Moray	18,970
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	19,253
Caithness	15,662
Inverness	19,502
Lochaber	16,789
Nairn	23,092
Ross and Cromarty	*17,823
Skye and Lochalsh	18,711
Sutherland	17,922
Lothian	
East Lothian	21,401
Edinburgh	20,522
Midlothian	22,011
West Lothian	18,060
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	19,117
Bearsden and Milngavie	23,720
Clydebank	19,021
Clydesdale	18,543
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	17,923
Cumnock and Doon Valley	15,108
Cunninghame	16,373
Dumbarton	18,627
East Kilbride	21,231
Eastwood	20,843
Glasgow	20,332
Hamilton	17,948
Inverclyde	19,835
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	16,242
Kyle and Carrick	*17,411
Monklands	16,761
Motherwell	18,218
Renfrew	19,313
Strathkelvin	20,527
Tayside	
Angus	18,134
Dundee	16,167
Perth and Kinross	18,563
Orkney Islands	*17,093
Shetland Islands	23,131
Western Isles	16,586

* Excludes returns for quarter ended 30 September 1985.

Leverndale Psychiatric Hospital

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis charges are being made to patients at Leverndale psychiatric hospital in Glasgow for certain items of furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The report of the working party on Incapax patients funds which was published in July 1983 reminded health boards that there is much scope for improving the quality of life for patients who are incapable of managing their own affairs by making fuller use of the funds to which they are entitled; and guidelines were suggested as to how this was to be achieved. The report stressed, however, that patients' funds should not be used to purchase goods or services which would normally be provided by the National Health Service. It is for Greater Glasgow health board to indicate the basis on which the purchase of items of furniture is to be charged to individual patients' funds at Leverndale hospital.

WALES

Higher Education

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is able to announce his decisions on local authority higher education provision in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Having consulted the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the Welsh Counties Committee I have decided that the advanced further education quantum for 1986-87 should be set at £31·0 million. This represents an 8·8 per cent. increase between 1985-86 and 1986-87.

I have received advice from the Wales Advisory Body on the planned disposition of academic provision and the number of student places on higher education courses in local authority colleges in Wales. The WAB proposals provide for a 3 per cent. growth in student numbers between 1985-86 and 1986-87, rising from approximately 13,200 to 13,595 in 1986-87. The proposals provide for a continued emphasis to be given to courses in science, engineering and other vocational disciplines and for sub-degree and part-time provision to be protected. The WAB has also provided advice on how the AFE quantum of £31·0 million should be distributed between local authorities, and I have also consulted the WJEC and the

WCC about this. The proposals for distributing the quantum are related to the proposals for target student numbers for 1986-87 by institution, mode of attendance and subject, and they allow additional funding for degree and postgraduate courses. The method of allocation proposed will put pressure on high spending institutions to become more cost effective, but will also protect institutions against unacceptably large reductions in their funding between 1985-86 and 1986-87.

I have decided to accept the WAB's advice on academic provision and student numbers and on the methodology for distributing the quantum. In the absence of firm advice from the WAB about a minimum level of funding, I have decided that for 1986-87 every local education authority will receive at least 92½ per cent. of its 1985-86 allocation. Local education authorities have been informed of these decisions and of their individual allocations.

Copies of a note explaining the method by which the AFE quantum for 1986-87 are being distributed and have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Council House Sales

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council houses were sold in 1979 in Wales and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer my hon. Friend to table 29 of the publication "Welsh Housing Statistics No. 5, 1985", a copy of which is in the Library.

Industrial Disputes

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many working days have been lost in Wales during the years 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, as a result of industrial action.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of working days lost in Wales due to industrial disputes for each calendar year requested was as follows:

Year	*Days lost ('000)*
1977	667
1978	444
1980	2,918
1981	292
1982	283
1983	353
1984	3,527

Source: Department of Employment.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many approved applications for regional development grant were outstanding for payment at 30 November 1985; how much money these applications represent; and what further delay he expects.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: 2,317 approved applications for old-style regional development grant were outstanding at 30 November 1985, representing approximately £46 million of grant. Payment of grant on each application will be made within the terms of the four-month moratorium announced on 17 January 1985.

Environment Policy

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to set up one overall co-ordinating elected body in Wales to subsume the work of the National Parks, the National Trust, the Nature Conservancy and the Countryside Commission on an all-Wales level.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. The National Trust is an independent body which is not, and should not be, subject to Government control. I have no evidence to suggest that a new body is necessary to subsume the functions of public sector bodies involved.

Company Registrations

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new companies have been registered in Wales in each year since 1983.

Mr. Michael Howard: I have been asked to reply.

All companies incorporated in England and Wales are registered at Cardiff. No separate statistics are kept of those who have their registered offices in Wales or in any other area. The Registrar of Companies estimates that about 2 per cent. of companies incorporated (currently at the rate of 100,000 per year) have their registered offices in Wales.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to continue the functioning of the National Commission on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation following British withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I have disbanded the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Gross National Product

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the latest available figure for average gross national product per capita in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; what comparable information he has for the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries and the rest of the world, respectively; and what information he has as to the trends in these figures in the past decade.

Mr. MacGregor: It is well recognised that international comparisons of national income, product and expenditure are best made in terms of purchasing power parities. The latest available data for OECD on this basis are given in the OECD publication "National Accounts —Main Aggregates Volume 1, 1960-1983", page 125. This is available in the Library. For the OECD as a whole, the figures since 1976 are as follows:

GDP per head in current dollars using current purchasing power parities

(US dollars)

	OECD—Total
1976	5,975
1977	6,516
1978	7,219
1979	8,021
1980	8,823
1981	9,741
1982	10,284
1983	10,914

There are no fully comparable data for the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries, nor for the rest of the world as a whole. Such estimates as are published by other international bodies must be treated with extreme caution.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to take any steps to counter the European Commission's implementation of the Community budget in the form approved by the European Parliament; if he intends to pay the United Kingdom's share for February on the basis of the budget approved by the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Trade Union Ballots

1. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Paymaster General how many unions have received public money for trade union ballots.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am informed by the certification officer that 27 trade unions have received public money for secret ballots under the provisions of section 1 of the Employment Act 1980.

21. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Paymaster General how many unions have now brought their election practices into line with the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Press reports indicate that 19 trade unions have decided to change their electoral practices in order to comply with the 1984 Act. Others are considering changes. For some unions no changes will be necessary.

Unions which do not afford their members the democratic rights required by the Act leave themselves open to challenge by any member through the certification officer or the courts.

23. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Paymaster General how many pre-strike ballots have taken place under the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Department is aware of 115 pre-strike ballots believed to comply with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984, but there will have been other ballots which the Department does not know about.

Small Firms

2. **Mr. Hind** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in reducing bureaucratic burdens on small firms.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have made good progress in following up the proposals in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" to reduce the administrative requirements on business and particularly small firms. We intend to produce a second White Paper reporting progress and making further proposals later this year.

31. **Mr. Soames** asked the Paymaster General what steps he proposes to take to seek to encourage small firms to use distance learning packages to improve their management expertise.

Mr. Trippier: I am anxious to encourage small firms to consider relevant training opportunities of all types as a route to success. Open learning methods have much to offer the small business sector in a number of areas including management training. The Manpower Services Commission's open tech programme has funded the North East Wales Institute to design material specifically for small businesses, and these packages will be available early in 1986. Other open tech projects have produced material which is helpful for small businesses. Training using open learning methods can be funded by the MSC through the normal rules applying to grant payments under its other schemes.

In the context of our request to the commission to focus adult training programmes more sharply on the needs of small firms and enterprise, we have asked the MSC to consider whether there is a need for additional open learning material to improve the management expertise of small firms, and whether more should be done to make small firms aware of the facilities available to them.

36. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Paymaster General what is the net increase in small firms in the United Kingdom over the last 12 months.

Mr. Trippier: It is estimated that the net increase in the number of small firms in the United Kingdom in 1984 (the latest period for which an estimate is available) was of the order of 35,000.

The figures were published in *British Business* on 23 August 1985, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

71. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Paymaster General what is the trend in venture capital investment in small firms.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 3 December 1985, at column *183*.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what training supported wholly or partly from public funds is available for those starting small firms.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission supports a range of training courses for people wishing to start up their own business as part of the training for enterprise programme. In the current financial year the programme has a budget of £14·3 million, and around 25,000 people setting up or running small businesses are expected to benefit.

In addition, many further and higher education institutions provide courses geared to the needs of new and small businesses.

We have asked the Manpower Services Commission to focus its adult training programmes more sharply on the needs of small firms, and I am at present considering whether more needs to be done to encourage those starting small firms to undertake relevant training.

Hi-tech Centres

11. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to encourage hi-tech centres.

Mr. Trippier: Information technology centres are an important national resource and we shall continue to support them, both with normal youth training scheme funds and with special transitional financing. We are also actively encouraging improved marketing, business planning and diversification of their training activities.

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. Cabom** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the work force was unemployed in May 1979; and what is the proportion unemployed at the present time.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, excluding school leavers, was 13·2 per cent. The corresponding unemployment rate for May 1979 was 4·9 per cent.

22. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for over one year, two years and three years, respectively; and what were the comparable figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom as at 10 October 1985, the latest data for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, and for unemployed registrants at 5 April 1979 (not available for May 1979). The figures for April 1979 and October 1985 are not comparable because of changes in the way the figures are collected.

Unemployment—United Kingdom

Registrants	*Over One Year*	*Over Two Years*	*Over Three Years*
5 April 1979	366,711	179,784	106,351
Claimants			
10 October 1985	1,351,857	823,127	532,573

24. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for 12 months or more; and what this is as a percentage of the total number of registered unemployed.

78. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months; and what this is as a percentage of those registered as unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom, who had been unemployed for over 12 months, was 1,351,857. This is 41·3 per cent. of the total.

27. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General how many of those presently unemployed are under 25 years of age; and what percentage of the total unemployed this represents.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom under 25 years of age was 1,245,218 —38 per cent. of the total.

28. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for over 12 months; and what was the figure for May 1979.

72. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985 the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,351, 857. It is difficult to make a comparison with April 1979 (no figures are available for May) because of changes in the way figures were collected. However, the number of registrants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in April 1979 was 366,711.

37. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate the aggregated component numbers from which a conclusion has been deduced adding 600,000 to the total number in full-time employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The employed labour force is estimated to have increased by 709,000 (seasonally adjusted)—from 23,015,000 to 23,724,000—between March 1983 and September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. The estimates cover the number of employees in employment, self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces, whether working full time or part-time, and are published monthly in table 1.1 of the labour market data section of *Employment Gazette* with further subdivisions being presented in other tables.

40. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Paymaster General what is the number of persons unemployed in Knowsley; and how many of those have been unemployed for over a year.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the borough of Knowsley was 20,222, of whom 10,989 have been unemployed for over one year.

41. **Mr. Strang** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for longer than 12 months at the latest available date; and what was the comparable figure five years ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,351,857. Comparable figures for October 1980 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, the number of registrants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in October 1980 was 401,114.

45. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Merseyside.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan county was 139,369, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 21 per cent.

55. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in full-time employment in Great Britain; and what were the comparable figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: In September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 16,547,000 male employees and female full-time employees in employment in Great Britain. The corresponding estimate for June 1979 (figures are not available for May) was 18,768,000.

Estimates of full-time male employees in employment are not separately available for the dates specified.

60. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area was 105,461.

61. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently employed in the United Kingdom; and how many were in employment in May 1979.

94. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in employment in Great Britain; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available estimates are presented in the following table:

*Size of the employed labour force**

Thousands

	Great Britain	*United Kingdom*
June 1979†	24,775	25,356
September 1985	23,724	24,248

* The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and Her Majesty's forces.

† Figures are not available for May.

62. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest number of people unemployed who are aged between 50 and 60 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom aged between 50 and 59 years was 508,931.

79. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the total number of people in work, including those in training schemes; how that compares with the total number of people in work in June 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The estimated size of the employed labour force in Great Britain in September 1985 is 23,724,000 (seasonally adjusted) compared with 23,038,000 in June 1983. The employed labour force comprises employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces; it includes employed participants in the Manpower Services Commission's adult training schemes together with those on the youth training scheme who have contracts of employment. For 1983, participants receiving work experience in the youth opportunities programme were included.

The new increase of 686,000 jobs since June 1983 has not been matched by our European competitors.

80. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Paymaster General what was the number of long-term unemployed in each of the past three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over one year was 1,351,857. The corresponding figures for October 1984 and October 1983 were 1,276,922 and 1,142,898, respectively.

81. **Mr. Michie** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in full-time employment in the United Kingdom; and what were the figures in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures for the United Kingdom are not available from the Department's statistics.

In September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 16,547,000 male employees and female full-time employees in employment in Great Britain. The corresponding estimate for June 1979 (figures are not available for May) was 18,768,000. Estimates of full-time male employees in employment are not separately available for the dates specified.

82. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of people who are unemployed.

85. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,273,089.

83. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Paymaster General what was the fall in the number of employees in employment between 1979 and 1983; and what has been the increase between 1983 and the present.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between June 1979 and June 1983 the number of employees in employment in Great Britain fell by 2,063,000. Between June 1983 and September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there has been an increase of 252,000.

88. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General how many people were out of work in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same month in 1973.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the Staffordshire, Moorlands constituency was 3,599. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

97. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of persons classed as being long-term unemployed in December 1978; and what was the number of such persons in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is

available, the number of claimants unemployed for over 12 months in Great Britain was 1,292,777. It is difficult to make a comparison with October 1978 (not available for December 1978) because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, the number of registrants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in October 1978 was 333,078.

Mr. Snape asked the Paymaster General how many people were out of work in the West Bromwich, East parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same month in 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the West Bromwich, East Parliamentary constituency was 6,005. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Canavan asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,273,089.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General (1) how many people were out of work in the Portsmouth, North parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same month in 1979;

(2) how many people were out of work in the Portsmouth, South parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same month in 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 12 December 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the Portsmouth, North and Portsmouth, South parliamentary constituencies was 4,719 and 7,524 respectively. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed continuously for more than 12 months; and what percentage of the total number of unemployed this represents.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 October 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,276,900, of whom 1,351,900, 41 per cent. of the total, had been unemployed for over one year, and 823,100 for over two years.

Jobcentre Advertisements (Minimum Wages)

15. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to introduce any further safeguards to ensure that jobs advertised in jobcentres pay at least the wages council minimum rates.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The present arrangements are adequate.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

16. **Mr. Madel** asked the Paymaster General whether he is satisfied with the working of the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mr. Madden** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the operation of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I am very satisfied with the operation of the scheme. It has now helped over 121,000 unemployed people set up new businesses, and the evidence available from surveys on the survival rate of these businesses and the number of new jobs they create is most encouraging.

33. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Paymaster General how many people have now benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme since its introduction.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 31 December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, 120,915 people have joined the enterprise allowance scheme.

92. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have now been generated by businesses established under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The total number of jobs generated by businesses established under the scheme since it began is not known. However, the latest survey evidence indicates that on average for every 100 businesses still trading two years after the allowance has stopped, 99 additional jobs have been created.

Truck Acts

17. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General when he expects to introduce legislation to amend or repeal the Truck Acts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As announced in the Queen's Speech, the Government intend to introduce legislation in this parliamentary Session which will repeal the Truck Acts and associated legislation and will contain new measures concerning deductions from pay.

Employment and Training Schemes

18. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Paymaster General when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss employment and training schemes for which the commission has responsibility.

Mr. Trippier: I regularly meet the chairman of the MSC to discuss a range of matters for which the commission has responsibility, including the employment and training measures.

Tyne and Wear

19. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of jobs lost in the Tyne and Wear county council area in manufacturing, transport, docks, shipbuilding and shiprepairing and local authorities for the years 1979 to 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The precise information requested is not available. The Department's statistics for the county monitor only net changes in employment between census dates.

The latest available figures from the September 1981 census of employment showed that 129,500 employees were employed in manufacturing industries in the county of Tyne and Wear compared with 162,400 in 1978 when the previous census was taken. Included in this reduction of 32,900 was a reduction of 6,300 in those employed in shipbuilding and repairing and marine engineering. The number of employees in transport services, with the exception of port and inland water transport, declined by 2,900 while the numbers in port and inland water transport (including docks) increased by 200.

The reported numbers employed by the Tyne and Wear county and district local authorities are as follows:

	Numbers
June 1979	71,258
June 1981	68,168
June 1982	66,445
June 1983	67,276
June 1984	67,057
June 1985	67,454

More up-to-date total employment estimates for the county will become available following the publication of the 1984 census of employment results later this year. Early estimates confined to employment in enterprise zones show a net increase of nearly 2,200 jobs in the Tyneside enterprise zone between designation in 1981 and September 1984.

Industrial Stoppages

20. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Paymaster General how many industrial stoppages there were in 1985; and how this compares with previous years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest information relates to the first 11 months of 1985. A total of 781 stoppages due to industrial disputes were provisionally recorded as being in progress. This is the lowest total for the first 11 months of a year since 1936.

Construction Industry

25. **Mr. Evans** asked the Paymaster General if there has been any increase in the employment of "lump" labour in the construction industry in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is not available from the Department's statistics.

35. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in the United Kingdom construction industry in 1979 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: In June 1979 there were 1,248,000 employees in employment in the construction industry in the United Kingdom. In September 1985 (the lastest date for which figures are available) the number was provisionally estimated to be 957,900. The figures may be affected by seasonal influences.

Community Programme

26. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to relax the rules governing the engagement of staff for the community programme in such a way as to enable their employment to be extended beyond 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: Employment on projects funded by the community programme is normally limited to a maximum of 12 months. However, exceptions to this rule may be allowed for managers, supervisors and other key workers with skills essential to the continued successful operation of a project and for whom no suitably qualified replacement is available from among unemployed people.

30. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Paymaster General what are the objectives of his Department's community programme policy; how he is monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to part 3.7 of volume II of the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702) which sets out the objectives of my Department's employment measures, and the methods of monitoring effectiveness.

38. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Paymaster General how many men and how many women are participating in the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: During the 12 months ending 29 November, the latest date for which the information is available, 160,108 males and 43,333 females joined the community programme. Monthly statistics about the number of jobs on the programme do not distinguish between male and female participants.

68. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Paymaster General what was the net increase in places on the community programme over the past three months.

Mr. Alan Clark: The increase was 24,146 in the three months ended 29 November.

Self-employed Persons

29. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Paymaster General what is the current number of self-employed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: In September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of self-employed in the United Kingdom was provisionally estimated to be 2,651,000.

Adult Training

32. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the adult training strategy.

51. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a further statement on the progress of the adult training initiative.

64. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a further statement on progress in Her Majesty's Government's initiatives to promote adult training.

Mr. Trippier: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 12

November, at columns *139-40*, we have made good progress in making our adult training programmes more relevant to current and future skill needs. I have asked the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission for proposals by the end of January to focus adult training programmes more sharply on the needs of small firms, and on promoting enterprise and self-employment and the advantages of open learning.

63. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the adult training strategy.

Mr. Trippier: I have frequent meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission and matters relating to the adult training strategy are regularly on the agenda.

Health and Safety

34. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Paymaster General how many accidents, serious and fatal, were reported by the Health and Safety Executive for the last year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for the year ended 1978.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) earlier today.

Unemployment (Reduction)

39. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General what criteria he uses to measure the progress of his policy to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Success in tackling unemployment depends on a strong economy that can generate wealth and new jobs. This is what our policies are designed to achieve and over 700,000 jobs have been created in the past two and a half years.

Guidance Leaflets

42. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Paymaster General if he will simplify the guidance leaflets emanating from his Department.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. As announced in the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", simpler and more readable leaflets are under consideration covering employment protection and health and safety matters. In addition, my Department will continue to issue a range of guidance and aim to simplify this as much as possible. Particular emphasis is being placed on meeting the needs of small firms.

Youth Training Scheme

43. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the preparations being made to introduce the new two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: My ministerial colleagues and I are satisfied with the progress that has been made on the establishment of the new two-year youth training scheme. All the main funding and administrative elements of the new scheme have been decided, and negotiations with potential training providers are going well. Plans for publicising the new scheme are also well under way.

48. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a further statement on the funding arrangements for the two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have approved the Manpower Services Commission's recommendations that the funding arrangements for the new two-year youth training scheme should feature not only basic grants, premium payments and annual management fees, but also permanent additional funding for specialist training for young disabled people and extra funds for equipment and adaptations to premises for disabled trainees. Agreement has also been reached about the future funding of information technology centres and on the transitional payments to current mode B1 providers.

50. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what were the destinations of those trainees who left the youth training scheme in June.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey of young people leaving the youth training scheme shows that, of those who left in June 1985, 63 per cent. were in work, 3 per cent. were on a full-time course at a college/training centre, 3 per cent. were on another YTS scheme, 7 per cent. were doing something else and 24 per cent. were unemployed, some three months later. Results from the survey are placed in the Library.

56. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of youth training scheme trainees secured a job within six months of leaving the scheme for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the most recent results from the Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey of young people leaving the youth training scheme show that, of those who left between 1 April 1985 and 31 July 1985, 61 per cent. were in work some three months later.

67. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on mode B youth training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: Mode B of the present youth training scheme provides funding, on a cost-recovery basis, for programmes for unemployed young people based mainly in training workshops and information technology centres and on community projects. Under the new two-year scheme, which will have a single system of funding and administration, there will be extra premium payments and transitional funding for the next two years to current mode B1 providers who remain in the scheme, so that they can continue to offer training programmes in areas where there is a shortage of employer-based provision and to young people with special needs.

69. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I frequently discuss the progress and development of the youth training scheme with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

70. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Paymaster General how many unfilled youth training scheme places there are in Hampshire.

Mr. Trippier: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at the end of

November 1985 some 8,863 places had been approved while there were 6,695 young people in training. It is not possible to give a precise figure of unfilled places because not all approved places will actually be available for occupation.

76. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Paymaster General how many youngsters will be able to participate in the youth training scheme each year after April 1986.

Mr. Trippier: We estimate that around 360,000 young people will enter the youth training scheme in 1986-87 and a similar number in 1987-88. It is too early to make forecasts for subsequent years.

MSC Training Schemes

44. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the financial disadvantages often experienced by participants in Manpower Services Commission schemes when they progress from part-time engagements to full-time.

Mr. Alan Clark: Participants on the community programme are able to move from part-time to full-time engagements. We have no evidence to suggest that those who choose to do so experience financial disadvantages.

47. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Paymaster General what arrangements are made for the inspection of Manpower Services Commission training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission monitors training courses to ensure that contractual obligations are met, to eliminate inefficiency and to identify and disseminate effective training practice. The pattern and frequency of monitoring visits are geared to the nature and performance of individual training courses. I am satisfied that the commission's monitoring strategy is appropriately targeted, and makes the most effective use of available resources.

Factory Inspectors

46. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase the number of factory inspectors in the north-west region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Decisions on the number and distribution of inspectors are a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive, subject to the limits set by the Government on total salary expenditure and manpower. Six new factory inspectors are to start work in the executive's Manchester, north-west and Merseyside area offices in the next three months.

Apprenticeships

49. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to increase the number of apprenticeships.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 12 November 1985, at column *132*.

Regional Aid

52. **Mr. Beith** asked the Paymaster General what research his Department has carried out concerning the relevance of travel-to-work areas as a measure of unemployment when related to regional aid.

Mr. Alan Clark: A discussion of the use of travel-to-work areas as building blocks for the assisted area map is contained in section V of "Regional Industrial Policy—Some Economic Issues", published by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1983.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

53. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General whether he is planning additional programmes for the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are concerned to ensure the most effective arrangements for helping long-term unemployed people back into the labour market, and therefore keep our range of current measures under constant review.

59. **Mr. Watts** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of employment counselling services for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since 1981 jobcentres have helped a proportion of long-term unemployed job seekers through a structured programme of individual counselling interviews. More recently, the Manpower Services Commission has set up a number of job clubs, which offer intensive coaching for the long-term unemployed in job finding techniques.

In addition, on 6 January, a new six-month pilot programme began in which as many as possible of the long-term unemployed in nine pilot areas will be offered counselling interviews. The results of the programme will be evaluated later this year.

Basildon

54. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people in Basildon in employment over the last three years; and how many new jobs have been created in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Employment statistics for local areas are available only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The latest available figures from the 1981 census of employment showed that 52,000 people were employed in Basildon compared with 46,000 in 1978 when the previous census was taken. It is not possible to give a figure for the number of jobs created. The number of net job gains shown by the censuses between 1978 and 1981 was 6,000. More up-to-date figures will become available following publication of the September 1984 census in the sping. Between censuses, employment estimates are based on small-scale sample inquiries which do not produce reliable results for areas smaller than regions.

Job Creation

57. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created during the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Between September 1984 and September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) the employed labour force in Great Britain increased by 220,000.

The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

Unemployed Persons (Jobs Take-up)

65. **Mr. Favell** asked the Paymaster General what further plans he has to encourage the unemployed to take available jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: In addition to the existing jobcentre services, pilot schemes to help the long-term unemployed get back into employment began in nine areas on 6 January. These schemes provide an in-depth counselling interview, a new short course specifically designed for the needs of the long-term unemployed and a practical incentive to return to work in the form of a new job start allowance of £20 a week for those who take jobs with earnings less than £80 per week.

Also, the Manpower Services Commission is currently evaluating the effectiveness of job clubs, which provide facilities and encouragement to longer-term unemployed people to undertake intensive job hunting, and the recent initiative to contact longer-term unemployed people, to promote the range of jobcentre services available to them.

Jobcentres (Training Courses)

66. **Mr. Stern** asked the Paymaster General to what extent jobcentres will be authorised to offer the new short training courses for the long-term unemployed at premises other than their own.

Mr. Alan Clark: The new courses, known as restart courses, will operate in nine pilot areas from 13 January. They will be run by various training agencies judged locally to be able to mount courses of good quality. It is not envisaged that any will be run on jobcentre premises.

Labour Mobility

73. **Mr. Holt** asked the Paymaster General what new proposals are being considered to assist in the mobility of labour from areas of high unemployment to others where unfilled vacancies exist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Manpower Services Commission will shortly be considering proposals for recasting its schemes to assist unemployed people to attend job interviews at some distance from their homes, and those moving home to take jobs in other areas for which local labour is not available. These revised arrangements, which are being tested in certain parts of the country at present, are designed to improve the cost-effectiveness and comprehensibility of the schemes.

The commission is also considering how its arrangements for helping unemployed people find out about job opportunities in other areas can be improved.

Wages Councils

74. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received on wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

96. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Paymaster General how many representations he has received concerning wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received about 100 representations on wages councils since my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State, announced on 17 July 1985 that we propose to introduce early legislation to reform the wages councils.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

75. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Paymaster General how many local education authorities are now participating in the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Trippier: There are 73 authorities running technical and vocational education initiative programmes in Great Britain at present. A further 25 authorities have put in proposals which are currently under discussion.

Non-advanced Further Education

77. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General what extra resources have been made available to improve the quality of work-related non-advanced further education.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) on 3 December 1985, at column *189*.

90. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Paymaster General what measures have been taken to improve the quality of work-related non-advanced further education.

Mr. Trippier: The resources for work-related non-advanced further education transferred from the local authority rate support grant (England and Wales) to the Manpower Services Commission (£110 million in 1986-87) will be used to improve the quality and relevance of work-related NAFE provision.

Detailed discussions in pursuit of these objectives are currently under way between local education authorities and local offices of the Manpower Services Commission.

Tourist Industry

84. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General if the Departmental review of section 4 grants in the tourist industry has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The review of the operation of the section 4 scheme in England is expected to be completed shortly and I shall then be considering its findings in conjunction with the English Tourist Board.

Manufacturing

86. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Paymaster General how many workers were employed in manufacturing in 1979, 1983 and the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: In November 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 5,353,000 employees in employment, seasonally adjusted, in the manufacturing industries in Great Britain.

The corresponding estimates for June 1983 and June 1979 were 5,510,000 and 7,127,000, respectively.

Bootle Jobcentre

87. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Paymaster General if he will visit the jobcentre in Bootle.

Mr. Alan Clark: My colleagues and I have no plans at present to do so.

Crown Immunity

89. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received regarding Crown immunity with respect to health and safety provisions that come within his departmental responsibility.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 17 April 1985, my right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State for Employment and I met the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South to discuss Crown immunity with respect to health and safety. The General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union subsequently submitted a report. Ministers in this Department have received four other letters.

Job Clubs

91. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Paymaster General what are the Government's plans for the establishment of more job clubs.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) earlier today.

Wage Levels

93. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a Green Paper on the relationship between wage levels and levels of employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. A review of the empirical evidence on this relationship was published by Her Majesty's Treasury in January 1985 ("The Relationship Between Employment and Wages", Her Majesty's Treasury, 1985).

Tourism

95. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to reduce bureaucracy and speed up the processing of applications for grants under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act.

Mr. Trippier: The English Tourist Board is aware of my Department's wish that it should avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and delay in processing section 4 applications. Last year, it introduced simpler application forms and reduced some of the documentation required for smaller projects and also devolved responsibility for appraising such cases to the regional tourist boards, which has improved the time taken to process applications. The ETB is continuing to look at ways in which its procedures could be further improved and streamlined.

School Leavers

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General how many school leavers have been referred to benefit officers for failing to attend interviews for offers of youth training scheme places during the past year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is not available in the form asked. In the year ended 30 September 1985, the latest period for which information is available, the total number referred to the independent benefit adjudicating authorities for refusing a place on the youth training scheme was 1,520, of which 1,055 were disqualified.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General how many school leavers have been refused benefit as a result of being referred for failing to attend interviews or to accept offers of employment during the past year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is not available in the form asked. The total number of claimants referred to the independent adjudicating authorities for failing to attend interviews or failing to accept offers of employment in the nine months ended 30 September 1985 were 312 and 4,007, respectively, of which 193 and 1,164 were disqualified. Records do not distinguish between school-leavers and others.

National Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General what level of financial support was given by the Manpower Services Commission to voluntary projects of the National Marriage Guidance Council in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The level of financial support given by the Manpower Services Commission to the National Marriage Guidance Council under the voluntary projects programme for each financial year is as follows:

Financial year	*Budget*
	£
1983-84	53,460
1984-85	231,270
1985-86	173,040

EC Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General if he will list all draft directives currently under consideration by the European Commission Labour and Social Affairs Council, stating in each case the remaining Government objections.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A list of draft directives not disposed of by the Labour and Social Affairs Council is as follows:

Select Committee on European legislation scrutiny number	*Draft directive title*	*Government position*
10681/84	Parental leave and leave for family reasons.	United Kingdom reserve maintained in principle. Not considered to be appropriate area for Community legislation. (A debate on the draft directive took place on 27 November 1985.)
4138/83	Voluntary part-time work.	United Kingdom reserve maintained in principle. Not considered to be appropriate area for Community legislation.
6365/84	The supply of workers by temporary employment businesses and fixed duration contracts of employment.	United Kingdom reserve maintained in principle. Not considered to be appropriate area for Community legislation.
8256/83	Informing and consulting employees.	United Kingdom reserve maintained in principle. Not considered to be appropriate area for Community legislation.
6871/83	Implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes.	Proposal welcomed in principle. The main United Kingdom difficulty is that actuarial considerations are not taken into account.
5825/1/84	Equal treatment as between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood.	Opposed in principle. The principle of the United Kingdom equal opportunity legislation is that the law should not try to regulate private relationships where there is no intention to create a legal business relationship.
9193/84 7832/85	The protection of workers by the proscription of specified agents and/or work activities.	No remaining objections of principle. (A debate took place in the Standing Committee on European Legislation on 11 December 1985.)

Select Committee on European legislation scrutiny number	Draft directive title	Government position
4044/86	The protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to benzene at work.	This proposal has not yet been deposited in Parliament. An Explanatory Memorandum setting out Government policy will be issued shortly.

Rosyth, Plymouth and Fife (Training)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what opportunities his Department provides for training in *(a)* engineering, *(b)* electrical skills, *(c)* computer science and *(d)* ship repair in (i) Plymouth (ii) Rosyth and (iii) Fife.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. 45]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information is not available for the skill categories requested for the youth training scheme and the majority of adult training programmes and is only available for the job training scheme by training division area.

The table shows the numbers we expect to train in 1985-86 under the relevant categories of the Manpower Services Commission's job training scheme in the training division areas which include Plymouth, Rosyth and Fife. In total, in these areas we plan to train some 5,600 people through our locally delivered adult training schemes and some 14,900 young people under the youth training scheme in 1985-86.

Job Training Scheme Planning Category	Devon and Cornwall Training Division Area (includes Plymouth)	Central and Fife Training Division Area (includes Rosyth and Fife)
Engineering Science and Technology	47	113
Electrical Skills	—	84
Computer Science	44	20
Mechanical Engineering	56	45
Engineering Fabrication	174	72

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received advocating withdrawal of benefits from school leavers who refuse all types of employment, or places on the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We are not aware of any recent representations advocating the withdrawal of entitlement to both benefits in these circumstances.

Hospital Laundry

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many hospitals laundering requirements have been put out to competitive tender; in how many hospitals laundering is currently undertaken by a commercial company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not collected centrally in the form requested but I understand that up to the end of September 1985 a total of 58 laundry tendering exercises had been completed and 18 of these had resulted in contracts being awarded to commercial companies.

Disability Aids

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department takes to promote the use of British designed and manufactured aids to disability, and in particular the ORLAU walking aid system.

Mr. Newton: The Department has supported the ORLAU research unit at Shrewsbury for more than 10 years. The swivel walker is listed in the MHM 50 Booklet for routine supply. The parawalker can now be supplied at seven special centres and approaching 150 patients have been fitted with these walking aids on the National Health Service. It is hoped to add the parawalker to the MHM 50 list in the near future.

We are arranging an independent evaluation of the ORLAU and Louisiana walking aids.

NHS (Pharmaceutical Supplies)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to break any current contracts with pharmaceutical suppliers to the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: My Department has very few contracts with pharmaceutical manufacturers for the supply of National Health Service medicines. I have no plans to break any of these. Health authorities make their own purchasing arrangements.

"Reform of Social Security"

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will clarify how, under the Government's proposals for the maternity grant in the "Reform of Social Security", savings exceeding £500 will be accounted for.

Mr. Newton: The arrangements will be similar to those currently in force for supplementary benefit single payments for maternity and other needs. If the savings exceed £500 by more than the set amount of the grant, no payment will be made. If the excess over £500 is less than the amount of a full grant, the grant will be reduced by the amount of the excess.

Clinical Psychologists

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the planned number of clinical psychologists for each region in 1994 according to the latest stategic plans;

(2) what is the present number of clinical psychologists in post for each region according to the latest strategic plans;

(3) what is the estimated shortfall of clinical psychologists in each region allowing for wastage and likely postgraduate training output according to the latest strategic plans.

Mr. Whitney: The regional strategic plans show manpower changes in terms of broad staff groups and,

overall, do not provide information at the level of detail requested. Following are figures derived from the routine annual manpower census for England.

*Clinical Psychologists in post at 30 September 1984**

Region	*Numbers*†	*Whole-time equivalent*†
Northern	90	80
Yorkshire	90	80
Trent	110	110
East Anglian	70	50
North West Thames	130	120
North East Thames	160	120
South East Thames	130	130
South West Thames	110	90
Wessex	70	60
Oxford	60	50
South-Western	120	100
West Midlands	130	120
Mersey	80	70
North-Western	170	160
London Postgraduate Hospitals	10	10
Total	1,520	1,360

Notes:
* Latest figures available to this level of detail.
† All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 and the sum of the component figures may not therefore add to total shown.

National Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grants were paid by his Department in 1984 and 1985 to the National Marriage Guidance Council; and why no grant is projected for 1986.

Mr. Whitney: The following grants were made towards the cost of the council's marital sexual therapy service:

Financial year	£
1984-85	30,000
1985-86	25,000

These concluded a final three-year departmental grant towards the service and were made on condition that the council contained any expenditure after 1985-86 within its other income.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give grant aid to professional or educational bodies for the purpose of establishing training courses for general practitioners on the problems of long-term use of tranquillisers.

Mr. Whitney: Consideration of prescribing practice of all drugs including the long term use of minor tranquillisers is part of undergraduate and postgraduate medical training.

Comprehensive advice on the prescribing of minor tranquillisers is given in the British National Formulary, which is issued free, bi-annually to all general practitioners. Guidelines on good clinical practice in the treatment of drug misuse, which have been issued to all doctors, include advice on the treatment of people with problems arising from long term use of minor tranquillisers. Advice through other medical channels warns of the addictive potential of these drugs. The basic information necessary to enable help to be given to this group has thus been made available to all doctors. There is increasing awareness among general practitioners about the problems.

The annual number of prescriptions for this group of drugs has been falling since 1979.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations, dealing with combating tranquilliser addiction, have applied for funding from his Department in the last 12 months; and how many of these applications were successful.

Mr. Whitney: No such applications have been received in the last 12 months. However, since 1983 the Department has funded from the drugs initiative the following organisations which cater specifically for the needs of people with problems arising from long term use of minor tranquillisers:

Voluntary organisation	*Description of project*	*Cost* £
TRANX	Self-help group—tranquilliser misuse—Harrow	89,183
Tranx Release (Northampton)	Advisory and self-help service—tranquilliser misuse	29,892
West Cumbria MIND (Copeland)	Self-help group and other services for tranquilliser misusers	89,494
Newcastle Association for Mental Health	Tranquilliser support project	96,213

In addition, funds have been made available to a large number of health authorities and voluntary organisations in respect of projects which include tranquilliser misusers amongst their clientele.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether any special procedures are used by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to monitor the safety of drugs in the benzodiazepine class;

(2) what procedures are used by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to follow up complaints from individual members and the public on the use of tranquillisers.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no special procedures which apply only to the safety of benzodiazepines. The safety of all licensed medicines is kept under constant surveillance by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. The committee's principal source of information about safety is yellow card reports by doctors of suspected adverse reactions to medicines. In February 1981, in its fact sheet "Current Problems", the committee made a special request to doctors for reports of adverse reactions to benzodiazepines. On receipt each report is evaluated for the committee by its medical secretariat.

If a member of the public has a complaint on tranquillisers which is concerned with safety he should bring the matter to the attention of his doctor so that he can

consider whether he should send a report to the Committee on Safety of Medicines. Subsequent action will depend on the nature of the complaint. If the hon. Member has a specific problem in mind I should be grateful if he would write to me about it.

X-rays

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people developed cancers each year as a result of X-rays in the course of investigations and radiological treatment in National Health Service hospitals; and how many of these are staff.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department last issued advice to health authorities about procedures to reduce radiation doses involved in X-ray investigations.

Mr. Hayhoe: The most recent guidance was circular HC(85)31 issued in December 1985.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the oldest X-ray equipment still in use in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the experts considering the future of breast cancer screening have been asked to consider the adverse effects of X-ray treatment as well as the advantages.

Mr. Hayhoe: The expert working group on breast cancer screening is considering all the advantages and disadvantages of screening by mammography, including any adverse effects from X-rays.

Hip Operations

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the modal average interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to a National Health Service hospital for a total hip replacement or other arthroplasty of the hip in England for the last year for which figures are available; and what were the longest and shortest waits, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have the available information as soon as possible.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if full instructions have now been given to local officers of his Department about the means of treating cases connected with board and lodging regulations in the light of recent court cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) on 14 January at columns *553-4*.

Mr. David Galloway

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the necessary papers concerning Mr. David Galloway's appeal against the decision of the adjudication officer at the Chorlton office of his Department have now been sent to the Social Security Appeal Tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The decision against which Mr. Galloway appealed was reviewed in his favour on 13 January by the adjudication officer and full arrears of benefit were paid on that day. As a result of the revision of the decision, the appeal has been superseded.

NHS (General Managers)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general managers so far appointed in the NHS at (i) regional, (ii) district and (iii) unit level, were in their previous job *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* business men, and *(d)* other occupations, and if he will give a breakdown of the last category.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *702*]: I understand health authorities have made the following appointments so far:—

	Number
Regional General Managers	
Doctors	1
Nurses	1
Administrators	9
Treasurers	1
Private Sector	*1
Self-employed	*1
Total	14
District General Managers	
Doctors	15
Nurses	5
Administrators	113
Treasurers	17
Private Sector	*20
Public Sector	*17
Self-employed	*3
Overseas	*1
Total	191
Unit General Managers	
Doctors	79
Nurses	40
Administrators	239
Treasurers	3
Private Sector	*18
Public Sector	*14
Self-employed	*1
Overseas	*1
Professions allied to medicine	2
Ambulance Officers	1
Physicists/Scientists	2
Total	400

* Non-NHS

DEFENCE

Helicopters (Procurement)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence why his national armaments director agreed at a recent meeting with the national armaments directors of France, Germany and Italy that certain helicopter

requirements should, in future, be met solely from aircraft designed and built in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: When they met in London on 29 November, the armament directors of Britain, France, Germany and Italy were invited to review progress towards the achievement of the goals set out in the declaration of principles signed in 1978 by the Defence Ministers of the four nations; and to make recommendations as to how they should be pursued in future.

They concluded that good progress had been made in a number of important areas, notably with EH101, with the launch of feasibility studies on the NATO helicopter for the 1990s (NH90), and in the field of collaboration on helicopter engines. They recommended that Ministers should commission a single European helicopter programme (in place of the PAH/HAC3G and A129 Mk 2) in order to maximise both the operational benefits of standardisation and the industrial benefits of a longer production run.

The armament directors further recommend that the needs of the forces of the four nations for helicopters in the three classes referred to should be met "solely" by helicopters designed and built in Europe. I understand that what they had in mind was that it would be a natural expectation that nations participating in the joint development of these helicopters would, other things being equal, purchase the resulting machines for use by their armed forces.

However, if applied in a wider context, the use of the word "solely" could be interpreted as going beyond the intentions of the 1978 declaration of principles to which, as the Prime Minister made clear on 15 January 1985, at column 1093, we still adhere.

Combat Helmets

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the purchase of resin bonded fibre combat helmets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: First issues of the new mk 6 combat helmet, which is constructed in resin-bonded fibre, were made in 1985 and will continue over the next seven years until all relevant areas of the services are equipped with it.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the role of Mr. Peter Levene in his Department.

Mr. Younger: In accordance with undertakings given by my predecessor, I shall shortly be reviewing the special arrangements made at the time of Mr. Levene's appointment whereby his access to papers relating to United Scientific Holdings plc was restricted. That apart, there are no plans to review Mr. Levene's role.

British Aerospace

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions between 1 October 1985 and 9 January 1986 the then Secretary of State for Defence met *(a)* Sir Austin Pearce, chairman of British Aerospace and *(b)* Sir Raymond Lygo, chief executive of British Aerospace.

Mr. Younger: Between 1 October 1985 and 9 January 1986 Sir Austin Pearce called twice, and Sir Raymond Lygo on seven occasions, on my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence.

FH70 Ammunition

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the 1985 order by his Department of FH70 ammunition has been delivered to date; and from which source.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over three quarters of the ammunition planned for delivery in 1985 was delivered in 1985. In accordance with our international obligations, the majority of this order has been placed with Germany, with the remainder in the United Kingdom.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to be able to announce a decision about the size, position, cost and starting date for a new headquarters office building for quality assurance staff at Woolwich Arsenal;

(2) when he expects to be able to announce a decision about the future of the royal laboratory pavilions at Woolwich Arsenal;

(3) when the review of land usage at Woolwich Arsenal began; how many different options have been considered; and when final recommendations are expected.

Mr. Lee: Land usage at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, is under intensive review. I am now considering recommendations based on studies into the long-term accommodation requirements of the directorate general of defence quality assurance which embrace the proposal for a new headquarters building and the future of the land at the Royal Arsenal, including the future of the royal laboratory pavilions.

ENVIRONMENT

Property (Use Classes)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the report published on 2 December by a sub-group of the property advisory group on the operation of the use classes, if he will make a statement on the integration of use classes 2 and 3.

Mr. Tracey: We shall wish to consider the comments which we have invited from interested persons and bodies before reaching any conclusions on the sub-group's detailed proposals for amending the use classes order.

Right to Buy

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to when Mr. P. Sheffield and Miss R. Lewis can expect to receive approval for the purchase of their council home at 46 Sunray avenue from Southwark council.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the London borough of Southwark issued legal documents on 17 December to the solicitors acting for the purchasers and proposed a completion date of 3 February.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the causes

for delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. W. Plant of their council home at 8, Bradlord house, West Dulwich; and when he now expects Southwark council to complete the transaction.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the London borough of Southwark wrote to the purchasers' solicitors with all the necessary conveyancing documents on 11 July 1985 and is still awaiting the solicitors' reply. If there are any outstanding difficulties, perhaps my hon. Friend will write to me.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for further delay by Southwark council in processing the application of Mr. G. Armour of 129B Copleston road to buy his council home; and when he now expects the transaction to be completed.

Mr. John Patten: Mr. Armour's application was among a number delayed at completion stage at Southwark council's procedure of requiring member level approval to be given to the sale of a property before legal documentation could be issued. Following discussions with my Department, these procedures were abandoned in October 1985. I expect this will lead generally to a substantial reduction in the delays previously experienced by purchasers at completion stage.

It appears, however, that further delays have occurred in Mr. Armour's case. I understand that Mr. Armour will be able to complete his purchase on 20 January, but I am seeking a full explanation from Southwark council and will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay by Southwark council in finalising the sale of 41 Kennoldes, Croxted road to Mr. and Mrs Moakes;

(2) what action he proposes to take in the light of the delays being experienced by tenants exercising their right to buy from the London borough of Southwark; and what information he has as to when Mr. D. Herbert of 3 Kennoldes, Croxted road can expect to complete the purchase of his home;

(3) what information he has as to when Mr. and Mrs. J. Baldwin of 9 Hillsborough road may expect to receive the legal documents from Southwark council in respect of their application to purchase their council home.

Mr. John Patten: These cases were held up because of an unfortunate delay on the part of Southwark council in producing a standard form of transfer for sales of leasehold property, following the extension of the right to buy in 1984 to properties in which the landlord's interest is leasehold.

I understand that Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin completed their purchase on 29 July 1985; Mr. and Mrs. Moakes on 23 September 1985; and Mr. Herbert on 23 December 1985.

Southwark Council (Works)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has regarding the failure by the town clerk's department of Southwark council to respond to the legal points raised by solicitors Messrs. Coulson and Coulson in letters addressed to it on 7 October and 8 December 1983, 5 March 1984 and 18 February 1985, regarding the notice of intended works sent to Mr. W. K. Rivers of 10, Countisbury house; and what action he intends to take in the light of this;

(2) if he will investigate the reasons for Southwark council's failure to have its written summary of the costs incurred during major works of repairs to Countisbury house certified by a qualified accountant, as required by schedule 19, paragraph 7(3) of the Housing Act 1980 and by Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Rivers of 10 Countisbury house on 7 October 1983;

(3) what information he has as to the failure of Southwark council to advise Mr. and Mrs. L. Bickel of 11 Northcroft Gardens of their statutory rights to buy the garage on their land when they exercised their right to buy; and if he will investigate the reasons why the borough valuer was instructed not to include the garage in the offer notice.

Mr. John Patten: Details of these cases are being sought from the London borough of Southwark, and I shall write to my hon. Friend when I have the council's reply.

Water (Pollution)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any areas in the Thames, Southern, South-West, Wessex, Northumbrian and Welsh Water authority areas where levels of lead in drinking water exceed limits stipulated in European Community Directive (80/778/EC) relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption.

Mr. John Patten: I am not aware of any areas in the Thames, Southern, South-West and Wessex water authority areas where lead levels exceed the limit in the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption. There is one supply in the Northumbrian water authority area serving 2,000 people and this will meet the directive standard by 1988. Responsibility for this matter in Wales lies with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the levels of aluminium, nitrate and nitrite in drinking water which would in his judgment represent a threat to public health; and whether public water supply in the United Kingdom exceeds these levels.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on 23 July 1985, at column *455-56*, in respect of nitrate levels. I have received advice from the chief medical officer that no public water supply for which I have responsibility contains aluminium or nitrite which represents a threat to public health. In the circumstances, I have not specified levels which would represent such a threat.

Water Supplies

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the successful applications for a derogation from the maximum nitrate concentration in drinking water set by directive 80/778 of the European Economic Community.

Mr. John Patten: Nitrate derogations have been given for the following supply areas, subject to certain conditions:

SUPPLY AREA

Anglian Water Authority

Dersingham and Snettisham
Docking
Heacham and Hunstanton
Moulton and Kennet
Wisbech
Habrough
Aswarby-Saltersford
Barrow
Binbrook
Bull Hill-Barnoldby
Bully Hill-Otby
Clay Hill-Drove Lane Sleaford
Drove Lane Sleaford
Potterhanworth
Saltersford
Waneham Bridge-Saltersford
Bucklesham
Bulk supply from Hinksford source of the South Staffordshire Water Works Co. to Bromley Lane
Parts of Newark DC area supplied from source at Farnsfield
Parts of Nottingham City Council area supplied from source at Salterford
Parts of Stourbridge in Dudley MBC area supplied from source at Coalbournbrook

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY

Baldersby Borehole

CAMBRIDGE WATER COMPANY

Fenstanton and St. Ives

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE WATERWORKS COMPANY

Parts of Kingswinford, Pensett and Brierley Hill
Parts of Lichfield and Whittington DC area
Parts of Lichfield DC, Sutton Coldfield, North Warwickshire CC and Walsall Metropolitan areas

EAST WORCESTERSHIRE WATERWORKS COMPANY

Grafton

LEE VALLEY WATER COMPANY

Part of Luton
Grundesburgh-Ufford-Melton
Horbling
Ely and Littleport
Habrough-Covenham
Bowthorpe
Heigham Thorpe
Tuddenham-Bucklesham
Otby
Otby-Waddingham

SEVERN TRENT WATER AUTHORITY

Parts of Wychavon DC Area supplied from the source at Hartlebury
Parts of Leamington Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford DC supplied from Campion Hills Treatment Works
Parts of Coventry supplied from Whitely Source
Parts of Rutland DC supplied from the Clipsham Ford source
Parts of South Derbyshire DC supplied from the Milton source
Parts of Newark and Ashfield DC areas
Parts of Warsop supplied from source at Bradmer
Parts of Stourbridge in Dudley MBC area supplied from source at Millmeadow
Part of Cheltenham supplied from the source at Northfield
Parts of Wychavon DC area supplied from the source at Overbury
Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest DC areas
Parts of Wrekin DC area supplied directly from Lellenshall source
Parts of Worksop (Bassetlaw DC area) supplied from Manton High level source
Parts of Worksop and Mansfield Woodhouse (Bassetlaw and Mansfield DC areas)
Part of South Shropshire DC area supplied from the source at Oakeley Farm
Part of Wrekin DC area supplied from source at Puleston Bridge
Parts of Bridgenorth and Wrekin DC areas supplied directly from the source at Shifnal

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has with organisations representing the consumer before granting a derogation from EEC directive 80/778 relating to water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities whose area contains a supply for which a derogation is requested are notified of the application and have the opportunity to comment to the Department. Comments received by the Department are taken into account before a decision is reached.

Home Improvements

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government intend to publish a White Paper on home improvement in the current parliamentary Session.

Sir George Young: It has not yet been decided in what form and when we shall announce our conclusions, following consultation on the home improvement Green Paper (Cmnd. 9513).

Coastal Footpath (Barnstaple and Bideford)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the conversion programme of the old railway line between Barnstaple and Bideford into part of the coastal footpath, together with the provision of separate facilities for cyclists.

Sir George Young: Work on reclaiming the former railway line, with the assistance of derelict land grant, began last November. I understand that Devon county council, which is responsible for the design and development of the project, expects to open the first section from Instow to Yelland by April 1986 and the remainder by spring 1987.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any proposed staff costs in his Department in the financial year 1986-87, arising out of duties associated with the implementation of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Yes, although it is too soon to quantify those costs. They will be contained within the Department's manpower targets for 1986-87.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Hampshire county council about 1987's rate support grant; and what further discussions are planned.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend met the leader of Hampshire county council and three fellow councillors on 16 January to hear their reactions to the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement. No further discussions are planned at present.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has received any representations from local authorities or individuals about the interim budget issued by the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the final budget of the London Residuary Body will be published;

(3) if he or his Department have had any discussions with the London Residuary Body over its interim budget.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer these questions shortly.

GLC (Grants)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the new Covent Garden consultancy's rail head for which the Greater London council applied on 15 October 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to grant aid to the Polytechnic of Central London for a study of decentralisation for which the Greater London council applied on 25 October 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to funding for Wyke House hostel, Weymouth, for which the Greater London council applied on 19 August 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the upgrading of computers for the welfare benefits project for which the Greater London council applied on 29 October 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Applications must be considered carefully and on their individual merits. All applications are dealt with as quickly as possible, subject to the need to give priority to parliamentary business.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to a homelessness initiative in the Abercrombie house hostel for which the Greater London council applied on 23 October 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent has been given to this application.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to a loan to the Circle 33 housing association for which the Greater London council applied on 1 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Further consideration will be given to this application when the council responds to the Department's request for further information.

TRANSPORT

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any proposed staff costs in his Department in the financial year 1986-87 arising out of duties associated with the implementation of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Ridley: I expect costs of the order of those incurred this year given in reply to the hon. Member on 16 December 1985, at column 47, by the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker). They will be contained within my Department's manpower and running cost targets.

Foreign Lorry Drivers (Road Safety)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the danger of non-English speaking lorry drivers *(a)* at unmanned level-crossings and *(b)* where vehicles carry dangerous loads.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, but if the hon. Member has a particular problem or incident in mind, I shall be happy to look into it.

PRIME MINISTER

Science Courses (Universities)

Q39. **Mr. Madel** asked the Prime Minister whether, in her capacity of being in overall charge of science, she is consulted by the University of Grants Committee when it is considering changes in the organisation and funding of science courses in universities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: If the University Grants Committee needed to consult Ministers about such matters it would consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Prime Minister of Israel

Q79. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she is now in a position to give details of the agenda of her discussions with the Prime Minister of the state of Israel.

The Prime Minister: I expect our discussions to concentrate on efforts to make progress towards a negotiated peace in the middle east and also to cover other regional and bilateral issues.

Engagements

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

Mr. Stern asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what response she has made to President Alfonsin's proposals on the future of the Falklands.

The Prime Minister: President Alfonsin has made no proposals to me. He has suggested publicly that the United Kingdom must vacate the islands. The answer to that is no. But as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of

State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs explained to the House on 18 December, we shall continue to encourage the Argentine Government to match our readiness to improve relations between us.

Plain English Unit

Mr. Norris asked the Prime Minister if she will indicate the Government's intentions with regard to the work of the plain English unit of the Management and Personnel Office; and if she will make a statement as to her appraisal of the work of the unit.

The Prime Minister: I have asked the Management and Personnel Office to continue with the work of the central forms unit and to report again in 1987 on Departments' efforts to improve Government forms. Since 1982 Departments have abolished some 15,700 forms altogether and redesigned a further 21,300. Last year alone 35,000 forms were reviewed. The central forms unit has played an important role in this achievement.

Bradford City Football Club

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government intend to provide the financial assistance for the rebuilding of Bradford city football club's ground which was promised at the time of the fire; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are considering Bradford's case for financial assistance.

Family Relationship (Tests)

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about co-ordination between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the acceptability of blood tests and genetic testing as offering conclusive evidence of family relationship.

The Prime Minister: The two Departments are working closely together on an experimental scheme to assess the acceptability and feasibility of the recently developed DNA testing technique in relation to entry clearance applications. The arrangements for conventional blood testing are well established.

Westland plc

Mr. Mikardo asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the conflicting accounts of certain incidents in the Westland affair given by her and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the one hand and the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), on the other, she will seek to determine the truth by using a polygraph of the type Her Majesty's Government are proposing to use at Government communication headquarters, Cheltenham.

The Prime Minister: No.

Ministers (Broadcasts)

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if it was with her authority that an official from her press office contacted the British Broadcasting Corporation and asked it not to broadcast an interview which had been recorded by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for use on Sunday 22 December; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to him on 20 January.

10 Downing Street (Foreign Visitors)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, column 628, if she will publish a list of all prominent nationals invited to Downing street social occasions held for foreign visitors in each of the past five years.

The Prime Minister: Guest lists for major social occasions for foreign visitors are made public at the time.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Alexander Archibald

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to secure the release of Alexander Archibald, a constituent of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith, presently held in a Thai jail.

Mr. Eggar: None. Mr. Archibald has been sentenced under Thai law to a cumulative period of three years and nine months' imprisonment for a number of offences. He is expected to be discharged from prison on 28 December 1987.

African National Congress

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions have to be fulfilled before he will allow his officials to meet members of the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: The Commonwealth accord called for a suspension of violence in South Africa. Clearly the African National Congress support for such a move would help to promote dialogue within South Africa and with those outside, including ourselves, who seek a peaceful political solution to South Africa's problems.

South Atlantic Islands (Sovereignty)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many records for the year 1955 relating to sovereignty of the South Sandwich Islands, the South Orkneys, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands were not made available in the Public Record Office in December 1985-January 1986; and if he will name the files.

Mr. Eggar: With the approval of the Lord Chancellor, and in accordance with established practice, certain records, some of which concern sovereignty, relating to the Falkland Islands and their former dependencies, have been withheld.

EC Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all measures and changes in procedure agreed by the recent European Economic Community intergovernmental conference, which require the unanimous consent of all member states and parliaments and those which cannot be implemented in practice without the unanimous consent of all member states.

Mrs. Chalker: All the changes to the EC treaties agreed in the intergovernmental conference are subject to the unanimous consent of member states and their Parliaments. The conclusions of the European Council on 2-3 December 1984 have already been placed in the Library of the House. Work is now in hand on a single consolidated text, which will be made available to the House as soon as we have it in final form.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Chile following General Pinochet's refusal to accept the terms of the national accord on the return to full democracy.

Mr. Eggar: As I told the House on 20 November, at column 256, we support the national agreement for the transition to full democracy as a basis for the orderly restoration of democracy in Chile.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Chile and what action he intends to take following the recently published report by the Chilean Human Rights Commission, detailing the number of political arrests and deaths which have occurred in 1985.

Mr. Eggar: The 1985 report of the Chilean Human Rights Commission will not be published until early February. We shall carefully study this and other forthcoming reports on human rights in Chile, notably that of the United Nations special rapporteur which will be presented at the UN Commission on Human Rights meeting starting on 3 February.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to resume discussions with Guatemala over the re-establishment of consular and diplomatic relations; what conditions the United Kingdom will set; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is not normal international practice to impose preconditions on the establishment of consular or diplomatic relations. We hope that the election of a democratic Government in Guatemala will facilitate a resumption of official relations, for which we have always been ready. No date for further discussions about this has been arranged.

UNESCO

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation following the United Kingdom's announcement of its withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Since the announcement of our decision not to rescind our notice of withdrawal from UNESCO we have received no communications from the secretariat. We have initiated exchanges with the secretariat about the maintenance of observer status for the United Kingdom with the organisation. We have also begun discussion of the financial aspects of our withdrawal, particularly in relation to our wish to continue to support certain intergovernmental scientific activities conducted under UNESCO auspices. Since our domestic legislation giving privileges and immunities to UNESCO staff lapsed automatically on withdrawal, we have informed the secretariat that we shall consequently be witholding from UNESCO the benefits of the convention on the privileges and immunities of the specialised agencies of the United Nations.

El Salvador (Officer Training)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of El Salvador concerning the training of their officers in the United Kingdom; what steps he will take to seek to ensure that the officers have had no part in human rights violations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There have been no substantive discussions recently with the Salvadorean Government about this. We have made it clear that candidates for training should be both professionally and personally suitable.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sumrie plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is now in a position to announce the action he is likely to take as a result of the inquiry under section 447 of the Companies Act into Sumrie plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No, but I hope to be able to do so shortly.

Research (Extra-territoriality)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department has held with the United States Academy of Sciences and the British Computer Society concerning extra-territoriality in research questions.

Mr. Channon: Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry met representatives of the United States National Academy of Sciences on 16 and 17 January, and there was some discussion of these questions. There have been no recent formal discussions specifically on these questions with the British Computer Society.

Lloyd's (Departmental Investigations)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the results of his Department's inquiries into the Unimax Minet and Howden affairs at Lloyd's.

Mr. Howard: I shall consider the question of publication when the reports are received from the inspectors.

Patent Office

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what changes in expenditure and staffing are expected as a consequence of the Patent Office becoming a statutory non-departmental body;

(2) what is the proposed relationship to his Department and source of funding of the Patent office when it becomes a statutory non-departmental body;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *454*, what aspects of the traditional Civil Service framework of the Patent Office currently inhibit its responsiveness to the needs of innovation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Patent Office's demands for manpower and other resources are at present considered in the context of the Department of Trade and Industry as a whole and in competition with other valid claims on the Department's limited resources. The Patent Office has, therefore, to keep its operations to the minimum necessary to meet its statutory obligations.

As a non-departmental body, the office will be obliged to be self-supporting from fees and charges which will be its regular source of funding and which will continue to be determined in relation to costs. My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State, intends to retain the power to set targets and appoint a management board which will give general direction and guidance to the comptroller on the running of the office. Within this framework, however, the office will be free to respond to the needs of its customers. Apart from the Secretary of State's general control, it will be independent of my Department and its staff will not be civil servants. There may be some small increase in Patent Office staff to carry out functions now performed centrally in my Department.

Post Office

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the external financing limit for 1985-86 for the Post Office, and the increase for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The negative external financing limit for the Post Office for 1985-86 is −£70 million and for 1986-87 will be −£93 million. Further details are given in paragraphs 58-67 and tables 5.4 and 5.5 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702-II).

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he made any assessment of the impact of an increase in the external financing limited for the Post Office on prices and service levels.

Mr. Pattie: In fixing the Post Office's external financing limit my right hon. and learned Friend takes into account a number of factors including the Post Office's plans for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and its assumption about the general level of its tariffs.

Financial Conglomerates

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals the Government have for regulating financial conglomerates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The growth of financial conglomerates poses particular problems for regulators. But these new financial supermarkets provide benefits for their customers and for investors. It is for the regulators to find ways of ensuring that these new entities are operating prudently, without erecting barriers which would prevent them from operating efficiently and competitively. Regulation must be clear enough to guide but not cramp structural change in the industry.

The needs of the different regulators are not identical. Investor protection, policy holder protection and depositor protection each call for different rules and different regulatory arrangements. The answer to the financial conglomerates is not necessarily the creation of an extra regulator specifically for them. That would mean duplication and inefficiency. The answer lies in facilitating co-operation between regulators. That involves three things — clear regulatory boundaries, shared information about the different aspects of the financial conglomerate in which one or more regulator has an interest and mechanisms for co-ordinating regulatory action with a view to resolving, conflicts of regulatory interest where possible.

Both the Financial Services Bill and the proposed new Banking Bill will lay down the boundaries of the two regulatory systems and provide powers to enable these boundaries to be swiftly adjusted to meet the needs arising from the creation of new financial products.

The Building Societies Bill and the Financial Services Bill contain powers to enable information to be disclosed to other regulators. The Government intend to enlarge the scope of the powers in the Financial Services Bill to enable information obtained under the Banking, Companies and Insurance Companies Acts to be disclosed to other regulators in appropriate circumstances.

Co-operation between regulators will be achieved by extra-statutory arrangements to nominate one of the regulators with an interest in a conglomerate to act as lead regulator. It will be for the regulators concerned to agree which of them should assume this role for each conglomerate. Essentially this role will be to ensure that all relevant information is obtained and shared, including information about potential difficulties, and to co-ordinate action by individual regulators. Each regulator will continue to have his own statutory duties and responsibilities. The task of the lead regulator is to promote an agreed solution which adequately takes account of the interersts of all the regulators.

The Department of Trade and Industry has established interdepartmental machinery to promote and monitor the new arrangements.

British Overseas Trade Board (Chairman)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it has yet been decided who should replace Lord Jellicoe when his term of office as Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board expires in March of the current year.

Mr. Brittan: It is my intention to appoint Sir James Cleminson as chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board with effect from 16 July 1986. Meanwhile Lord Jellicoe has accepted an extension of his current appointment as chairman until 15 July. I am most grateful to Lord Jellicoe for this, and for his distinguished service in the post over the last three years.

House of Fraser

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will seek the permission

of Mr. R. W. Rowland, chief executive of Lonrho, to publish in the *Official Report* the letter to him from Mr. Rowland of December 1985, regarding the takeover of the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* his reply to the letter he received in December 1985 from Mr. R. W. Rowland, chief executive of Lonrho, regarding the takeover of the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *18*]: The text of the Secretary of State's reply of 15 January 1986 to Mr. Rowland is as follows:

"Thank you for your letter to me of 16 December, and for your subsequent letter of 18 December to the Prime Minister to which she has asked me to reply in view of my responsibility for competition legislation.

On the point you raised in your first letter, as Alex Fletcher clearly explained to you when he met you at the beginning of November 1984, the extension to the reference period was granted in the normal way, in response to a request from the MMC who were faced with several exceptionally lengthy submissions from the parties involved. As is illustrated by the fact that three other extensions to MMC reporting periods were announced on the same day as that to the Lonrho House of Fraser merger reference, such extensions are by no means a rare occurrence, and indeed I am not aware that there have been any occasions when a request by the MMC has been turned down.

As for the allegations you make in your letter to the Prime Minister about her involvement, I must emphasise these decisions were taken by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and that the Prime Minister played no part whatsoever in that decision."

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

98. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to make higher education more relevant to the needs of industry.

Mr. Walden: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 3 December 1985, at column *157*.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, for redundancy and for early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant, changes in the level of local authority rates and additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Walden: The percentage changes in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee in its basic recurrent and equipment grants between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in the level of home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provision for capital in recurrent expenditure, local authority rates and additions made for information technology and new blood programmes, is given in column *(a)*. Columns *(b)* and *(c)* give the comparable percentage figures in real terms measured by the GDP deflator *(b)* including and *(c)* excluding additions made for information technology and new blood posts. The percentage changes shown will be in part the consequence of the withdrawal of the overseas student subsidy and to the extent that these losses have been made up by the increased fee income will not accurately reflect the changes in the universities' financial position.

Percentage change in UGC fund (Academic Year) 1980-81 to 1984-84

University	*(a) Cash excluding Information Technology and New Blood*	*(b) Real terms including Information Technology and New Blood*	*(c) Real terms excluding Information Technology and New Blood*
Aston	−14·1	−31·5	−32·0
Bath	+18·3	−5·7	−6·4
Birmingham	+6·7	−15·1	−15·6
Bradford	−14·4	−31·9	−32·3
Bristol	+8·4	−13·4	−14·3
Brunel	+4·2	−17·2	−17·6
Cambridge	+14·7	−8·1	−9·3
City	..	−20·7	−20·9
Durham	+16·8	−7·4	−7·7
East Anglia	+10·2	−12·3	−12·9
Essex	+0·6	−19·8	−20·5
Exeter	+3·4	−17·9	−18·2
Hull	3·3	−17·9	−18·3
Keele	−15·5	−33·0	−33·2
Kent	−0·3	−20·4	−21·1
Lancaster	+8·6	−14·0	−14·1
Leeds	+7·6	−14·6	−14·9
Leicester	+17·8	−6·2	−6·8
Liverpool	+5·5	−16·3	−16·6
London Graduate School of Business Studies	+70·3	+35·0	+35·0
London University	+7·6	−14·4	−14·9
Loughborough	+16·8	−7·3	−7·7
Manchester Business School	−1·8	−22·5	−22·5
Manchester	+5·6	−16·1	−16·5
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	−10·9	−28·8	−29·5
Newcastle	+11·9	−10·9	−11·5
Nottingham	+9·5	−12·6	−13·4
Oxford	+13·7	−9·1	−10·1
Reading	+8·8	−13·7	−13·9
Salford	−28·0	−42·8	−43·0
Sheffield	+10·0	−12·7	−13·0
Southampton	+11·9	−11·0	−11·5
Surrey	−3·0	−23·0	−23·3
Sussex	+1·6	−18·7	−19·6
Warwick	+10·3	−11·9	−12·8
York	+23·8	−0·2	−2·1

University	(a) Cash excluding Information Technology and New Blood	(b) Real terms including Information Technology and New Blood	(c) Real terms excluding Information Technology and New Blood
Aberystwyth UC	+3·5	−17·7	−18·1
Bangor UC	+6·9	−15·3	−15·4
Cardiff UC	+7·5	−14·8	−14·9
St. David's Lampeter	+28·0	+1·3	+1·3
Swansea UC	+4·3	−17·1	−17·5
University of Wales College of Medicine	+15·7	−8·3	−8·6
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	−0·3	−20·7	−21·1
Aberdeen	+0·3	−20·4	−20·7
Dundee	+5·3	−16·3	−16·7
Edinburgh	+14·5	−8·6	−9·4
Glasgow	+17·5	−6·5	−7·1
Heriot-Watt	+12·0	−10·8	−11·4
St. Andrews	+2·5	−18·5	−18·9
Stirling	−1·7	−21·5	−22·3
Strathclyde	+5·3	−16·3	−16·7

Student Numbers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of students in *(a)* universities, *(b)* maintained sector advanced education and *(c)* non-advanced further education, for each of the last 10 years; what proportion were full-time and part-time; and what were the percentage changes in each category in each year and over the whole period.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

A. Student Numbers

	Universities* (Great Britain) Total	Universities* (Great Britain) Total percentage		Public sector higher education (England) Total	Public sector higher education (England) Total percentage		Non-advanced further education (England) Total	Non-advanced further education (England) Total percentage	
	(000's)	Full-time	Part-time	(000's)	Full-time	Part-time	(000's)	Full-time	Part-time
1975	286·3	91·3	8·7	240·3	50·7	49·3	†1,643·8	†14·9	†85·1
1976	297·8	91·3	8·7	326·2	63·1	36·9	1,519·1	17·8	82·2
1977	307·8	91·1	8·9	326·3	59·9	40·1	1,486·7	18·6	81·4
1978	316·5	91·1	8·9	329·3	56·7	43·3	1,572·0	18·3	81·7
1979	322·7	90·7	9·3	332·9	55·3	44·7	1,482·1	19·5	80·5
1980	330·6	90·3	9·7	345·7	54·1	45·9	1,454·7	20·4	79·6
1981	333·4	90·0	10·0	368·4	55·3	44·7	1,467·5	22·3	77·7
1982	328·9	89·8	10·2	384·2	56·7	43·3	1,504·7	23·6	76·4
1983	326·3	89·4	10·6	402·6	57·3	42·7	1,578·3	21·8	78·2
1984	326·6	89·0	11·0	‡410·0	58·1	‡41·9	‡1,618·9	20·8	‡79·2

* Excluding the Open University and the University of Buckingham.
† Estimated.
‡ Includes open distance learning.

B—Percentage change in total student numbers

	Universities	Public sector higher education	Non-advanced further education
1975 to 1976	+ 4·0	+35·7	− 7·6
1976 to 1977	+ 3·4	—	− 2·1
1977 to 1978	+ 2·8	+ 0·9	+ 5·7
1978 to 1979	+ 2·0	+ 1·1	− 5·7
1979 to 1980	+ 2·4	+ 3·8	− 1·8
1980 to 1981	+ 0·8	+ 6·6	+ 0·9
1981 to 1982	− 1·3	+ 4·3	+ 2·5
1982 to 1983	− 0·8	+ 4·8	+ 4·9
1983 to 1984	+ 0·1	+ 1·8	+ 2·6
1975 to 1984	+14·1	+70·6	− 1·5

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the change in the number of *(a)* polytechnic students, *(b)* university students and *(c)* advanced further education students since 1979; and what proportion they represent within the post-18 student population as a whole, all expressed as full-time equivalents.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Students aged 18 and over in educational establishments in England (full time equivalents)

	Full-time equivalents (thousands)			Per cent.	
	1979-80	1983-84	1984-85	1979-80	1983-84
Universities	242·2	239·4	*	35	32
Polytechnics†‡	130·9	166·5	170·8	19	22
Other public sector higher education‡	99·6	118·2	121·6	14	16
Non-advanced further education	223·5	234·0	238·9	32	31
Total	696·2	758·1	*	100	100

* Not available
† Advanced courses only
‡ Including a small number of students aged under 18

University Applicants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many advanced level secondary school pupils applied for a place at Oxford and Cambridge universities in each year since 1974; and how many were finally accepted.

Mr. Walden: The number of United Kingdom candidates applying and obtaining a place at Oxford and Cambridge universities in each year since 1980 was as follows. The numbers include a small number of students from further education colleges as well as school pupils. The numbers of acceptances include a few condition acceptances at Oxford, a small percentage of whom fail to meet the required conditions.

Figures prior to 1980 are not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

	Applicants	*Acceptances*
1980	13,580	5,552
1981	13,563	5,464
1982	14,244	5,357
1983	14,359	5,334
1984	14,026	5,484
1985	15,248	5,901

Universities (Teaching Staff)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total cost to the Government of the employment of academic teaching staff in the universities, including and excluding national insurance contributions.

Mr. Walden: This information is not available. Universities' general expenditure in the academic year 1983-84 (the latest year for which information is available) included £583 million for the salaries of clinical and non-clinical academic staff, including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions. Separate information for expenditure on national insurance contributions is not available, but it is expected to have been 4 to 5 per cent. of total salary costs for these staff.

A precise share of this cannot be attributed to Government funding, but Exchequer grants and fees paid from public funds will have covered approximately 70 per cent. of universities' total recurrent income.

Professional Engineers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the annual production of professional engineers in member states of the European Economic Community, the United States of America and Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: International comparisons of numbers of engineers achieving chartered or equivalent status annually are not available. Estimates of the number of higher education engineering qualifications awarded each year in the United Kingdom together with figures for the other countries referred to are given in the following table.

*Engineering graduates in thousands 1982**

	Below first degree level	*First degree level*	*Both levels*	*Postgraduate level*	*All levels*
France	—	11·3	11·3	2·1	13·4
Germany, Federal Republic of	—	17·7	17·7	0·8	18·6
United States of America‡	—	73·4	73·4	14·7	88·1
Japan‡	7·0	60·0	67·0	7·2	74·2
Italy	—	6·3	6·3	0·1	6·4
Netherlands¶●	7·0	..	..	..	8·5
Spain	3·6	..	..	..	5·7
Belgium■	..	..	..	..	1·3
Portugal■⋆	—	1·3	1·3	—	1·3
Denmark¶	0·5	..	..	..	1·7
Greece⋆	2·6	1·2	3·9	—	3·9
Luxembourg#	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland¶■	—	0·6	0·6	0·2	0·8
United Kingdom:					
Basic**	15·4	11·4	26·8	2·5	29·3
Enhanced‡‡	20·3	14·2	34·5	3·1	37·7

Engineering graduates as a percentage of the relevant population 1982†

	Below first degree level	*First degree level*	*Both levels*	*Postgraduate level*	*All levels*
France	—	1·3	1·3	0·2	1·6
Germany, Federal Republic of	—	1·9	1·9	0·1	2·0
United States of America‡	—	1·7	1·7	0·3	2·0
Japan‡‖	0·4	3·8	4·3	0·5	4·7
Italy	—	0·8	0·8	—	0·8
Netherlands¶●	2·9	..	..	..	3·6
Spain	0·6	..	..	..	0·9
Belgium■	..	..	..	..	0·8
Portugal■⋆	—	0·8	0·8	—	0·8
Denmark¶	0·6	..	..	..	2·3
Greece⋆	1·9	0·9	2·8	—	2·8
Luxembourg#	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland¶■	0·1	1·1	1·2	0·4	1·6
United Kingdom:					
Basic**	1·7	1·3	3·0	0·3	3·3
Enhanced‡‡	2·3	1·6	3·9	0·4	4·2

* Home students only in France, Germany, United States of America and United Kingdom. Elsewhere students from abroad may be included where applicable, although numbers in Japan are thought to be negligible.

† An average of the population in the age range to which most graduates belong, for example, for the United Kingdom ages 21 to 23/4.
‡ Includes private sector.
Includes correspondence courses. Estimated graduates in architecture and trade, craft and industrial programmes have been deducted from figures for the engineering group published by UNESCO.
▼ 1981.
● Includes trade, craft and industrial programmes.
■ Universities and equivalent degree granting institutions only.
• 1980.
Higher education students mainly study outside Luxembourg.
** The basic figures for the United Kingdom do not include students completing courses leading to professional qualifications. Excludes private sector institutions.
‡‡ The enhanced figures for the United Kingdom include first estimates of successful completions of courses leading to professional qualifications in public sector institutions. Excludes private sector institutions.
. . = Not available.

Overseas Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage change in the overseas students intake for each year since 1974, and for the periods 1974-75 to 1978-79 and 1979-80 to 1984-85, in both global terms and on a proportion of the *(a)* higher and *(b)* further education population.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Students from abroad on the first year of their course
Great Britain

	Higher education	*Non-advanced further education*	*Total*
Percentage change			
1974 to 1975	+17·5	−10·5	+3·7
1975 to 1976	+10·7	−2·8	+5·0
1976 to 1977	+2·1	−2·8	+0·2
1977 to 1978	−1·4	−1·5	−1·4
1978 to 1979	−7·0	−0·4	−4·5
1979 to 1980	−9·6	−35·6	−19·9
1980 to 1981	+2·3	−46·4	−13·2
1981 to 1982	−8·2	−15·9	−9·7
1982 to 1983	+3·8	−0·9	+2·9
1983 to 1984	+6·0	−7·5	+3·6
1974 to 1978	+30·9	−16·7	+7·5
1979 to 1984	−6·5	−73·4	−33·1
Percentages of all full-time first year students			
1974	14·2	14·6	14·4
1979	13·2	7·3	10·0
1984	11·2	1·7	5·9

Open University

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the geographical distribution of student enrolments in the Open University.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of Open University students by region of study is as follows:

Calendar year 1984

Region of Study	*Under-graduates*	*Associates*	*Post-graduates**	*Total***
London	8,228	1,380	62	9,670
South East	5,475	675	31	6,181
South	6,612	853	76	7,541
South West	4,739	588	29	5,356
West Midlands	5,420	745	37	6,202
East Midlands	4,264	481	25	4,770
East Anglia	6,784	872	52	7,708
Yorkshire	4,597	511	28	5,136
North West	6,909	894	44	7,847
North	3,191	425	11	3,627
Wales	2,658	313	18	2,989
Scotland	6,289	708	39	7,036
Northern Ireland	1,597	230	5	1,832
Overseas	—	—	15	15
Total	66,763	8,675	472	75,910

* Excluding 240 postgraduate students on Open University campus and 144 postgraduate students on taught higher degree courses.
† Excluding short courses, specialised short courses and learning materials for which figures are not available by region of study.

Postgraduate Awards

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of students in the United Kingdom who have received awards from public funds for the purpose of postgraduate study since 1979 and the total cost thereof, as to the number of students in the United Kingdom who received postgraduate awards over the same period, by sex, and as to the number of postgraduate student awards which have been made over the same period from public funds from each award making body.

Mr. Walden: Figures by sex and total United Kingdom expenditure are not readily available. The available information is as follows:

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84	
	Student numbers	Cost £000's	Student numbers	Cost £000's	Student numbers	Cost £000's	Student numbers	Cost £000's	Student numbers	Cost £000's
POSTGRADUATE AWARDS:										
Department of Education and Science*	3,472	9,171	3,524	11,171	3,319	11,567	3,077	11,244	2,475	9,758
RESEARCH COUNCILS†										
Agricultural and Food	106	335	111	419	107	490	113	538	112	558
Medical	1,460	4,455	1,372	5,193	1,362	6,013	1,408	5,715	1,461	6,694
Natural Environment	1,058	3,301	1,105	4,204	1,091	4,741	1,087	5,221	1,118	5,612
Sciences and Engineering	7,836	25,275	7,638	29,777	7,451	33,653	7,330	35,071	8,508	40,771
Economic and Social	2,934	9,259	2,587	9,442	2,197	9,172	1,814	8,567	1,823	8,044
ALL UNITED KINGDOM AWARDS‡	19,234		19,000		18,134		17,586		18,247	

* Relates to studets receiving Department of Education and Science awards throughout the United Kingdom
† Relates to students in Great Britain.
‡ Including awards made by the Scottish and Northern Ireland Education Departments. The cost of these awards is not readily available

Further Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds who remained in education in schools and colleges in September 1984 for England and for each local education authority; and how this compares with each of the previous five years, according to the following categories *(a)* full-time education in schools, *(b)* sixth-form colleges, *(c)* tertiary colleges, *(d)* further-education colleges and *(e)* private institutions.

Mr. Walden: Full information in the format requested could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The tables show the percentage of the population aged 16 and 17 in full-time education in each local education authority in England. It shows separately those in maintained schools and further education establishments for the academic years 1979-80 and 1984-85.

Percentage of population aged 16 in full-time education in each local education authority in England showing separately those in schools and further education colleges

LEA	Academic year			
	1979-80		1984-85	
	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools
Barking	11	14	13	18
Barnet	11	48	13	57
Bexley	12	34	15	33
Brent	14	43	12	46
Bromley	12	39	14	39
Croydon	11	34	18	30
Ealing	13	37	16	38
Enfield	12	37	14	36
Haringey	14	37	19	35
Harrow	15	44	16	55
Havering	14	27	16	27
Hillingdon	9	33	13	32
Hounslow	10	38	13	45
Kingston-upon-Thames	11	42	15	43
Merton	12	38	16	40
Newham	13	23	17	28
Redbridge	17	30	15	38
Richmond-upon-Thames	49	1	55	1
Sutton	13	38	21	35
Waltham Forest	10	32	13	35
Outer London Boroughs	13	34	16	36
ILEA	11	33	16	33
Birmingham	14	26	18	25
Coventry	19	21	15	28

LEA	Academic year			
	1979-80		1984-85	
	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools
Dudley	15	21	29	14
Sandwell	13	17	17	18
Solihull	26	20	23	21
Walsall	10	21	13	24
Wolverhampton	16	21	18	23
Knowsley	17	13	17	16
Liverpool	11	21	15	27
St. Helens	16	22	18	23
Sefton	20	25	26	28
Wirral	16	27	16	30
Bolton	17	20	18	22
Bury	15	25	20	30
Manchester	12	26	13	29
Oldham	13	13	13	17
Rochdale	12	21	12	24
Salford	11	19	15	21
Stockport	16	27	17	29
Tameside	17	14	18	19
Trafford	25	16	25	19
Wigan	19	17	24	20
Barnsley	14	16	19	16
Doncaster	14	21	11	25
Rotherham	16	18	16	21
Sheffield	13	22	19	22
Bradford	12	25	10	30
Calderdale	13	24	14	26
Kirklees	17	23	19	26
Leeds	10	27	16	28
Wakefield	15	16	25	15
Gateshead	11	15	20	19
Newcastle upon Tyne	11	24	14	27
North Tyneside	10	25	18	29
South Tyneside	16	17	14	19
Sunderland	13	17	12	20
Isles of Scilly	18	—	41	—
Avon	16	26	17	28
Bedfordshire	15	24	14	31
Berkshire	12	30	21	32
Buckinghamshire	17	30	20	34
Cambridgeshire	17	24	22	26
Cheshire	19	22	20	28
Cleveland	12	20	19	25
Cornwall	19	25	23	29
Cumbria	14	21	18	24
Derbyshire	17	18	23	19
Devon	24	18	27	20
Dorset	16	22	18	26
Durham	11	17	16	20
East Sussex	19	32	19	34
Essex	14	27	17	27
Gloucestershire	15	26	16	28
Hampshire	15	29	26	24
Hereford and Worcester	25	22	22	24
Hertfordshire	18	34	20	35
Humberside	9	22	15	25
Isle of Wight	26	27	21	28
Kent	17	29	20	30
Lancashire	18	18	26	14
Leicestershire	13	28	14	33
Lincolnshire	23	20	24	21
Norfolk	20	17	20	22
North Yorkshire	17	27	21	30
Northamptonshire	14	20	17	25
Northumberland	13	26	17	30
Nottinghamshire	15	19	15	21
Oxfordshire	17	30	21	31
Shropshire	22	23	20	26
Somerset	26	15	33	17
Staffordshire	18	19	20	21
Suffolk	11	23	13	27
Surrey	13	41	17	45
Warwickshire	24	21	27	22

LEA	Academic year			
	1979-80		1984-85	
	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools
West Sussex	14	37	17	37
Wiltshire	21	24	31	17
England	16	26	19	27

Percentage of population aged 17 in full-time education in each local education authority in England showing separately those in schools and further education colleges

LEA	Academic year			
	1979-80		1984-85	
	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools
Barking	6	9	7	9
Barnet	11	31	18	33
Bexley	7	19	13	18
Brent	17	21	21	22
Bromley	9	24	12	22
Croydon	9	18	15	15
Ealing	15	18	22	17
Enfield	10	20	13	19
Haringey	17	16	23	12
Harrow	12	32	16	30
Havering	9	16	9	16
Hillingdon	8	19	11	17
Hounslow	10	21	14	21
Kingston-upon-Thames	11	23	14	26
Merton	10	20	15	20
Newham	10	12	16	12
Redbridge	12	19	13	22
Richmond-upon-Thames	32	0	38	0
Sutton	8	25	12	26
Waltham Forest	10	13	17	13
Outer London Boroughs	11	19	15	19
ILEA	9	16	15	15
Birmingham	8	14	12	15
Coventry	11	14	14	15
Dudley	9	14	16	12
Sandwell	6	11	11	12
Solihull	15	15	17	19
Walsall	5	14	10	15
Wolverhampton	9	14	13	13
Knowsley	8	8	10	9
Liverpool	7	13	10	17
St. Helens	9	15	12	17
Sefton	11	16	14	20
Wirral	11	16	15	19
Bolton	10	15	13	17
Bury	13	13	14	19
Manchester	9	15	9	19
Oldham	8	8	13	10
Rochdale	9	13	10	15
Salford	6	14	9	14
Stockport	12	20	15	19
Tameside	9	9	11	13
Trafford	13	16	19	17
Wigan	12	11	16	14
Barnsley	6	8	9	11
Doncaster	7	14	9	17
Rotherham	8	12	10	14
Sheffield	7	14	10	16
Bradford	8	14	9	17
Calderdale	6	17	12	17
Kirklees	9	15	13	17
Leeds	7	16	10	16
Wakefield	7	10	12	10
Gateshead	6	10	10	12
Newcastle upon Tyne	5	15	10	16

LEA	Academic year			
	1979-80		1984-85	
	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools	†Full-time and sandwich in further education	*Maintained schools
North Tyneside	6	15	10	17
South Tyneside	6	11	10	11
Sunderland	5	12	9	13
Isles of Scilly	30	—	35	—
Avon	10	16	12	17
Bedfordshire	11	14	12	18
Berkshire	9	19	14	20
Buckinghamshire	13	22	16	24
Cambridgeshire	11	1	15	16
Cheshire	11	16	15	19
Cleveland	5	14	9	18
Cornwall	13	15	17	18
Cumbria	6	15	10	16
Derbyshire	9	13	14	14
Devon	14	12	20	13
Dorset	12	15	14	17
Durham	6	12	9	14
East Sussex	13	19	16	20
Essex	9	18	11	17
Gloucestershire	10	16	12	19
Hampshire	10	18	18	15
Hereford and Worcester	14	15	17	16
Hertfordshire	12	22	14	23
Humberside	5	13	9	15
Isle of Wight	13	15	16	17
Kent	12	17	15	18
Lancashire	13	13	18	11
Leicestershire	8	16	12	20
Lincolnshire	12	14	17	15
Norfolk	13	12	14	14
North Yorkshire	11	19	16	21
Northamptonshire	9	14	13	15
Northumberland	8	17	10	19
Nottinghamshire	8	13	12	14
Oxfordshire	10	18	13	19
Shropshire	13	16	15	18
Somerset	17	11	20	11
Staffordshire	10	13	13	15
Suffolk	7	13	10	15
Surrey	11	24	15	27
Warwickshire	13	15	18	17
West Sussex	11	21	15	21
Wiltshire	12	14	17	14
England	10	16	14	17

*The LEA is that in which the school is situated.
†Students in further education establishments have been sorted into the LEA of home residence.

European Youth Ministers

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Youth Ministers' meeting in December.

Mr. Dunn: This Council of Europe Conference, with the theme "Participation", was held at the invitation of the French Government in Strasbourg from 16 to 19 December. The United Kingdom delegation, which I led, included the current chairperson of the British Youth Council, and advisers from the Department's youth service unit and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools.

Ministers and delegations from all member countries attended, with representatives and observers present from some other countries, the European Commission and many international organisations, including a number of non-governmental organisations representing young people in Europe. Discussions in formal sessions concerned the situation facing young people in Europe; the scope for increasing participation by young people in member countries of the Council of Europe; and future co-operation at European level on youth matters. The conclusions of the conference have now been published by the Council of Europe and I am sending a copy to the hon. Member and placing further copies in the Library.

Visually Handicapped Students

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies have been made of the needs of partially sighted students, including low vision aids and audio visual aids and of the use of large print.

Mr. Dunn: A number of studies have been made on the needs of partially sighted students; I am sending the right hon. Member a copy of a bibliography published by the Department. It is not possible to identify specifically those which refer to low vision aids, audio visual aids or the use of large print.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial assistance is available to

schools, higher and further education and training establishments for provision of low vision aids and larger print publications to enable visually handicapped students to read standard text books and literature.

Mr. Dunn: The provision of low vision aids and larger print publications to enable visually handicapped students in schools, higher and further education and training establishments to read standard text books and literature is a matter primarily for local education authorities and the bodies responsible for individual institutions. Such expenditure would be met from the normal sources of finance for local government, voluntary colleges and universities. Specific provision is also made under the scheme for education support grants in 1985-86 for microelectronic equipment designed or adapted for use by children with special educational needs; and in 1986-87 for similar equipment for further education students.

University Museums (Funding)

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the present arrangements for funding university museums, including the Fitzwilliam museum in Cambridge; and if he intends to review urgently the method of their funding.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations on the funding of university museums. The responsibility for the funding of university museums rests with the university concerned, but is one of the factors the University Grants Committee takes into account in determining the distribution of recurrent grant. As announced on 11 April 1984, at columns 261-262, special arrangements have been made for an amount equivalent to the present Greater Manchester council's contribution to the Manchester museum and the Whitworth art gallery to be channelled through the UGC and the University of Manchester following the abolition of the Greater Manchester council.

Research Councils

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to review the work of the research councils and their funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend already receives advice annually on the work of the research councils and their funding from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

School Curriculum

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to respond to the report of the Library and Information Services Council "School Libraries: The Foundations of the Curriculum".

Mr. Chris Patten: There are no plans for a formal response to this report, but there have been a number of recent developments which are relevant to its concerns.

In March 1985 the Government published the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9649), which recognise the importance of school libraries. As "Better Schools" says, the Government believe that the function and use of school libraries and media resources should be an essential feature of the curricular policy of every local education authority and school. Schools which think through the role of the library in the curriculum are better placed to take full advantage of this important resource and so to extend the range and depth of their pupil's learning.

A report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of a survey of library provision in some secondary schools in six local education authorities, published last June, highlighted the need for a change in attitudes to school libraries. The senior chief inspector sent copies of the report to all chief education officers in England, inviting them to comment on its relevance for their schools. Comments were also sought from the Library Association and the School Library Association. Responses to the survey are under consideration.

Arrangements have been agreed with the Office of Arts and Libraries for joint visiting by Her Majesty's inspectors and library advisers from time to time. The first such visits have already taken place. Her Majesty's inspectorate has also indicated its willingness to consider appointing chartered librarians as occasional inspectors if exercises mounted in future need this expertise.

The Library and Information Services Council's report also addressed a number of recommendations to local authorities, training establishments, staffs of schools, professional bodies and others. Those recommendations are for consideration by the bodies concerned. A concerted effort is needed, within the resources available, to improve the contribution which school libraries make to the quality of education in our schools.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Enterprise Zones

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of enterprise zones in the Province.

Mr. Needham: There are two enterprise zones in Northern Ireland, the Belfast enterprise zone and the Londonderry enterprise zone.

Belfast enterprise zone:

1. The Belfast zone was designated on 21 October 1981. It consists of two sub-zones:—
   (i) an inner city sub-zone of 300 acres dominated by large former textile mills; and
   (ii) 200 acres of mostly reclaimed land at the north foreshore owned by the Belfast city council and the Belfast harbour commissioners.
2. At the end of four years the zone has attracted 150 new firms, bringing 1,512 new jobs; a further 41 firms have expanded and generated 241 new jobs—giving 1,753 new jobs to the zone. Over the four years the zone has attracted £25 million of investment.
3. There continues to be a high level of interest in the advantages of the zone from the private sector. Full utilisation of the 200 acres in the north foreshore sub-zone is in prospect. Development schemes in the inner city sub-zone already under way or in planning will cater for the demands for development sites in the area.

Londonderry enterprise zone:

4. Londonderry enterprise zone was designated on 13 September 1983. It also is a split one with:
   (a) 167 acres on the west bank of the river Foyle at Springtown, Northland and Pennyburn industrial estates; and
   (b) 103 acres at Campsie on the east bank.
5. To date 39 new businesses have been established, which together with expansion of existing companies provide 290 new jobs in the zone. The zone has attracted some £1

million of investment, bringing 250,000 sq. ft. of vacant factory space into use for commercial and industrial purposes.

6. One of the most significant developments has been the acquisition of a very large vacant factory by a local company. To date, 11 of the new companies to the zone are located at these premises, occupying some 70,000 sq. ft.

Car Parks

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been achieved in the privatisation of car parks run by the Department of the Environment (NI).

Mr. Needham: At present, 29 of the Department's charged car parks are operated under contract by private enterprise. The possibility of extending this number is under consideration.

Intergovernmental Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to keep the House informed of the activities of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: I have placed the joint statements issued after each of the three meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference in the Library. I intend to make this a general practice in future.

Police Stations (Damage)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the repair of the Royal Ulster Constabulary stations damaged by terrorist bombardment.

Mr. Tom King: The Provisional IRA's bombing campaign on police stations and the intimidation of building contractors involved in security works will not diminish the Royal Ulster Constabulary's commitment to discharging its essential tasks. The Government and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland are firmly resolved that those police stations which need to be replaced will be rebuilt as a matter of top priority.

For security reasons I do not wish to detail the steps which the Government have taken, and will be taking, in conjunction with the Police Authority to ensure that the momentum of the police building programme is maintained. However, I can say that the Royal Engineers will play an important role in this: already they have provided invaluable assistance at a number of locations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Thames Valley Police

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on police manning levels in the Thames Valley force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Deportation

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the annual cost of removal of illegal entrants;

(2) what is the average cost of enforcing a deportation order.

Mr. Waddington: In the financial year 1984-85 the total cost of travel arrangements for all those removed from the United Kingdom at public expense was just over £850,000. I regret that it is not possible to divide this figure so as to show separately the costs of travel arrangements for those removed as illegal entrants, as the subject of deportation orders, and as passengers refused leave to enter. Arrangements have already been made to enable this information to be available for future periods. Figures for costs, other than travel costs, could not be obtained without disproportionate expense.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been deported during each of the last 10 years on each of the grounds of national security, good international relations or for other such reasons; and in each case what was their nationality;

(2) how many persons deported on grounds of national security, good international relations of for other such reasons have sought in the last 10 years to have their deportation orders revoked; and what was the outcome in each case.

Mr. Hurd: In 1977 two United States citizens were deported on grounds of national security. Between 1976 and 1983 there were no other deportations on the grounds specified in the question. The figures for 1984 and 1985 are as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Algeria	2	—
Bahrain	—	8
Iran	2	—
Libya	15	4
Morocco	1	—
Sudan	1	—
Syria	—	4
Yugoslavia	—	1
	21	17

The grounds for deportation were as follows:

	1984	*1985*
National security	6	14
Relations with another country	7	—
Other reasons of a political nature	8	3

In one case application has been made for revocation of an order; it was refused.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the proportions of visitors admitted on check out and ordinary conditions during 1985 or the most recent available 12-month period.

Mr. Waddington: In the 12 months ending June 1985, about 5 per cent. of those admitted as visitors (other than European Community nationals) were admitted on checkout conditions and the other 95 per cent. on non-checkout conditions.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers travelling through

Heathrow airport in the most recent 12-month period have been referred for medical examination; and how many passengers have been refused entry on medical grounds.

Mr. Waddington: Under the immigration rules, persons subject to immigration control who are coming to the country for more than six months are normally referred for medical examination. Other persons may be referred for examination at the discretion of the immigration officer.

In 1985 at Heathrow airport, 33,312 passengers were referred by the immigration service for medical examination, of whom 66 were refused leave to enter on medical grounds.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer he gave to the hon. Member for Stretford on 18 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *174*, if the Secretary of State has specified conditions and restrictions to be observed in a control area designated for the embarkation or disembarkation of passengers at any port under paragraphs 26 and 27 of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971; if any of these refer to passengers being accompanied by friends, relatives or representatives; and, if appropriate, when these conditions and restrictions were imposed.

Mr. Waddington: The Secretary of State has from time to time given written notice of the conditions and restrictions to be observed in control areas of a port under paragraphs 26 and 27 of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971. It has not been felt necessary to refer in such notices to passengers wishing to be accompanied by friends, relatives or representatives, as the powers of examination of a passenger under paragraph 2 of schedule 2 do not grant to a third party a right to be present during an examination.

Video Recordings Act 1984

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under the provisions of the Video Recordings Act 1984; and with what result.

Mr. Mellor: The Act came into force during 1985 and information on prosecutions during 1985 is not yet available.

Prisons (Workplaces)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of workplaces in prisons in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Totals of workplaces available in prisons for the last 10 years are not held centrally. For prison service industries this information is available for the past four years only, although the numbers employed in industries is available for the past 10 years. The figures relating to prison service industries areas follows:

	No. of Workplaces	*No. Employed*
1975-76	—	14,400
1976-77	—	14,600
1977-78	—	14,200
1978-79	—	13,600
1979-80	—	12,900
1980-81	—	12,200
1981-82	15,505	12,250
1982-83	15,026	11,450
1983-84	14,600	10,418
1984-85	14,480	9,802

Prisoners (AIDS)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in prison currently have acquired immune deficiency sysdrome.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no report of a current case of diagnosed AIDS in the prison population of England and Wales.

Women (Attacks)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from chief constables on special responses made to attacks on women;

cal(2) if he will call for reports from chief constables on the steps taken to respond to rape;

(3) what information he has as to the number of police officers in each force area who have been trained in sexual investigation techniques;

(4) if he will call for reports from all chief constables outside the metropolis as to which forces have rape victim examination suites on the same lines as the one in Brentford.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Five hundred and fifty-six officers of the Metropolitan police had undergone a course in sexual offences investigation techniques by the end of 1985. Special training in the handling of rape cases, especially by women officers, is customary in other forces, but no figures are available centrally of the numbers who have been trained. The general question of the police's response to cases of rape and domestic violence, including the treatment of victims, and the provision of special examination suites, is the subject of a recent report on violence against women published by the Women's National Commission. The report contains a large number of recommendations for building on the work which has already been done in this area, and the Department will be consulting with the Association of Chief Police Officers on the scope for further action in response to the report.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables on the steps taken to prevent attacks on women.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As a result of the Prime Minister's recent seminar on crime prevention the Home Office, in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers, will consider urgently the production of an advisory publicity package for the public, and particularly for women, on practical steps they can undertake to reduce the risk of attack and how to respond in the event of attack.

Police Records

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside as to information kept about persons not suspected or convicted of involvement in

criminal matters, and as to the form in which this information is kept and as to how many such individuals are presently recorded on the system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards police forces keeping records on persons not suspected or convicted of involvement in criminal matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The collection and keeping of such information are matters for individual chief officers of police, but any information kept on computers by the police is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Undercover Operations

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the instructions given to PC John Fordham as to the extent to which he was to conceal his identity when involved in an undercover operation at the home of Mr. Kenneth Noye; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the general instructions given to officers in surveillance units as to the extent to which they are to disclose their identity if challenged when involved in undercover operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The comissioner considers that the disclosure of operational instructions given to officers engaged in such duties would be to place them at unjustifiable risk and impair their operational effectiveness. All officers undertaking such operations are, however, subject to the same legal requirements as police officers generally. The instructions given to PC John Fordham conformed to these principles.

Ms. Angela Lloyd

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis into the circumstances of the police raid at the house of Ms. Angela Lloyd in St. Paul's Tower, Beaumont road, Leyton, in early December and as to when a search warrant was obtained to authorise this entry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The commissioner informs me that a warrant was obtained on 29 November for the purpose of entering Ms. Lloyd's flat to search for stolen property. As a result of the search, carried out on 3 December, one person was arrested and Ms. Lloyd charged with impeding his arrest.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the resources devoted by each police force to crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested for each force is not readily available. It is for individual chief officers of police to decide on the disposition of their resources. They are encouraged by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to formulate strategies for the prevention of crime which make best use of the resources at their disposal.

Exclusion Orders

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been excluded on the personal direction of himself or his predecessors from the United Kingdom during each of the last 10 years; in each case, on what grounds; and what was their nationality;

(2) how many persons excluded on grounds of national security, good international relations or for other such reasons have sought in the last 10 years to have their exclusion order revoked; and what was the outcome in each case.

Mr. Hurd: Separate statistics of persons excluded on the personal directions of the Secretary of State have been collected only since 1984. Their nationality was as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Bulgaria	1	1
Canada	1	—
Cuba	1	3
Czechoslovakia	1	—
GDR	—	2
Greece	1	—
Hungary	3	3
India	1	—
Iraq	—	1
Iran	1	1
Lebanon	—	3
Libya	4	6
Netherlands	—	1
Pakistan	1	—
Poland	2	2
Switzerland	—	1
Syria	—	4
Uganda	—	1
USA	3	—
USSR	6	9
Nationality doubtful	1	2
	27	40

In 1984 and 1985 the main categories of people excluded were those excluded on security grounds and those who there was reason to believe were involved in terrorist activities. In 1984 another significant category was officials of international Communist Front organisations.

In one case the exclusion directions were subsequently withdrawn. In one other case an application for their withdrawal was refused.

Refugees

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received during the last five years to incorporate the convention and protocol relating the status of refugees into United Kingdom law.

Mr. Waddington: The question of incorporation has been raised with us by refugee organisations on several occasions over the last five years, but comprehensive information about these approaches is not available.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many experiments were conducted on each species of animal designated as protected under the Cruelty to Animals Act in each of the last five years for which figures are available; how many applications were made to experiment with each such species in each year, and how many applications were refused.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of experiments on living animals subject to the provisions of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 which were started in the years 1980 to 1984 is given, by species of animal, in table 14 of the "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1984" (Cmnd. 9574). Applications for licences and certificates are not made for specific experiments as such and information is not available as to the numbers of applications for authority to carry out experiments on particular species, nor as to the numbers refused.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit the passaging of tumours between experimental animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The maintenance and passage of tumours for scientific purposes is not subject to any form of control under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876; but under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill now in another place these procedures will require the consent of my right hon. Friend. The passaging of tumours, where justified, will be permitted under the authority of an appropriate personal and project licence, and subject to such conditions as my right hon. Friend may impose. All personal licences will include a condition requiring the immediate, humane killing of any animal found to be suffering severe pain or severe distress which cannot be alleviated.

Police (Automatic Weapons)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the police forces in England and Wales which have been given permission to acquire automatic weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available centrally. Police forces in England and Wales do not need Home Office permission to acquire firearms. The purchase of such equipment is a matter for chief officers and their police authorities.

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to public funds in each year since its inception of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The association was formed in 1948. A full-time general secretary was appointed in 1968 to do the work previously done by two chief constables in their own time, but the costs of the secretariat have been met from public funds only since 1 April 1973. Following is the annual expenditure:

	£
1973-74	20,608
1974-75	29,476
1975-76	38,091
1976-77	41,259
1977-78	47,989
1978-79	57,374
1979-80	96,923
1980-81	108,524
1981-82	133,105
1982-83	142,344
1983-84	148,519
1984-85	151,400
*1985-86	77,566

* First two quarters only.

Commission for Racial Equality (Letters)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality its policy on replying to letters received in languages other than English.

Mr. Waddington: No. This is entirely a matter for the commission.

Mr. Alan W. Norton

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in the past year in the case of Alan W. Norton; what action he has taken following these representations; which Jersey officials were consulted on what action should be taken; what previous involvement these officials had in the case; whether the trial judge was consulted on all requests for parole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Mr right hon. Friend has received representations in the past year from the hon. Member about Mr. Norton's conviction and his possible release on licence. These representations were carefully considered.

The observations of the former Bailiff of Jersey (who had acted as prosecution counsel in the case) were obtained on points of detail raised about Mr. Norton's conviction. I subsequently wrote to the hon. Member to say that I could see no grounds for any action on the part of the Home Secretary.

I also explained that the trial judge, the Lord Chief Justice and the Bailiff had been consulted in September 1984 about Mr. Norton's possible release on licence. The Parole Board did not recommend Mr. Norton's release but recommended—and my right hon. Friend has agreed—that his case should be referred to the local review committee in May 1990.

Channel Islands

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responses he has received from the states of Guernsey and Jersey to Her Majesty's Government's request for a contribution to the cost of defence and foreign representation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The states of Guernsey have offered to assume responsibility for the Alderney breakwater, to make a voluntary contribution towards the annual cost of maintaining the Royal naval paort headquarters in Guernsey, to pay over to Her Majesty's Government fees charged for the issue of passports in Guernsey and to pay reasonable identifiable expenses incurred by Her Majesty's Government specifically for the island in the field of international representation.

We understand that the recommendations of the committee which the States of Jersey established to consider the Government's request will be debated later this month.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any proposed staff costs in his Department in the financial year 1986-87, arising out of duties associated with the implementation of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes; it is too soon for estimates of costs, but they will be within the Department's manpower and financial targets.

Immigration

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to transfer interviews, where appropriate, under the immigration rules, in relation to visitors from the Indian sub-continent from London Heathrow to Leeds/Bradford airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Interviews are already transferred where appropriate to Leeds/Bradford airport. In the third quarter of 1985, 122 cases were transferred there from Heathrow terminal 3. Many of these involved passengers from the Indian subcontinent.

National Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grants were paid by his Department to the National Marriage Guidance Council in 1984 and 1985; and what is the projected grant for 1986.

Mr. Mellor: Grants to the National Marriage Guidance Council have been £827,460 in 1984-85 and £864,570 in 1985-86.

The grant for 1986-87 will be decided in the light of the review of grants to marriage guidance organisations which will shortly be completed. I shall write to my hon. Friend when it has been settled.

Tottenham Disturbances

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to *(a)* the number of people from whom the police have taken possession of their shoes and clothing since the 6 October disturbances in Tottenham, *(b)* when it is intended to return these items to their owners and *(c)* if compensation for loss, dry cleaning and repairs will be paid.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the course of their inquiries into the murder and other serious offences which occurred during the Tottenham riot on 6 October the Metropolitan police have seized clothing and footwear from 183 persons for forensic examination. Articles are being returned as soon as they are excluded from the inquiries and are being retained only when required as exhibits in criminal proceedings. The police are prepared to consider claims for compensation where property is lost or damaged as a result of police action.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of those convicted for robbery or mugging in Portsmouth in each of the past 10 years have been *(a)* given a custodial sentence, *(b)* given a suspended sentence, *(c)* fined and *(d)* given a community service order;

(2) how many people were prosecuted for offences related to robbery or muggings committed in Portsmouth in each of the last 10 years;

(3) how many of the robberies or muggings committed in Portsmouth in each of the last 10 years were committed by people in the 14 to 25 years age group.

Mr. Mellor: The available information, which may be incomplete, is given in the table.

In the absence of a caution or a prosecution the age of an offender is not known.

To produce corresponding figures for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against for offences of robbery at Portsmouth Petty Sessional Division or Crown Court.

Number of persons

	All Ages						Aged 14-25
	Proceeded against	*Found guilty*	*Fined*	*CSO*	*Fully suspended sentence*	*Immediate custody*	*Found guilty*
1979	19	15	—	—	—	14	11
1980	15	13	—	—	2	11	8
1981	17	15	—	1	1	8	11
1982	23	16	—	—	1	14	11
1983	13	3	—	2	—	1	1
1984	14	7	—	—	—	5	2

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been injured in robberies and muggings in Portsmouth in each of the last 10 years; how many people have been detained in hospital; and how many have been disabled;

(2) how many robberies and muggings were recorded in Portsmouth in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The term mugging has no legal definition; most offences of the type frequently referred to as "mugging" are recorded as offences of robbery. The information readily available to me relates to offences of robbery recorded by the police in police force areas, statistics of which are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.6 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621), and in "Criminal Statistics

Supplementary Tables" (volume 3, table S3.1 of the issue for 1984). No information is available to me on numbers of persons injured hospitalised or disabled as a result of robberies or "muggings".

Cigarettes (Illegal Sale)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for illegal sale of cigarettes were initiated in 1985 in England.

Mr. Mellor: Records readily available to me, which may be incomplete, show 45 prosecutions in England and Wales in 1984 for the offence of selling tobacco to a juvenile. This information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, 1984" (table S1.1(A) under classification 144). Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Television Licence

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the television licence would cost at current prices if it had remained at the real level at the time of the Post Office Act 1969; how many applications he or the licence records office receives in a year for a refund and how many were granted in 1985; why the administrative costs preclude a refund system similar to that for vehicle excise duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The television licence fees in 1969 were £6 (monochrome) and £11 (colour), the real equivalents of which would now be about £33 and £60. The current fees of £18 and £58 cover the three-year period from 28 March 1985. Comprehensive records about refunds and refund applications are not kept. It is estimated that about 13,000 refunds a year are made on the ground that a licence is no longer needed within 28 days of its issue (or its due date of issue if it is a renewal). We have no present plans to introduce refund arrangements similar to those which have applied for a number of years to vehicle excise duty, in the light not only of the administrative costs involved, but of the loss of licence revenue to the BBC.

Benzodiazepine Drugs

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider the re-scheduling of benzodiazepine drugs in accordance with the United Nations convention on psychotropic substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984, 33 benzodiazepine drugs were scheduled under the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971, which the Government intend to ratify within the next few weeks. The changes needed in our misuse of drugs legislation to bring these drugs within our domestic controls are contained in regulations which are currently before Parliament and are intended to take effect from 1 April this year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Access

Sir John Page asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will seek discussions with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, the Westminster city council and the Greater London council about the implementation of the sessional order relating to access to the House with regard to the new bus lanes leading to Parliament square.

Mr. Biffen: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 14 January, at column 559. In the circumstances I do not believe that any useful purpose would be served by the discussions which my hon. Friend suggests.

Select Committees

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many committee temporary assistants are employed by each of the Select Committees; how many have been appointed since the new committees were established; what is the cost each year; and how many have had their appointments extended beyond the initial two years.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *693*]: The Treasury and Civil Service Committee employs two temporary assistants; the Education, Science and Arts, Environment and Transport Committees each employ one.

A total of 13 such assistants have been appointed since their Committees were established. Of these, six have had their appointments extended beyond the initial two years.

The expenditure in terms of salaries paid to specialist assistants to Select Committees in each of the financial years since the Committees were set up is as follows:

Financial year	£
1980-81	14,118
1981-82	65,004
1982-83	74,293
1983-84	57,204
1984-85	58,442
1985-86	69,588

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 January 1986

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Salaries

Mr. Dykes asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the latest information he has on comparable parliamentary salaries exclusive of allowances, in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States of America.

Mr. Biffen: The latest available figures on parliamentary salaries which have been compiled on a comparable basis are given in the "Twentieth Report of the Review Body on Top Salaries" (May 1983). The figures for the countries referred to in the hon. Gentleman's question are as follows:

UNITED KINGDOM
House of Commons

Basic salary of £14,510. Maximum salary of £15,362 for those who draw the London allowance of £852 per annum, which is taxable. Whole of salary taxable.

FRANCE
National Assembly

335,200 Fr (£27,702), of which nine twentieths (150,840 Fr=£12,466) is regarded as an expense allowance free of tax.

GERMANY
Bundestag

DM 90,000 (£20,979), all taxable.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Senate

US $60,662·50 (£35,684), all taxable. In 1977 a limit on outside earnings equivalent to 15 per cent. of the Member's salary was imposed but this was increased to 30 per cent. in December 1982. Compared with Senators, Members of the House of Representatives do not add substantially to their income by means of outside earnings.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
House of Representatives

Same as Senator from December 1982. However, Members of the House of Representatives will receive US $69,800 (£41,059) — the first time since 1796 that Senators and Congressmen have received different salaries.

Throughout this table the figures in pounds given in brackets are converted from local currencies at the rates of exchange prevailing in October 1982.

Salaries

Mr. Dykes asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will give figures and grades, titles and rank for those officers of the House of Commons whose salaries are *(a)* higher and *(b)* lower than those of hon. Members.

Mr. Beith: The number and grades of staff employed by the House of Commons Commission, with an annual basic rate or on a salary scale which includes certain points exceeding £17,702, are given in the chart. All scales include £1,365, or a proportion of this figure, per annum inner London weighting allowance except that no such allowance is payable to those indicated*. The numbers of staff shown include some staff in grades with a salary scale exceeding £17,702 per annum who may individually be receiving an annual salary below that amount.

The remaining grades of staff currently in receipt of an annual salary of less than £17,702 are included in the list of all staff given in Statement C to the "Seventh Annual Report of the House of Commons Commission 1984-85", a copy of which is held in the Library. The salaries of certain grades of staff at various levels are in the course of revision following a recently completed grading review conducted by the Commission's Staff Inspector.

The salaries of all staff employed by the Commission are linked to those of Civil Service grades.

Staff with equal or higher salary than £17,702

		£
Office of the Speaker		
2	Speaker's Counsel	31,658-32,433
1	Speaker's Secretary	22,329-26,898
1	Staff Inspector	14,873-19,728
Department of the Clerk of the House		
1	Clerk of the House*	52,750
1	Clerk Assistant*	38,325-39,250
1	Clerk of Committees*	38,325-39,250
6	Principal Clerks I	31,658-32,433
3	Principal Clerks II	28,916-29,666
16	Deputy Principal Clerks	22,329-26,898
25	Senior Clerks	14,873-19,728
Department of the Serjeant at Arms		
1	Serjeant at Arms	31,658-32,433
1	Deputy Serjeant at Arms	22,329-26,898
1	Assistant Serjeant at Arms	19,169-22,988
1	Deputy Assistant Serjeant at Arms	15,821-19,728
Department of the Library		
1	Librarian	31,658-32,433
1	Deputy Librarian	22,329-26,898
2	Assistant Librarians	22,329-25,265
1	Deliverer of the Vote	17,653-24,291
8	Deputy Assistant Librarians	18,416-22,662

		£
15½	Senior Library Clerks	11,682-19,728
Administration Department		
1	Head of Administration Department	31,658-32,433
1	Accountant	22,329-26,898
1	Head of Establishments Office	22,329-26,246
1	Computer Development Officer	20,434-26,246
1	Deputy Accountant	18,365-24,291
1	Deputy Head of Establishments	18,365-24,291
1	Senior Assistant Accountant	17,653-20,799
1	Internal Auditor	14,873-19,728
Department of the Official Report		
1	Editor	25,448-26,898
1	Deputy Editor	20,894
2	Principal Assistant Editors	19,599
2	Senior Assistant Editors	19,599
1	Assistant Editor	17,653-18,946
3	Deputy Assistant Editors	18,046
Refreshment Department		
1	General Manager	24,129
1	Deputy General Manager	14,873-19,728
1	Catering Accountant	14,873-19,728

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the number of those from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers within his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Eggar: Records are not yet kept, as staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have not been asked to disclose their ethnic origins. However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is participating in an ethnic survey of staff in Government Departments in London, the south-east and East Anglia which will be completed by the end of 1986.

South Yemen

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the nationalities and numbers of those rescued from South Yemen by the Royal Navy.

Mr. Eggar: The total number of persons rescued so far by the Royal Navy is 674. Apart from British citizens these comprised nationals of the following countries:

Afghanistan
Algeria
Argentina
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
China
Denmark
East Germany
Egypt
Ethiopia
France
Guyana
India
Iran
Iraq
Italy
Republic of Ireland
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Morocco
Netherlands
New Zealand
Pakistan
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Saudi Arabia
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Thailand
West Germany
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Race Relations

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the chartered accountancy profession about the implications for the cost-effectiveness and competitiveness of the profession of its co-operation with the investigation being conducted by the Commission for Racial Equality under sections 48 and 49 of the Race Relations Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: None.

Airbus

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent discussions he has had with United States trade officials

concerning restraints on the sale, import or use of the European Airbus by airlines flying within or to the United States of America.

Mr. Brittan: In the past few months, charges have been made in some quarters in the United States that European Governments have politically intervened to promote Airbus sales in competition with US manufactured aircraft. Doubts have also been expressed on whether Government launch aid towards development of the A320 is in accordance with our international obligations.

My right hon. and learned Friend has already informed the US Administration that Her Majesty's Government do not accept that it has in any way acted contrary to its international obligations in these matters. The Government will continue to resist such charges on behalf of British Aerospace and our other aerospace companies.

Westland plc

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he or his private office saw a draft of the letter to him dated 17 January from the chief executive of British Aerospace regarding the Westland affair before a copy of the letter was formally received by him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: Following the exchange in the House between my hon. Friend, the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 16 January at column 1207, it was clear to both my Department and BAe that there was a possibility of a misunderstanding having arisen at the meeting which I held with Sir Raymond Lygo on 8 January.

Following contacts between my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone), a discussion took place on the evening of 16 January between Sir Raymond Lygo and one of his colleagues, and representatives of my Department. My hon. Friends the Members for Arundel and for Aberdeen, South took part in these discussions.

As a result of those discussions Sir Raymond indicated his intention to write substantially in the terms of his letter of 17 January. When this was reported to me I indicated in turn that, were I to receive such a letter, it would be my intention to reply in the terms of my letter to Sir Raymond of 17 January.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the number from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers within his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Butcher: This Department does not at present hold records of the ethnic origins of its staff employed in the London area; a survey is to be conducted later this year.

Company Returns and Accounts

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has taken any action against Mr. Michael Hepker or against Provincial Properties Wales, its officers or directors for alleged non-filing of annual returns and accounts.

Mr. Howard: Summonses were issued on 11 December against the company and its directors, including Mr. Hepker. These summonses are returnable at Cardiff magistrates' court on 28 January.

Mr. Michael Hepker and Meldoak

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to take any action concerning Mr. Michael Hepker and Meldoak in the light of the correspondence received from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch.

Mr. Howard: I cannot say until my right hon. and learned Friend has studied the papers that he has just received from the hon. Member.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to take any action concerning Mr. Michael Hepker and borrowings from Johnson Matthey Bankers by Ravensbury Investments, Radcliffe and Provincial Properties Wales in the light of the correspondence received from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch.

Mr. Howard: No. This is one of the matters already being investigated by the police.

GEC—Plessey (Takeover)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now refer the proposed take over of Plesseys by the General Electric Company to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *15*]: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 20 January 1986 that he had decided, in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading, to refer the proposed acquisition of Plessey Co. plc by GEC plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation. He considered that the proposal raised issues of competition which justified investigation by the Commission.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crime Statistics

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General if he will give for each of the following categories of crime, namely, murder, attempted murder or conspiracy to commit murder, wounding with intent to do serious bodily harm, possession of firearms or explosives, other major firearms offences and membership of an illegal organisation, the number of cases reported to and investigated by the Director of Public Prosecutions, the number of persons charged and the number of persons convicted who were serving members of the security forces at the time of the alleged offence.

The Attorney-General: In respect of cases received by the Director of Public Prosecutions Northern Ireland in 1985 relating to persons who were serving members of the security forces at the time of the commission of the alleged

offence, records maintained by the Director of Public Prosecutions Northern Ireland show the position to be as follows:

Offences	*Persons in respect of whom directions to prosecute have been issued*	*Trial result*
Murder	2 (see note below)	Not yet tried
Attempted murder	—	—
Conspiracy to murder	—	—
Manslaughter	1	Not yet tried
Offences Against the Person Act 1861 Section 18 Causing Grievous Bodily Harm with intent	—	—
Offences Against the Person Act 1861 Section 20 Malicious Wounding	1	Not yet tried
Offences Against the Person Act 1861 Section 35 Furious driving of a vehicle	1	Not yet tried
Offences Against the Person Act 1861 Section 47 Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm	12	3 acquitted 2 convicted 7 not yet tried
Explosives Substances Act 1883	—	—
Firearms Order (NI) 1981 Article 3 Possession of firearms or Ammunition without a Certificate	2	1 convicted 1 not yet tried
Article 20 Discharge of Firearm unlawfully	3	1 convicted 2 not yet tried
Article 24 Drunk in Charge of a Firearm	1	Acquitted
Armed Robbery	1	Convicted
Membership of a Proscribed Organisation	—	—

Note: These two persons are also to be prosecuted in the same proceedings for possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life. One of them is also to be prosecuted in those proceedings for collecting information likely to be useful to terrorists and armed robbery.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve, were charged with offences and convicted of offences, respectively, in 1985, giving details of custodial sentences imposed, and separately for charges and convictions concerning: murder, attempted murder, membership of illegal organisations, conspiracy to cause explosions, withholding information concerning terrorist activity, possession of explosives, possession of explosives to cause bodily harm, possession of firearms, possession of firearms with intent to cause bodily harm and other offences classified as scheduled offences.

The Attorney-General: In respect of cases received by the Director of Public Prosecutions Northern Ireland in 1985 relating to persons who were full-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment at the time of the commission of the alleged offence or part-time members who were on duty at the time of the commission of the alleged offence, records maintained by the Director of Public Prosecutions Northern Ireland show the position to be as follows. Directions were issued to prosecute 27 such members of the UDR. Trials have taken place in respect of four of these persons. Of these four one has been acquitted and three have been convicted. All three convicted persons were fined.

In respect of the offences specifically referred to the position is as follows:

Offences	*Persons in respect of whom directions to prosecute have been issued*	*Trial Result*
Murder	*1	Not yet tried
Attempted Murder	—	—
Membership of a proscribed organisation	—	—
Conspiracy to cause explosion	—	—
Withholding information of terrorist activity	—	—
Possession of Explosives	—	—
Firearms Order (NI) 1981 Article 3 (Possession of a firearm without a Certificate)	1	Not yet tried
Firearms Order (NI) 1981 Article 17 (Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life)	—	—
Firearms Order (NI) 1981 Article 20 (Unlawfully discharging a firearm in a public place)	2	1 convicted 1 not yet tried
Offences against the Person Act 1861 Section 47 (Assault occasioning actual bodily harm)	5	1 acquitted 1 convicted 3 not yet tried
Other Scheduled Offences	—	—
Other Non-Scheduled Offences	18	1 convicted 17 not yet tried

* The person who is to be prosecuted for murder is also being prosecuted in the same proceedings for three other offences, namely possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, collecting information likely to be useful to terrorists and armed robbery.

Mr. Michael Hepker

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General what papers the Department of Public Prosecutions has received in relation to Mr. Michael Hepker and the Moneysave/Supasave case; and if he intends to take any action.

The Attorney-General: The greater part of this matter is under investigation by the Inland Revenue. The liquidator of the companies is in contact with the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of certain other aspects and has provided the Director with papers. It is too early to say what action, if any, the director will take.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he intends to take any action concerning Mr. Hepker and Meldoak.

The Attorney-General: This matter is under investigation by the south Wales police who have recently submitted a preliminary report to the director, which is under consideration.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he intends to take any action concerning Mr. Michael Hepker and borrowing from Johnson Matthey Bank by Ravensbury Investments, Radcliffe and Provincial Properties Wales Ltd.

The Attorney-General: The transaction mentioned in the hon. Member's question have been referred to the City of London police who are looking at all complaints relating to JMB. It is too early to say what action, if any, the Director of Public Prosecutions will take regarding this particular aspect of the matter.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Duties (Rail Travel)

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is her policy towards using British Rail for official duties; and if she will state the number of occasions since May 1979 on which she has travelled by British Rail in undertaking her official duties.

The Prime Minister: I regret that for reasons of practicality and security it has not proved possible for me to travel by British Rail on official business. I hope to do so if a suitable opportunity arises.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will state the number of those from an ethnic minority background who are employed in her private office; and what are the positions they occupy.

The Prime Minister: Records are not yet kept as staff in 10 Downing street have not been asked to disclose their ethnic origins. However, the office is participating in an ethnic survey of staff in Government Departments in London, south-east and East Anglia which will be completed by the end of 1986.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and science if he will list in the *Official Report* the levels of direct and indirect spending at outturn and at 1985-86 prices on *(a)* public sector schools and *(b)* assisted and independent schools by (i) central Government and (ii) local education authorities for children (1) up to school leaving age and (2) after school leaving age up to 18 years, for each of the last 10 years, together with the percentages of children covered by the categories listed.

Mr. Dunn: The financial information is as follows. Figures on the total numbers of pupils supported in independent and direct grant schools are not readily available. In 1983-84 the numbers supported under the assisted places schemes were 13,000.

Net recurrent expenditure

Financial Years	*Maintained schools* *Local education authority expenditure (£ million)*		*Non-maintained schools* *Local education authority expenditure (£ million)*		*Central government* expenditure (£ million)*	
	Cash	*1983-84 real terms*	*Cash*	*1983-84 real terms*	*Cash*	*1983-84 real terms*
England and Wales						
1974-75	2,370	7,258	47	144	13	40
1975-76	3,015	7,346	70	171	17	41
1976-77	3,420	7,364	82	177	17	37
1977-78	3,711	7,016	87	164	14	26
1978-79	4,160	7,109	84	144	11	19
1979-80	4,743	6,936	94	137	9	13
England						
1980-81	5,880	7,239	110	135	8	10
1981-82	6.109	6,831	117	131	9	10
1982-83	6,520	6,811	116	121	12	13
1983-84	6,832	6,832	116	116	18	18

* From 1981-82 awards expenditure on independent schools via the assisted places schemes is included in addition to residual expenditure on direct grant schools.

Open University

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown by age, sex and social class of student enrolments in the Open University since 1971.

Mr. Walden: The Open University collects information on occupation but not social class and a cross analysis by age, sex and occupation is not readily available. The available information is shown in the following tables. Information in respect of occupation prior to 1983 has been published by the Open University in their "Digest of Statistics 1971-1982", a copy of which is in the Library.

Table 1: Open University Students by Occupation — *United Kingdom*

Calendar Year	*1983*		*1984*	
Occupation at commencement of studies	*Undergraduates per cent.*	*Associates per cent.*	*Undergraduates per cent.*	*Associates per cent.*
Housewives	17·3	12·9	17·2	13·3
Armed Forces	3·1	0·9	3·0	0·8
Administrators and managers	4·3	3·9	4·2	3·5
Teachers and lecturers	18·3	30·4	17·4	32·7
The professions and the arts	10·5	13·4	10·5	13·0
Qualified scientists and engineers	3·8	5·1	3·7	5·4
Technical personnel: including data processing, draughtsmen and technicians	12·9	8·5	13·0	8·1
Electrical, electronic, metal and machines, engineering and allied trades	3·3	1·8	3·5	2·0
Farming mining, construction and other manufacturing	2·3	1·3	2·2	1·1
Communications and transport: air, sea, road and rail	1·9	1·0	1·8	1·0
Clerical and office staff	10·7	5·8	10·7	5·7
Shopkeepers, sales, services, sport and recreation workers	4·6	2·6	4·5	2·5
Retired, independent means, not working (other than housewives) students	5·7	9·8	6·3	8·3
In institutions, eg prison, chronic sick, etc	0·4	0·2	0·4	0·2
No information	0·8	2·4	1·5	2·5
	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Total (Numbers)	(66,403)	(7,367)	(66,763)	(8,675)

TABLE 2
Open University students by sex 1971 to 1984
United Kingdom

Calender year	*Undergraduates*	*Percentage men*	*Percentage women*	*Associates*	*Percentage men*	*Percentage women*
1971	19,581	73·0	27·0	—	—	—
1972	31,902	69·3	30·7	—	—	—
1973	38,424	67·2	32·8	1,885	—	—
1974	42,636	65·1	34·9	1,350	—	—
1975	49,358	62·4	37·6	4,188	53·6	46·4
1976	50,994	60·8	39·2	4,578	55·6	44·4
1977	55,397	59·5	40·5	5,576	53·7	46·3
1978	58,778	58·7	41·3	6,923	48·2	51·8
1979	60,579	57·5	42·5	8,778	49·1	50·9
1980	61,007	57·5	42·5	7,889	49·5	50·5
1981	59,968	56·4	43·6	7,078	48·1	51·9
1982	63,119	55·3	44·7	7,150	48·0	52·0
1983	66,403	55·0	45·0	7,367	49·6	50·4
1984	66,763	54·8	45·2	8,675	48·6	51·4

TABLE 3
Open University students by age 1984
United Kingdom

Age	*Per cent.*
Up to 21	—
21 to 25	4·6
26 to 30	17·9
31 to 35	23·5
36 to 40	21·8
41 to 45	11·7
46 to 50	8·1
51 to 54	5·2
55 and over	7·2
	100·0
Total number	66,763

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of students who have enrolled with the Open University in each year since it was established in 1969, the global student population of the Open University in each year, and the number of students graduating in each year.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Open University Students 1971-1985

United Kingdom

Calendar year	*Undergraduates*	*New undergraduates*	*Associates*	*Postgraduates*	*New postgraduates*	*Total**	*Degrees Awarded†*	
							BA degrees	*BA (Hons)*
1971	19,581	19,581	—	34	13	19,615	—	—
1972	31,902	15,716	—	108	68	32,010	898	—
1973	38,424	12,680	1,885	195	92	40,504	3,640	14
1974	42,636	11,336	1,350	258	80	44,244	5,180	224
1975	49,358	14,830	4,188	338	102	53,884	5,469	448
1976	50,994	12,231	4,578	414	107	55,986	6,027	782
1977	55,397	15,146	5,576	507	116	61,480	5,997	952
1978	58,778	15,622	6,923	582	124	66,283	5,534	1,031
1979	60,579	14,854	8,778	664	160	70,021	5,835	1,068
1980	61,007	14,022	7,889	733	139	69,629	6,091	1,226
1981	59,968	14,410	7,078	711	133	67,757	6,503	1,211
1982	63,119	17,772	7,150	742	174	71,011	6,440	1,241
1983	66,403	17,627	7,367	765	190	74,535	5,555	1,129
1984	66,763	15,446	8,675	856	138	76,294	5,950	1,230
1985	67,433	13,870	8,999	704	—	77,136	—	—

* excludes short courses, specialised short courses and learning materials.
† excludes a total of 318 higher degrees awarded since 1971.
Note: There were 14 postgraduates admitted during 1969 and 1970.

Home Students (Fees)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average level of fees in higher and further education courses for home students for each of the last five years at *(a)* outturn prices, *(b)* 1984-85 prices and *(c)* indexed; and if he will isolate arts and science courses according to the same criteria.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

	(a) Outturn prices £	*(b) 1984-85 prices* £	*(c) Column (a) indexed*
1980-81			
Postgraduate	1,105	1,417	100
First degree and diploma	740	949	100
Advanced FE	315	404	100
Non-advanced FE	216	277	100
1981-82			
Postgraduate	1,320	1,539	109
First degree and diploma	900	1,050	111
Advanced FE	411	479	119
Non-advanced FE	249	290	105
1982-83			
Postgraduate	1,413	1,540	109
First degree and diploma	480	523	55
Advanced FE	480	523	129
Non-advanced FE	276	301	109
1983-84			
Postgraduate	1,494	1,558	110
First degree and diploma	480	501	53
Advanced FE	480	501	124
Non-advanced FE	294	307	111
1984-85			
Postgraduate	1,569	1,569	111
First degree and diploma	500	500	53
Advanced FE	500	500	124
Non-advanced FE	309	309	112

Notes:

1. No differentiation is made between arts and science courses in the recommended fee levels for home students.
2. The levels of fee charged to home students are recommended by the Secretary of State for postgraduate and first degree and diploma courses, and by the Council of Local Education Authorities for other advanced further education courses (AFE) and non advanced further education courses (NAFE).
3. The reduction in the first degree and diploma fee from £900 in 1981-82 to £480 in 1982-83 was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the provision of grant to institutions.
4. Fees for the current academic year are as follows:

	£
Postgraduate	1,632
First degree and diploma	520
Other Advanced FE	520
Other Non-advanced FE	321

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing, for each year since 1962 *(a)* the value of student grants inside and outside London, *(b)* the real value when compared with the rise in retail prices and *(c)* the real value when compared with the rise in rents/accommodation costs, *(d)* the real value when compared with the rise in average earnings, *(e)* the global value of student grants as a proportion of the gross domestic product and *(f)* the real value when compared with the increase in book prices, indexed, using 1962-63 as a base.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	"Elsewhere" Rate of Grant	Real value in percentage terms (September 1962=100) deflated by increases in—				London Rate of Grant	Real value in percentage terms (September 1962=100) of the grant deflated by increases in—				Total cost of maintenance as percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
	£	(a) Retail Prices	(b) Average Earnings	(c) Rents	(d) Book Prices	£	(a) Retail Prices	(b) Average Earnings	(c) Rents	(d) Book Prices	
1962-63*	320	100	100	100	100	330	100	100	100	100	0·08
1963-64*	320	98	93	95	98	330	98	93	95	98	0·09
1964-65*	320	94	86	91	93	330	94	86	91	93	0·10
1965-66	340	95	86	91	94	370	101	90	96	99	0·12
1966-67	340	92	80	86	90	370	97	85	91	95	0·12
1967-68	340	91	78	79	84	370	96	82	84	88	0·14
1968-69	360	91	76	81	83	395	97	81	86	88	0·14
1969-70†	360	86	71	76	79	395	92	75	80	84	0·18
1970-71	380	85	66	74	76	420	91	71	79	81	0·17
1971-72	430	88	67	77	75	465	92	71	81	79	0·18
1972-73	445	85	62	71	72	480	88	65	74	76	0·16
1973-74	485	85	59	71	73	520	88	61	73	75	0·15
1974-75	605	90	62	83	71	665	96	66	89	75	0·17
1975-76	740	87	60	89	72	810	92	63	95	77	0·17
1976-77	875	90	62	91	74	955	95	65	97	78	0·17
1977-78‡	1,010	90	66	95	70	1,145	99	73	104	77	0·19
1978-79	1,100	91	63	94	70	1,315	105	73	109	81	1·19
1979-80	1,245	88	62	92	68	1,485	102	71	106	79	0·19
1980-81	1,430	88	58	81	66	1,695	101	67	93	76	0·20
1981-82	1,535	84	56	69	63	1,825	97	64	80	72	0·20
1982-83	1,595	82	53	66	56	1,900	94	62	77	65	0·20
1983-84	1,660	81	51	65	49	1,975	93	59	75	57	0·20
1984-85‖	1,775	83	52	70	47	2,100	95	60	81	54	¶

Notes:

* The expenditure for 1962-63, 1963-64 and 1964-65 has been estimated to exclude the cost of fees.

† Cost of maintenance on teacher training is included from 1969-70 onwards.

‡ The minimum grant was introduced with effect from 1977-78.

‖ Including the additional travel allowance of £50.

¶ Not available.

School Governing Bodies (Budgeting)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the devolution of greater budgeting responsibility to school governing bodies.

Mr. Dunn: The Government believe that, to increase the scope for cost-conscious and sound financial management in both LEAs and schools, the governing body should have significant responsibility for a school's expenditure. The Education Bill to be introduced this Session will consequently include proposals for an appropriate measure of financial delegation from LEAs to school governing bodies.

Museum Attendances

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1985 reported by the Natural History museum, comprising its outstations and the Geological museum, with the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1984.

Mr. Walden: I understand that 3,354,351 people visited the British Museum (Natural History) in 1985. This figure includes the Zoological Museum at Tring, Hertfordshire and the Geological Museum. This represents an 11 per cent. increase over the equivalent figure for 1984.

First Degree Students

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the numbers of first degree students in British universities in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86; and what numbers he anticipates for 1986-87.

Mr. Walden: The total numbers of full-time and sandwich undergraduate level students in British universities in 1983-84 and 1984-85 were 244,200 and 241,700 respectively. The provisional estimate for 1985-86 to the nearest thousand is 240,000. Numbers to be admitted in 1986-87 is a matter for the universities to decide but it is not expected that the total numbers will be very different from those in 1985-86.

Civil Science Budget

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proposed civil science budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Walden: The science budget, from which the research councils receive their grants in aid, will be £614 million in 1986-87, an increase in cash of £15 million over

previously published plans for that year. In addition it is estimated that approximately £600 million will be spent on scientific research in universities from University Grants Committee funds; this figure is based on an estimate of the distribution of universities' resources among different functions.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Woking, dated 5 September, 16 November and 30 November 1985, respectively, about which the hon. Member wrote to him on 5 January 1986.

Mr. Walden: I hope to reply later this week to the letters dated 5 September and 30 November. The Department has no record of receiving a letter dated 16 November from my hon. Friend.

Teacher Training

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students entered initial teacher training in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: About 16,700 students entered initial teacher training courses in 1985 — the same number as in 1984, and rather more than in 1983. It is clear that many people still perceive teaching to be an attractive and rewarding career, despite the current dispute. Recruitment exceeded targets for primary training courses and was satisfactory for most secondary subjects.

It is disappointing that there have once more been difficulties in achieving the recruitment targets in those secondary subjects where there has always been strong competition from other employers for the skills of a relatively small group of suitably-qualified people. In these subject areas we need to encourage more people to consider time spent in teacher training as a worthwhile alternative to immediate salaried employment. That is why, after consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I am today launching a bursary scheme which will pay £1,200 a year tax free in addition to the normal grant to students entering one or two year initial training courses in mathematics, physics or CDT.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to take any steps to counter the European Commission's implementation of the Community budget in the form approved by the European Parliament; if he intends to pay the United Kingdom's share for February on the basis of the budget approved by the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *109*]: The European Parliament adopted on 18 December a Community budget for 1986 which includes a larger total for non-obligatory expenditure than the Council had agreed, and other disputed elements.

In the view of seven member states, including the United Kingdom, the Parliament's action was not compatible with the EEC Treaty, and the Council decided accordingly on 20 December, by seven votes to three, to bring an action against the European Parliament before the European Court. The French, German, Dutch and Luxembourg Governments have decided to bring separate actions against the Parliament.

The United Kingdom Government has likewise decided to bring a separate action against the European Parliament in which the Court will be asked to rule either that the disputed elements in the budget are invalid, and in particular the 629 mecu (some £385 million) of expenditure which the Parliament added in mid-December to the Council's second reading draft budget of 27 November, or in the alternative, that no legal budget has been established. The United Kingdom will shortly deposit an application with the European Court in Luxembourg.

The Government will also be applying shortly to the European Court for an interim measures order suspending implementation by the Commission of the disputed elements in the budget pending substantive judgment by the Court.

Since in the Government's view the United Kingdom is legally obliged to make monthly VAT contributions to the budget of only some 190 million ecus (some £120 million), any contributions in excess of that figure cannot be paid as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund under Section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. The Government propose, as in the 1982 budget dispute, to contribute in full to the budget but to make clear that our contribution, to the extent that it is in excess of 190 million ecus, is paid on a "without prejudice" basis pending judgment by the European Court. The authority of Parliament for this element in our contributions, which amounts to some 10 mecu (some £6 million) a month, is being sought in a Special Supplementary Estimate for the current financial year which is today being presented to the House.

The Government's intention in adopting this approach is to minimise the risks of prejudicing the United Kingdom's case before the European Court, including our application for an interim measures order, and likewise the risks of incurring liability for penal interest rate charges.

Educational Institutions (Charitable Status)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the cost to the Treasury of the charitable status of private and assisted-independent educational institutions for the last five years for which data are available.

Mr. Moore: I regret that the information is not available.

Education (Covenanting)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost to the Exchequer of covenanting for educational purposes in the first five financial years for which data is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I assume the hon. Member has in mind the cost of tax repayments on covenant payments to charities with an educational purpose. However, it is not possible to distinguish educational charities from other charities.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost of cutting employers' national insurance contributions by 1 per cent.

Mr. Moore: We estimate that a cut of 1 per cent. in employers' national insurance contribution rates would reduce contribution revenue by £1,630 million (Great Britain) in respect of 1986-87.

Footballers (Transfer Fees)

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax was received from transfer fees in respect of footballers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moore: I regret that this information is not available.

Sporting Events (Taxation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was received in taxes from *(a)* football, *(b)* rugby union, *(c)* rugby league, *(d)* cricket and *(e)* athletic events in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moore: I regret that this information is not available.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of those from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Brooke: Three clerical officers and two specialist typists with ethnic minority backgrounds are employed in ministerial private offices in the Treasury.

WALES

Education Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the numbers of children in *(a)* public sector schools and *(b)* assisted and independent schools up to school-leaving age, and after school-leaving age, and the proportion they represent within their respective school populations as a whole.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The figures for 1984-85, the latest year for which figures are available are as follows:

	Under School Leaving Age	*Over School Leaving Age*
Maintained Schools:		
Number of Pupils	468,899	23,182
As percentage of total maintained school population	95·3	4·7
Independent Schools:		
Number of Pupils	9,601	1,528
As percentage of total independent school population	86·3	13·7

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the teacher-to-pupil ratio now in schools in Wales compared with 1978-79.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 20 January 1986 at column *21*.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each county in Wales, the expenditure per pupil in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The figures, at outturn prices, for the latest available financial year, are as follows:

Pupil unit costs at maintained primary and secondary schools: 1983-84

	Net cost per pupil (£s)	
	Primary Schools	*Secondary Schools*
Clwyd	727	996
Dyfed	772	970
Gwent	750	1,029
Gwynedd	715	961
Mid Glamorgan	788	979
Powys	879	1,037
South Glamorgan	682	961
West Glamorgan	807	1,140

Advance Factories Programme

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the advance factories programme in Wales and the benefit it produces.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Government's advance factory programme supports the other measures of regional policy by providing speculative premises in areas where the private sector has shown itself unwilling to supply them. It continues to yield substantial benefits by providing space for new job opportunities. During 1985 the Welsh development agency, Mid Wales Development and the Cwmbran development corporation allocated a total of 457 advance factories, comprising more than 2 million sq ft of floor space, to companies which are expecting to create nearly 6,000 jobs.

New House Building

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new housing units he anticipates will be built in Wales in 1986-87 by *(a)* local housing authorities and *(b)* registered housing associations; and if he will publish comparable figures for 1984-85 and estimates for 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Provisional figures for the numbers of new dwellings completed in Wales in 1984-85 by local authorities and registered housing associations are 2,141 and 281 respectively. Comparable estimates for 1985-86 are 1,000 and 500. No reliable estimates are available for 1986-87.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating his latest estimate of the eventual out-turn for 1985-86 of capital expenditure on new housing units by each of the district councils in Wales; and if he will give comparable figures for each of the past three years and his budgeted figures for 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following table shows capital expenditure on new build in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 for each district council in Wales.

As authorities are free to determine their own priorities for housing investment there is no estimate available for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Local authorities own forecast of such expenditure in 1985-86 is however included in the table.

Local authority capital expenditure on new build 1982-83 to 1985-86
£000

Local authority	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86 Forecast*
Clwyd				
Alwyn and Deeside	1,507	899	1,115	1,202
Colwyn	514	461	439	172
Delyn	91	—	849	—
Glyndwr	906	335	26	8
Rhuddlan	832	762	709	820
Wrexham Maelor	1,340	1,510	1,524	950
Dyfed				
Carmarthen	1,926	1,933	1,040	1,077
Ceredigion	1,240	2,660	927	973
Dinefwr	480	1,005	510	424
Llanelli	666	714	1,374	1,619
Preseli	178	25	367	500
South Pembroke	109	399	467	99
Gwent				
Blaenau Gwent	1,478	549	1,931	711
Islwyn	648	1,357	760	786
Monmouth	1,407	2,186	2,072	2,241
Newport	2,092	3,476	4,290	3,750
Torfaen	2,240	1,963	1,090	541
Gwynedd				
Aberconwy	483	405	599	180
Arfon	461	698	536	410
Dwyfor	82	187	194	142
Meirionnydd	619	575	95	60
Ynys Mon	1,156	1,545	803	913
Mid Glamorgan				
Cynon Valley	252	563	306	204
Merthyr Tydfil	425	373	96	75
Ogwr	952	1,897	1,882	1,100
Rhondda	131	56	54	66
Rhymney Valley	1,790	2,471	1,200	629
Taff Ely	1,613	1,988	411	1,002
Powys				
Brecknock	650	480	192	469
Montgomeryshire	431	424	421	488
Radnor	897	743	284	192
South Glamorgan				
Cardiff	5,703	7,409	2,563	629
Vale of Glamorgan	734	341	603	750
West Glamorgan				
Port Talbot	93	11	13	—
Lliw Valley	1,611	1,720	739	709
Neath	904	932	983	1,434
Swansea	1,716	1,799	1,363	951
Total Districts	38,357	44,849	32,827	26,246

Housing Corporation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the latest estimated expenditure by the Housing Corporation in each county of Wales for the present financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales, on what date he issued general guidelines to the Housing Corporation in Wales; and whether such guidelines included any direction as to the distribution of housing investment by the corporation between the various districts in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No such guidelines have been issued however, the corporation's development programme is submitted annually for my approval.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1985 reported by the National Museum of Wales, comprising its outstations, with the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A total of 765,189 people visited the National Museum of Wales during 1985, an increase of 0·63 per cent. on the attendance figures for 1984.

Health Services (Resources)

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached decisions about the allocation of resources for hospital and community health services in Wales in 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In 1986-87, I shall allocate £719·9 million, which will amount to additional resources of £46·5 million over provision in 1985-86.

For revenue spending this represents additional sums totalling £44·4 million, a cash increase of 7·1 per cent. over 1985-86 provision, of which £9·5 million will be required for centrally funded developments. The balance of £34·9 million is being made available to district health authorities. In 1986-87, district health authorities will again be expected to make efficiency savings, the first 0·5 per cent. of which will as in previous years be for reinvestment in the long stay sector; and these together with the cash increase now announced should enable authorities to meet pay and price increases, maintain proper standards of patient care and continue improvements in facilities.

Capital resources for hospital and community health services will increase by £2·1 million net of receipts to £46·2 million. As a consequence of the declining requirements of the centrally funded residual all-Wales programme, the funds available to health authorities will increase to £21·4 million. Authorities will also, as before, retain the benefit of receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings.

The revenue and capital resources available to individual authorities in 1986-87, will be as shown in the following table. These allocations do not take into account further sums which will be made available following decisions on centrally funded developments for the coming year. These will be announced shortly.

	Revenue Element of Allocation £'000	*Capital Element of Allocation £'000*
Clwyd	82·101	3·576
East Dyfed	51·176	1·603

	Revenue Element of Allocation £'000	Capital Element of Allocation £'000
Pembrokeshire	17·869	0·760
Gwent	99·562	3·743
Gwynedd	49·329	1·314
Mid Glamorgan	116·149	4·096
Powys	23·123	0·775
South Glamorgan	134·994	1·965
West Glamorgan	85·441	3·570

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of total United Kingdom official aid to India will be accounted for by assistance with the purchase by the Indian Government of Westland helicopters in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: It is not possible to give firm figures until the contract and the aid agreement have been signed.

EMPLOYMENT

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General what are the projected future numbers of participants *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region in the various training and employment measures run by the Manpower Services Commission by each individual scheme and by all schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following tables show the numbers of participants or places planned for 1986-87 on the various training and employment measures run by the Manpower Services Commission. I regret that a regional breakdown is not available for all schemes at this time because plans are presently being prepared. However, where regional figures are available these are shown.

Table 1

Scheme	Planned Numbers 1986-87
Adult Training Programmes	292,000
Community Industry	7,000 places
Community Programme	230,000 places*
Employment Allowance Scheme	80,000
Voluntary Projects Programme	Around 350 projects†
Youth Training Scheme	362,000

* From June 1986.

† VPP is planned on a project basis and estimates of future numbers of participants are not available.

Table 2
Current Regional Targets

Region	*Community Programme	Community Industry
Scotland	29,150	1,440
Northern	27,200	975
North West	36,500	1,125
Yorks and Humberside	26,850	1,045
Midlands	40,100	665
Wales	20,540	825
South West	15,500	200
South East	17,800	100
London	15,120	595

* Targets are for June 1986. A further 1,240 places currently not allocated to regions and are also available for linked experiments.

Self-regulation Agreements

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General what is his policy towards the conclusion of agreements between the Health and Safety Executive and certain companies permitting self-regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The possibility of making arrangements, in the appropriate cases, for health and safety assurance was put forward for discussion by the Health and Safety Commission in its "Plan of Work" for 1985-86 and onwards. The Commission intends to consider the responses it has received to its plan later in the year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General when details of the registered self-employed seeking work will be published.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to the labour force survey, in the spring of 1984 there were about 100,000 people in Great Britain without jobs seeking work who had been self employed in their previous job held within the previous three years, and who were included in the unemployment count.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of unemployed in the Gravesham constituency expressed as a percentage of the working population of each ward.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. William Powell asked the Paymaster General how many youth training scheme places have been *(a)* filled and *(b)* remain unfilled in Northamptonshire and in Corby at the latest convenient date; and how these figures compare with the equivalent date in 1984-85.

Mr. Trippier: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at the end of December 1985 some 3,725 places had been approved in Northamptonshire, and some 376 in Corby local authority district, while there were 2,524 young people in training in Northamptonshire and 219 in Corby local authority district.

These figures compare with 3,955 approved places and 2,397 young people in training in Northamptonshire and 502 approved places and 236 young people in training in Corby local authority district at the end of December 1984.

It is not possible to give a precise figure of vacant places because not all approved places will actually be available for occupation.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General how many applicants there were in 1985 in Leeds metropolitan district council for *(a)* youth training scheme mode A

schemes and *(b)* youth training scheme mode B schemes; and if he will show the applicants in relation to mode A, and mode B schemes by ethnic background.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not available: training providers are not required under the youth training scheme to keep records relating to applicants.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. William Powell asked the Paymaster General how many persons in *(a)* Northamptonshire and *(b)* Corby are in receipt of the enterprise allowance at the latest convenient date; and how this compares with the equivalent date in 1984-85.

Mr. Trippier: In the Northamptonshire area, which includes Corby, 421 people were receiving the enterprise allowance on 14 January 1986. This compares with 325 people on 15 January 1985. No separate figures are available for Corby.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General if he proposes to seek powers to impose a duty upon local authority careers services departments to assist every firm which notifies a job vacancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. This is a matter which is best decided by each local education authority in the light of the Employment and Training Act 1973 and the guidance which the Department issues under that Act.

Industrial Injuries (Statistics)

Mr. John asked the Paymaster General if he will set out in a list the top five industries having the highest incidence of serious or fatal injuries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following lists show the five industry groups with the highest incidence rates of reported injuries to employees, in 1984 from accidents arising in connection with work. The groups are listed in alphabetical order.

For reported fatal injuries	*For reported major injuries*
Agriculture	Bricks, pottery, glass, cement etc.
Construction	Construction
Metal manufacture	Metal manufacture
Mining and Quarrying	Mining and Quarrying
Railways	Timber, furniture etc.

The industry groups are those for which reports of accidents are made to the Health and Safety Executive and agencies of the Health and Safety Commission under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1980.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not yet keep ethnic records but there are certainly four clerical staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in the offices of myself and my colleagues out of a total staff of 33.

SCOTLAND

Lothian and Borders Police

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Lothian and Borders police as to information kept about persons not suspected or convicted of involvement in criminal matters and as to the form in which this information is kept; how many such individuals are presently recorded on the system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand from the chief constable that, apart from particulars required for administrative or statutory purposes, for example, under the Firearms Act 1968 and the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, no information is kept by the Lothian and Borders police about persons who have no actual or suspected criminal associations and that current force orders are specific on this point.

Children's Activity Holidays

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the safety of children's holiday activity-related courses in the light of the Consumers Association report, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I welcome the initiative by agencies providing activity holidays to produce guidelines to safeguard children. My officials are involved with the inter-departmental group which is presently considering whether existing legislation provides adequate protection.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1985 reported by the national museums and galleries in Scotland, broken down to the individual institutions but comprising their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1984.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

	1985	*Percentage change Since 1984*
National galleries of Scotland (NGS)	538,137	+14·7
National museums of Scotland (NMS)	709,509	*−17·2

*The 1985 figure for the NMS is compared with the aggregate 1984 figure for the RSM and the NMAS.

The NGS comprise the National gallery of Scotland, the Scottish national gallery of modern art and the Scottish national portrait gallery (SNPG). The NMS are the Royal museum of Scotland (formerly known as the Royal Scottish museum (RSM) and the national museum of antiquities of Scotland (NMAS)), the Scottish agricultural museum, the Scottish united services museum, the museum of flight and the Shambellie museum of costume.

Attendances to the Findlay building, Queen street, which houses both the SNPG and part of the RMS, have been credited in full to both institutions. This represents a change of practice from previous years, of which account has been taken in calculating the percentage changes from 1984.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the complaints over youth training scheme criteria and funding raised by the volunteer centre for community action for Glasgow about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill has given him notice.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have asked the office for Scotland of the Manpower Services Commission to clarify why the Glasgow volunteer centre has said it finds it impossible to join the new two-year youth training scheme.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the premises and persons for which he has responsibility in Scotland in respect of which Crown immunity is claimed.

Mr. John MacKay: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost concerning premises and persons for which my right hon. and learned Friend has direct responsibility. Crown immunity, as an immunity from a requirement to comply with statutory provisions, applies mainly to the Food and Drugs (Scotland) Act 1956, Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Rents Acts and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts in respect of the Secretary of State and his agents, directly executing responsibility in the National Health Service, such as health boards.

ENERGY

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the number of those from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers of his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Peter Walker: Staff in the private offices of Ministers of my Department include some of other than white European ethnic origin. Staff in the London area, where all such private offices are located, will be invited to take part later this year in the phased survey of ethnic origins of civil servants which was announced by the Government in January 1985. Their ethnic origins, therefore, are not yet recorded.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1985 reported by the national museums and galleries in England, broken down to the individual institutions but comprising their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1984.

Mr. Luce: For the nine national museums and galleries for which I am responsible, the information requested is as follows:

	Estimated attendance in 1985	*Percentage change from 1984*
British Museum	4,142,092	+19·5
Imperial War Museum	1,291,435	−5·4
National Gallery	3,156,725	+7·5
National Maritime Museum	600,000	*
National Portrait Gallery	516,148	−11·2
Science Museum	4,607,852	+2·2
Tate Gallery	996,565	−21·3
Victoria and Albert Museum	2,067,202	−0·6
Wallace Collection	178,770	+0·7

* No quantifiable change.

The figure quoted for the national maritime museum, which charges for admission, is an approximate estimate based partly on the number of admission tickets sold, some of which cover more than one entrant or visit. Other museums record visitors by a variety of methods, and in most cases the figures are regarded as being accurate to within about 5 per cent. only. This limits the interpretation of apparent annual changes in attendance, which may also be affected by other factors at individual museums and galleries.

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the items for which the issuing of export licences was withheld on the recommendation of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art during the half year ended 31 December 1985, specifying in each case the valuation and whether an item was eventually exported or retained, with particulars in the latter event of the acquiring institution; whether he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not yet decided, specifying in each case *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit; and whether a press notice will be issued from the Office of Arts and Libraries covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: The items for which export licences were withheld for a period on the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art are as follows. The valuation has been omitted in six cases where the owner wished it to remain confidential. Details of the items listed were given in press notices issued at the time of the Minister's decision.

Description	*Valuation* £	*Outcome*
A portrait of Captain Walter Griffiths by Richard Wilson	9,031·50	Licence suspended for three months. Purchased by the National Library of Wales.

Description	Valuation £	Outcome
A German crossbow by Johann Gottfried Hagnisch	—	Licence suspended for three months. Licence granted.
A silver gilt tankard by John Bridges	41,000	Licence suspended for three months. Purchased by National Maritime Museum.
A glass goblet enamelled by William Beilby	62,462	Licence suspended for four months. Purchased by Whitehaven Art Gallery.
A painting 'Boy bitten by a Lizard' by Caravaggio	—	Licence suspended for six months until 18 February 1986.
A painting 'the Vision of the Blessed Clare of Rimini' by the Master of the Blessed Clare	—	Licence suspended for three months. Purchased by National Gallery.
Oak cabinet by Charles Rennie Mackintosh	—	Licence suspended for three months. Licence issued.
The Portland Font by Paul Storr	1,275,000	Licence suspended for seven months until 24 April 1986 (suspension to be reviewed after four months).
A pair of paintings by Guercino	330,882	Licence suspended for four months until 24 January 1986.
A 15th century Flemish Painting 'the Madonna and Child with Four Saints'	751,890	Licence suspended for six months to 24 March 1986.
A daguerrotype 'A London Street' attributed to de St. Croix	36,000	Licence suspended for three months until 22 January 1986.
A Romano-British statuette of a stag	30,576	Licence suspended for six months until 16 May 1986 (to be reviewed after two months).
A painting 'Le Chenal de Gravelines' by Georges Seurat	—	Licence suspended for four months until 6 April 1986 (suspension to be reviewed after six weeks).
A painting 'Brutus and Portia' by Ercole de Roberti	—	Licence suspended for six months until 30 June 1986 (suspension to be reviewed after two months).
A painting 'Mars and Mercury leading Horses to Venus' by Jacob Jordaens	610,000	Licence suspended for four months until 30 April 1986.
An 18th century skeleton clock by Joseph Merlin	25,000	Licence suspended for four months until 30 April 1986.
A collection of architectural drawings of Althorp House by Henry Holland and others	17,730	Licence suspended for three months until 31 March 1986.

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half year ended 31 December 1985 of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators or executors; whether he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of capital transfer tax; and whether a press notice will be issued from the Office of Arts and Libraries covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: The information is:

1. *Items allocated since 1 June 1985 and to whom allocated.*

Mount Edgcumbe (chattels)*—Plymouth City and Cornwall County Councils

Bust of Lord Somers by Le Marchand—National Trust

Seneca Epistles—British Library

* This offer carried a condition that the objects remain *in situ*

2. There are no items accepted in lieu of tax by Ministers with heritage responsibilities awaiting allocation.

3. A press notice will be issued on 22 January to publicise this information.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Census Forms

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many annual agricultural census forms were filled in and returned by farmers in 1960, 1970, 1980 and for the last year for which the figure is available.

Mrs. Fenner: Comparable figures of the precise numbers of annual forms completed are no longer available for earlier years. The best guide to the trend is provided by the numbers of agricultural holdings in the scope of the annual census, as follows:

	England & Wales (thousands of holdings)
1960	350·9
1970	233·4
1980	185·2
1985	183·7

Creameries (Cheese Production)

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss its policies on allocating milk to creameries which produce cheese.

Mr. Gummer: I am in regular contact with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on this and other matters.

Wet Weather Payments

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the farmers who are entitled to wet weather payments have made claims; and whether he anticipates that there will be surplus moneys left over from the funds allocated.

Mr. Gummer: Claims for exceptional weather aid in England have been received from well over 90 per cent. of farmers thought to be eligible to apply.

I do not anticipate that expenditure will differ significantly from the funds allocated.

Farm Workers

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of farm workers hold the national proficiency tests council certificate.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested by the hon. Member. However, since 1975 over 18,500 category-based craft

certificates have been awarded by the National Proficiency Tests Council, although not all holders of such certificates will currently be employed in agriculture.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of employed farm workers on each of the following dates *(a)* 1 January 1966, *(b)* 1 January 1976 and *(c)* 1 January 1986 or the last convenient date prior thereto.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Numbers of regular workers, both family and hired, and of seasonal or casual workers recorded at June in 1966, 1976 and 1985 are given in the table:

Numbers of agricultural workers at June—United Kingdom

	Number
1966	522,227
1976	382,767
1985*	324,978

* provisional

Note: Figures for 1976 and 1985 include salaried managers in Great Britain.

Cereals

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the size of the cereal harvest for 1985; and where in order of precedence this ranks for yearly cereal production.

Mr. Gummer: United Kingdom production of cereals in 1985 is currently estimated at 22·3 million tonnes. This would represent the second largest quantity harvested in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the anticipated cereal surplus for 1985; and what was the carry over of surplus cereals at 31 December 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The quantity of cereals from the 1985 harvest that will be surplus to requirements depends on demand in the home and export markets and cannot be quantified at this stage. On 31 December 1985, stocks on farms are estimated at 8·5 million tonnes, from which of course normal commercial requirements for the rest of the crop year will be drawn. Stocks carried over into the 1985-86 crop year are estimated at 1·3 million tonnes in commercial stores and 4·2 million tonnes in intervention stores.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on 20 and 21 January; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The main decisions taken by the Council concerned beef and cattle imports during 1986.

The Council decided on the division between Member States of the 50,000 tonnes of frozen beef which the Community has undertaken, in the context of international trade negotiations, to import annually free of levy. At 13,680 tonnes, the United Kingdom's share remains larger than that of any other member state. It represents a small reduction, of less than 2 per cent. (240 tonnes), on the 1985 figure compared with the reduction of some 10 per cent. (1,340 tonnes) originally proposed by the Commission.

The Council also decided on the 1986 level of imports on preferential terms of calves for fattening and beef for processing. Given current high levels of production and stocks of beef in the Community, these imports were set at 175,000 head and 25,000 tonnes respectively compared with 190,000 head and 50,000 tonnes in 1985. At my request, the Commission undertook to safeguard the position of meat processors by making beef available for processing from intervention stocks on terms reflecting the Council's decision on imports.

In recognition of the effect on overseas suppliers of the reduction in imports of processing beef the Council agreed, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament, to open a special levy-free import quota for 6,000 tonnes of high quality beef during 1986. The Council also decided that 300,000 tonnes of feed wheat in intervention stocks in the United Kingdom should be transferred at Community expense to Italy to assist livestock farmers affected by drought. This will help to reduce our large stocks of feed wheat.

The Council again discussed the Commission's proposals for changes in the arrangements for starch and for the provision of sugar at reduced prices for use in industrial products. The Chairman stated his intention of trying to reach final decisions on these proposals at the next meeting of the Council.

TRANSPORT

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Transport, in view of the number of near misses and the growth in air traffic in recent years, if he remains satisfied with the present procedures for air traffic control in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes, I am satisfied with the standard of air traffic control services provided by the National Air Traffic Services. Despite the growth in air traffic, annual statistics show that in 1984-85 the number of risk bearing airmisses for commercial aircraft fell, continuing a downward trend shown by a three year moving average of this category of airmiss. The data for non-commercial aircraft shows no significant change.

Channel Fixed Link

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of his letter to Mr. B. P. Shaw, president of the General Council of British Shipping, about the Channel fixed link, dated 9 December 1985.

Mr. Ridley: I am happy to do so. The text of my letter to Sir Brian Shaw is as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 1 November about the Channel Fixed Link. It is very helpful to know the shipping industry's general approach to the Link. As you are no doubt aware, four proposals from promoters were accepted on 31 October and these are now being assessed in detail by a joint Anglo/French team of officials.

I can assure you that a cardinal aim of the assessment process will be to ensure that the requirement in the Invitation to Promoters, that no proposal should involve any public subsidy or commercial guarantees from the Government, is fully met.

The British and French Governments have a clear interest in ensuring, before any go-ahead is given, that any project they select is not liable to fail, for whatever reason, and is financially robust. As part of the assessment, therefore, we are examining critically the promoters' forecast costs and construction timetable, their assumptions on traffic, tariffs and revenues of all kinds, and their financing proposals.

Any failure of the project would thus represent a failure of the Government's assessment too. I recognise, of course, that one can never be entirely certain that financial difficulties will not arise in a project of this complexity. However, I can assure you that, even if such unforeseen problems were to arise, there would be no question of Government support. In such an event it would be for those with a financial interest to organise a restructuring package. But this would have nothing to do with the tariffs finally charged. Any company, whether restructured or not, can be expected to charge optimum prices—ie those which give the best financial return — whether or not this under or over-remunerates the capital employed. If the company has had to undergo restructuring because the project has over-ran, this will not affect the tariffs charged, which will be at the same level as if the project had been constructed to plan. If, however, the company has had to restructure because the promoters failed to forecast market conditions, then it might well be in the operator's interest to adopt a policy of lower tariffs. But the lower tariffs would be a consequence of market conditions, not of the restructuring.

So far as competition is concerned, it will be very important to be able to deal with the possibility of predatory pricing—ie pricing temporarily below the long-run economic price level in order to eliminate competition. The Guidelines therefore make it clear that any Fixed Link will be subject to existing national and Community legislation on monopolies, abuse of a dominant position and anti-competitive practices generally. There are, as you are well aware, certain complications in applying national competition laws to international transport undertakings: this aspect is receiving attention, but it does not affect the general position. These laws do not of course mean that the Government will protect any particular transport operation if the need for it, as expressed through market demand, no longer exists. Nevertheless it is far from inevitable that ferry operations will be drastically affected in relation to the existing level of operations, by a Fixed Link. The 1982 Anglo/French Study Group concluded that there could be room both for the ferries and for a Fixed Link, and we are looking thoroughly at these issues again.

I can also assure you that the impact of a Fixed Link on the role of the ferries in our defence planning will be fully taken into account before a decision is reached. The promoters themselves were required in their proposals to assess the impact of their projects on employment and the economy. However, as an extension of our own appraisal of traffic forecasts for the Link, we shall assess the effect of each proposal on the level of ferry operations and thence the consequences for our defence capability.

I am not in a position at this stage to say how much of our assessment will be published. We have agreed with the French Government that, during the assessment period, the proposals will remain confidential, apart from what the promoters themselves decide to make available. But as you can imagine, Ministers fully expect to answer to Parliament in due course for all the likely consequences of whatever decision the Government takes.

Our aim is to reach and announce a decision in January. If the Government decides to go ahead with a Fixed Link, we would hope to introduce legislation which, as you say, would be hybrid in the spring of 1986. The arrangements for such legislation allow those directly affected to petition a special committee. There will of course also be full Parliamentary debate of the chosen proposal. Work is already well underway on the necessary Treaty with the French Government and on the concession Agreement to be signed with any successful promoter. The Government expects that legislation might complete its passage in the spring of 1987 and the Treaty be ratified and construction begin shortly thereafter. I am happy that this letter should, if you so wish, be circulated to your members and made public.

749

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the numbers from ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Ridley: No. My Department is, however, currently taking part in the central programme of ethnic surveys of civil servants. The programme is proceeding on a region-by-region basis, with the London and south-east region, where all my Department's private offices are located, due to be covered later this year. By agreement with the Civil Service unions, the information gathered on ethnic origins is subject to strict rules of confidentiality in relation to individuals.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Border Areas Measures

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of the border areas measures within the context of the European regional development fund.

Dr. Boyson: The first border areas special measure, Regulation 2619/80, made available some £4·5 million in 1980-85 towards the development of tourism, communications, small firms and craft industries in the seven district council areas on the border with the Republic of Ireland (Armagh, Derry, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Newry and Mourne, Omagh and Strabane). Approximately 75 per cent. of the funds available were allocated for the provision of tourism infrastructure, 10 per cent. for the promotion and development of craft industries, and the balance for improvements in communications, mainly roads by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

The new special measure of December 1985, Regulation 3637/85, provides a further £9·5 million and is intended to extend and reinforce the first measure. The geographical scope has been extended to cover all of Northern Ireland with the exception of the Belfast urban area, thus including 25 of the 26 district council areas, and the range of aids available to small firms will be significantly expanded to include investment aid, promotion of innovation and the setting up of development agencies. A special programme for the implementation of this new measure will shortly be drawn up and submitted to the European Commission for approval.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest available figures which indicate unemployment in each parliamentary constituency and each electoral ward in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The numbers of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland at 12 December 1985 are as follows. Since there are over 500 electoral wards in Northern Ireland I shall write to the hon. Member giving December unemployment figures for each electoral ward.

Parliamentary constituency	Male	Female	Total
Belfast East	3,176	1,412	4,588
Belfast North	6,237	2,060	8,297
Belfast South	3,765	1,696	5,461
Belfast West	9,227	2,290	11,517
East Antrim	4,702	1,983	6,685
East Londonderry	6,499	2,277	8,776
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	6,017	2,040	8,057
Foyle	9,386	2,278	11,664
Lagan Valley	3,958	1,901	5,859
Mid-Ulster	6,246	2,117	8,363
Newry and Armagh	6,266	2,192	8,458
North Antrim	4,651	1,694	6,345
North Down	2,680	1,521	4,201
South Antrim	4,126	1,908	6,034
South Down	4,264	2,016	6,280
Strangford	2,629	1,495	4,124
Upper Bann	4,776	1,985	6,761
Northern Ireland totals	88,605	32,865	121,470

Discrimination

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of individual discrimination have been found by the Fair Employment Agency in the current year to date; and how many of these were against *(a)* Catholics and *(b)* Protestants.

Dr. Boyson: Four during the period 1 April 1985 to 5 January 1986; in each case Protestants were discriminated against.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the most recent calendar year, giving figures separately for *(a)* salary and benefits, *(b)* transport and communications, *(c)* new construction, *(d)* other costs, *(e)* total gross expenditure and *(f)* total net expenditure after deduction of receipts.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested but Royal Ulster Constabulary expenditure for the financial year 1984-85 is shown in the statement of account for the year ended 31 March 1985 presented by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Ulster Museum

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1985 reported by the Ulster museum, comprising its outstations, with the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1984.

Mr. Scott: In 1985 a total of 290,000 people visited the Ulster museum and the Armagh county museum; an increase of about 13 per cent. on the attendance figure for 1984.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Manchester Prison (Duty Solicitors)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report on the duty solicitor scheme at Manchester prison will be published; and whether he intends subsequently to initiate discussions with interested bodies in the light of its findings concerning the development of advice and legal services to prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: We intend to publish the report when further consideration has been given to the policy implications.

My right hon. Friend has no present plans to initiate discussions with interested bodies.

Drug Offences

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of sentenced prisoners, including fine defaulters, received into prison in 1984 had committed offences involving drugs;

(2) what proportion of sentenced prisoners, excluding fine defaulters, received into prison in 1984 had committed offences involving drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to persons received under sentence for drug offences and was published in tables 3.2, 4.1 and 5.1 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9622). In 1984, 3 per cent. of all those received under sentence including fine defaulters and 3·5 per cent. of those excluding fine defaulters had been sentenced for drugs offences.

Fire Safety

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the course of his review of the fire Precautions Act 1971, he has considered the evidence of the Westminster city council; and if he will use his powers to designate clearly defined hostel type accommodation as a further class of premises requiring fire certification.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The council's views, given in response to the consultation exercise on the review of the Fire Precautions Act will be carefully considered, together with other comments. Pending the outcome of the review, my right hon. Friend does not propose to designate further classes of premises.

Prison Population

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the highest prison population recorded in 1985; and if he will detail the different types of prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: In 1985, the highest figure recorded in the weekly summary returns of the population held in prison department establishments in England and Wales was 48,130 on 2 August. The composition of the population is reported at the end of each month and on 31 July, when the population was 48,100 it comprised 8,220 untried prisoners, 1,560 convicted unsentenced prisoners, 38,120 sentenced and 210 non-criminal prisoners.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the prison population to the latest date available compared with that of five and 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: On 17 January 1986, the total prison population was 45,153. Figures for comparable dates in 1975 and 1980 are not recorded. However, on 31 January 1976 the total prison population was 40,647 and on 31

January 1981 it was 40,047. The latter figure was affected by the national industrial action by prison officers which had only just been concluded.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the re-use of animals for experimentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill contains a provision to continue the present prohibition on the re-use of an animal which has undergone procedures involving the use of an anaesthetic from which it has been allowed to recover. The possibility of an amendment to the Bill to allow a limited relaxation of this prohibition has been discussed during the passage of the Bill in another place but no such amendment has been made. Consultations on this matter are continuing.

Prisons (Construction)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current programme of new prison construction or major rebuilding works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The current building programme includes 16 new prisons, of which three have now been completed, five are under construction, and the remaining eight are at various stages of planning and design. Together, these new establishments will provide some 7,800 new places by the early 1990s. As a result of the recent public expenditure decisions, design work will also begin in 1986-87 on two further new prisons. In addition, we are undertaking an extensive programme of modernisation and redevelopment of the existing prison estate, with major capital work in progress or planned at about 100 establishments including almost all of the Victorian local prisons. This part of the programme includes a number of place producing schemes which will provide overall a further 5,400 new places by the same date.

Exeter Prison

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted persons and remand prisoners are in residence at Exeter prison; and what is the number that the prison is designed to hold.

Mr. Mellor: On 17 January 1986 the population and certified normal accommodation of Her Majesty's prison, remand centre and youth custody centre, Exeter, were as follows:

	Prison	*Remand centre*	*Youth custody centre*
Certified normal accommodation	252	48	45
Untried	81	35	—
Convicted	245	15	39
Civil	3	1	—
Total	329	51	39

Hong Kong

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision he intends seeking to allow Hong Kong citizens, other than ethnic Chinese people, to emmigrate to the United Kingdom between now and 1997.

Mr. Waddington: None, but British nationals in Hong Kong, whatever their ethnic origin, will continue to be eligible to settle in this country if they satisfy the relevant requirements of the rules.

Prison Industries

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future of prison industries.

Mr. Mellor: I have as yet nothing to add to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 21 November 1985, at col. *272*.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been injured in robberies and muggings in the Cardiff, West constituency in each of the last 10 years; how many people have been detained in hospital; and how many have been disabled;

(2) how many robberies and muggings were recorded in the Cardiff, West constituency in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The term "mugging" has no legal definition; most offences of the type frequently referred to as 'mugging' are recorded as offences of robbery. The information readily available to me relates to offences of robbery recorded by the police in police force areas, statistics of which are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.6 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621) and in "Criminal Statistics Supplementary Tables" (volume 3, table 3.1 of the issue for 1984). No information is available to me on numbers of persons injured, hospitalised or disabled as a result of robberies or muggings.

Police (Cardiff)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Glamorgan on the numbers of *(a)* police establishment and *(b)* police in post in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1985 in *(x)* Cardiff and *(y)* the police stations covering the Cardiff, West constituency.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The authorised establishments and strengths on 31 December 1979 and 31 December 1985 of Cardiff central and Cardiff greater divisions, which are the two territorial divisions covering Cardiff in the south Wales constabulary, were as follows:

	On 31 December	*Authorised Establishment*	*Strength*
'C' (Cardiff Central) Division	1979	409	409
	1985	411	396
'D' (Cardiff Greater) Division	1979	306	306
	1985	325	318

I understand that finance will be available in 1986-87 to enable the south Wales constabulary to fill its existing force vacancies, and arrangements are in hand for it to do so as soon as possible.

Chief officers of police keep the allocation and use of force manpower under constant review to meet current objectives and priorities and local needs. Establishment figures showing a more detailed distribution for particular areas of the force would therefore be misleading and would not adequately reflect the numbers of police officers actually deployed there at any one time, which will include officers from central divisions, such as the traffic divisions.

Robberies and Burglaries

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many robberies and how many burglaries took place in J division Metropolitan police in 1980 and in 1985, respectively; and what was the percentage change in each case.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information requested for 1985 is not expected to be available until March. The figures for 1980 and 1984 are given in the following table.

Offences of robbery and burglary recorded by the police in Metropolitan Police "J" Division

	1980	*1984*	*Per cent.*
	Number		*change*
Robbery	299	500	+67
Burglary	7,081	9,093	+28

Commission for Racial Equality (Investigation)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of investigations implemented by the Commission for Racial Equality under section 48 of the Race Relations Act 1976; and how many of that number were required by him to be undertaken.

Mr. Waddington: The commission has initiated 49 such investigations. All were undertaken on the initiative of the commission.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he was consulted by the Commission for Racial Equality about the terms of reference of its investigation under sections 48 and 49 of the Race Relations Act 1976 into recruitment into chartered accountancy and, in particular, about the criteria as to the number of partners and size used to select the firms involved; what information he has as to the total number of firms involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The commission is not required to consult my right hon. Friend about the terms of reference of formal investigations which it undertakes. It did not do so on this occasion. I understand from the commission that 49 firms are to be asked to complete a full questionnaire, and that 230 firms are to be asked to complete a very much shorter one.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost to *(a)* public funds and *(b)* industry of complying with the requests of the Commission for Racial Equality in relation to its formal investigation under section 49(3) of the Race Relations Act 1976 into recruitment into chartered accountancy.

Mr. Waddington: The commission estimates that its own costs arising from the conduct of this investigation are likely to be about £20,000. It is not possible to estimate the external costs, but the commission is conscious of the need to avoid unnecessary expenditure by firms and other bodies involved in its inquiries and intends to keep its requests for information to the minimum necessary for the purposes of the investigation.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he required the Commission for Racial Equality to commence a formal investigation into recruitment into chartered accountancy under sections 48 and 49 of the Race Relations Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: This formal investigation was undertaken on the initiative of the commission.

Sunday Trading

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of the restrictions on Sunday trading in Portugal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I am awaiting the relevant information and will reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of the restrictions on Sunday trading in Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that shops in Spain are now free to choose their own opening hours and days. They may therefore open on Sundays, though not many do so.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of the restrictions on Sunday trading in Belgium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that Sunday trading is permitted in Belgium. Belgian law stipulates that shops must close for one day a week, and that day is negotiated between management and staff. Many small food shops and home equipment stores open on Sunday.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of restrictions on Sunday trading in Denmark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that Sunday trading in Denmark is generally restricted to certain goods. The Consumer Association is in favour of more liberal trading hours, and some illegal trading takes place.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of restrictions on Sunday trading in France; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that in France there are no legal restrictions on shop opening hours; the Code du Travail stipulates that shop employees must have one day

off per week and this should usually be Sunday. In some sectors — for example, food — another day is given instead of Sunday. Some chain stores in urban areas have begun to open on Sundays in recent years.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of restrictions on Sunday trading in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that Sunday trading in the Federal Republic of Germany is limited to certain goods. There is a degree of public demand for longer or more flexible opening hours, and also resistance from trade unions and retail trade organisations.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of restrictions on Sunday trading in the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: There are no restrictions on shop opening hours in the Republic of Ireland except for a very few outdated and unenforced local restrictions. I understand that there is no move by any interested party to impose restrictions and that there is general satisfaction with the present situation.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of restrictions on Sunday trading in Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that Sunday trading in Italy is largely prohibited. There is public demand for a liberalisation of trading hours.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of the restrictions on Sunday trading in the Netherlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that Sunday trading is restricted in the Netherlands to four Sundays a year, but that there are demands from shoppers and traders alike for shop opening hours in general to be extended, which are being actively considered by the Government.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of those from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers within his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Hurd: While no formal records are available at present, informal inquiries indicate that there are three members of staff from an ethnic minority background amongst the 26 staff in the offices of Home Office Ministers. All three are employed on clerical duties.

ENVIRONMENT

Enterprise Zones

13. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the operation of the enterprise zones designated so far, and the effect of the zones upon neighbouring businesses.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Enterprise zones are successful in restoring economic activity to previously declining areas. By September 1984 over 2,000 businesses employing 48,000 people were located in the zones. This compared with 28,000 people when the zones were designated.

It is difficult to estimate the effect of the zones on neighbouring businesses. There is evidence, both that zones stimulate activity in neighbouring areas, and that they can have an adverse effect.

Public Sector Housing

17. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his plans to introduce private capital into areas of housing currently within the public sector.

Mr. John Patten: The private sector must have an expanding role, not only to provide the funds needed for investment, but to offer tenants more diversified and sensitive forms of management. I am exploring a number of ways of bringing about such an expansion, some of which involve the urban housing renewal unit in my Department.

Housing (Survey)

19. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will launch a national survey into the state of British housing.

Mr. John Patten: The next English house condition survey will be undertaken this autumn. The state of the housing stock in Wales and Scotland is a matter for the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland respectively.

New Towns

20. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of Peterlee, Aycliffe and Washington new towns.

Mr. Tracey: I cannot at this stage add to the announcement made on 21 March 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin). The consultations on successor arrangements requested by my right hon. Friend are currently taking place, and it would be premature to make any statement before the development corporations have reported to me.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has invited a delegation led by the hon. Member to meet my noble Friend the Minister of State after that date.

London Docklands Development Corporation

21. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the working of the statutory code of practice relating to consultation between the London Docklands Development Corporation and local borough councils.

Sir George Young: Yes.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for what specific purpose the London Docklands Development Corporation has issued a compulsory purchase order for land adjacent to the Silvertown viaduct in the London borough of Newham.

Sir George Young: This matter is currently the subject of public local inquiry and it would be inappropriate for Ministers to comment.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of separate businesses and persons employed in them presently occupying the industrial area adjacent to Silvertown viaduct, recently the subject of a compulsory purchase order by the London Docklands Development Corporation, together with the number of businesses and employees already relocated by that corporation from that area.

Sir George Young: There are 36 businesses occupying this land and the corporation is currently undertaking an employment survey to discover the number of employees in the area. No businesses have yet been relocated.

Private Housing Development (South-East)

22. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on future private housing development in the south-east.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall shortly be publishing a consultation paper of a letter of regional guidance which I propose to send to the chairman of the London and South East Regional Planning Conference — SERPLAN — which deals with the levels of housing provision in the region in the 1990s.

Rates

23. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publish his review of the rating system.

24. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his review of the rating system.

25. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy to reform the rating system.

40. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his consultation document on the future of the rating system.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson).

27. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation period he will allow on his report on the review of the rating system.

Mr. Waldegrave: I must ask the hon. Member to await the publication of the consultative document.

32. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average increase in rates in 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: This year the average increase in general rate poundages is 7·3 per cent. If authorities plan sensibly, the average increase next year need be no higher, and it could be lower.

52. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he proposes to undertake on the future of the rating system.

Mrs. Rumbold: We shall be publishing a Green Paper very shortly and consulting widely on the proposals in it.

Multiple Occupation House (Standards)

26. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to give greater powers to control standards in houses of multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce further legislation on houses in multiple occupation this session. The consolidated Housing Act 1985 and the proposed circular on HMOs will assist local authorities in the use of their wide-ranging powers. My right hon. Friend will wish to see the outcome of the Department's research on HMOs before considering whether further measures are necessary.

European Community Trade Mark Office

28. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the involvement of the Property Services Agency in finding suitable potential sites for the European Community Trade Mark Office.

Sir George Young: The PSA is assisting my right hon. Friend in his Department's search for suitable sites which might be available for locating the Community Trade Mark Office in the United Kingdom.

London Residuary Body

29. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has discussed the London Residuary Body's 1986-87 interim budget with the chairman of the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: This is one of the matters which my right hon. Friend discusses with the chairman from time to time.

Rate Support Grant

30. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the city of Birmingham over next year's rate support grant settlement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I met the leader of the city council when I visited Birmingham on 20 November 1985, and have also corresponded extensively with him.

42. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the applications for rate support grant contained provision for training in racial awareness; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No specific provision is made in rate support grant settlements for training in racial awareness. It is open to local authorities to decide on their own policies and priorities in spending the resources available to them. I have no information on the number of authorities involved in such training or their expenditure on it.

47. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on his rate support grant settlement for 1986-87.

54. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities following his rate support grant announcement on 18 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) earlier today.

Empty Property

31. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his policy towards the selling by local authorities of empty houses and flats to people not on waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is for local authorities to decide their own policies on the sale of empty dwellings, within the terms of the general consents issued by my right hon. Friend. The consents are being reviewed, but I have no present intention of placing new restrictions on authorities' powers to sell empty dwellings.

53. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities levy rates on empty domestic property.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected by my Department. However, according to the Rating and Valuation Association's publication "General Rate Poundages and Products 1985-86", 148 authorities in England and Wales currently levy rates on empty domestic properties.

Tobacco Industry (Sport Sponsorship)

33. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to propose any alterations to the current voluntary code exercised by the tobacco industry over the sponsorship of sport.

Mr. Tracey: Yes.

Council House Sales

34. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants since May 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The latest estimate is that from April 1979 to September 1985, 667,000 dwellings were sold to sitting tenants by local authorities and new towns in England.

National Parks

35. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish arrangements for formal links between national parks representatives and local farmers.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not believe that more formal arrangements than at present exist are necessary. The notification arrangements introduced under the Ministry of Agriculture's farm capital grants scheme have encouraged good working relationships between national park authorities and local farmers, and additional links are provided by the farming and wildlife advisory groups.

Housing Capital Investment

36. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the total expenditure of local authorities on housing capital investment in 1985; and how this compares with housing capital investment in 1978.

Mr. John Patten: Gross capital expenditure on housing by local authorities in England in 1985-86 is estimated to be £2,530 million, compared with £2,249 million in 1978-79.

Sulphur and Nitrogen Oxide Emissions

37. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the United Kingdom will now join those nations which have agreed a time scale to reduce sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions by 30 per cent.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Government aim to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions by 30 per cent. on the 1980 base by the late 1990s and believe it would be wrong to commit the United Kingdom to potentially high levels of investment by joining those countries committed to achieving this reduction by 1993. It also aims to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 30 per cent. on the same basis and to the same time scale although there is no international agreement to reduce these emissions.

Team Games (Policy)

38. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on sport involving team games among under 16-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Responsibility for school sport is primarily a matter for the local education authorities and individual schools. However, I am keen to encourage greater participation by children, at school and elsewhere, in sport and recreation generally, including team sports. I am aware of concerns expressed by some organisations and individuals about standards of team sports in schools. I have asked for further evidence to support those concerns. When that is available, I shall consider whether discussions with other Ministers are appropriate.

Derelict Land Grants

39. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to make the availability of derelict land grants more widely known.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department has recently issued a circular to local authorities setting out the Government's priorities for reclamation in the public sector and on privately owned land. I have also published an attractive brochure urging everyone to make the best possible use of the grants available.

Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library.

Home Ownership

41. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he proposes to extend opportunities for home ownership.

Sir George Young: Proposals were announced in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) on 28 November 1985, at column *618*, for legislation to encourage sales under the right to buy, especially of flats, and to promote the privatisation of council estates. A Bill is about to be introduced.

Partnerships and Programme Authorities

43. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to increase resources to partnership and inner urban authorities.

Sir George Young: I shall announce partnership and programme allocations for 1986-87 shortly.

49. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of total Government financial support, including rate support grant and urban programme, to partnership and programme authorities in 1978-79 and 1984-85, in constant price terms.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is given in the table and is explained in the notes to the table. Meaningful comparisons between figures for the two years are not possible. In particular, the arrangements for paying rate support grant changed in 1981-82, when the needs, resources and domestic elements were replaced by block grant, and domestic rate relief grant. Prior to 1981-82, in non-metropolitan areas, the needs element was paid only to counties and the resources element only to districts. In metropolitan areas and London, no payments were made to precepting authorities. Since 1981-82 block grant has been paid direct to authorities in both tiers. Also, since 1982-83, as part of the arrangements for unified housing benefit, the DHSS has paid grant to authorities for rent and rate relief previously paid to individuals.

Government financial support to partnership and programme authorities at 1984-85 prices (£ million)

	1978-79		*1984-85*
	Total excluding capital grants	*Capital grants*	*Total excluding capital grants*
Partnership Authorities			
Birmingham	*393·1	24·0	356·7
Gateshead	*91·2	7·8	75·5
Hackney	*106·2	1·3	114·8
Islington	*127·5	11·0	117·3
Lambeth	*130·8	3·8	148·6
Liverpool	*245·2	3·0	233·6
Manchester	*256·7	2·6	205·5
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	*121·9	2·1	98·2
Salford	*116·2	3·0	100·4
Programme Authorities			
Blackburn	†34·6	10·2	27·3
Bolton	*95·0	0·8	99·1
Bradford	*182·3	1·8	170·5
Brent	*122·8	6·6	128·8
Coventry	*113·8	2·9	102·9
Hammersmith and Fulham	*77·9	8·2	74·4
Kingston-upon-Hull	†53·5	0·7	47·8
Knowsley	*81·3	—	68·7
Leeds	*251·1	1·1	203·1
Leicester	†47·2	7·1	48·0
Middlesbrough	†29·7	3·1	32·1
North Tyneside	*86·8	1·9	72·8
Nottingham	†49·4	2·4	53·5
Oldham	*99·1	1·1	85·1
Rochdale	*88·5	0·5	78·0
Sandwell	*103·5	0·2	100·0
Sheffield	*205·3	1·1	174·5
South Tyneside	*77·8	0·4	67·0
Sunderland	*126·4	0·9	102·1
Tower Hamlets	*74·5	0·7	50·9
Wandsworth	*128·3	3·0	106·3
Wirral	*123·5	2·5	106·2
Wolverhampton	*97·8	1·0	90·4

* In 1978-79 no payments of rate support grant were made direct to metropolitan county councils or the GLC. Payments in respect of county and GLC expenditure are therefore included in these figures.

† These figures include payments of the then resources element of RSG in respect of county services. They exclude payments of the then needs element of RSG in respect of district services which was paid to counties.

Notes:

1. Identifiable Government financial support to these local authorities includes rate support grant, housing subsidies, housing benefit and specific revenue and capital grants (which include urban programme grants). Except as indicated in 2. below, the total figures in the table are made up of these items. The 1978-79 figures have been expressed in 1984-85 prices by using the GDP deflator.

2. Capital grants are not yet available for 1984-85. They have therefore been excluded from the totals for both years but have been shown separately for 1978-79.

3. The 1978-79 figures included for rate support grant comprise the needs, resources and domestic elements and are final entitlements. Those for 1984-85 comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant and are the latest entitlement based on unaudited outturn.

4. The 1978-79 figures for Leicester for rent rebates and housing subsidy are not available. The 1979-80 figures (at 1984-85 prices) have been used as estimates for them.

5. The figures only include grants and subsidies paid to the local districts/boroughs and do not include grants paid to the upper tier authorities within whose areas these authorities are situated, nor any payments to persons, companies or other organisations within the areas administered by them.

Regional Sports Councils (Local Planning Inquiries)

44. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to restrict the powers of regional sports councils to intervene in inquiries relating to local planning aspects by indicating the possibility of a substantial grant to the appellant before a final decision on the appeal has been made: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. Regional councils for sport and recreation have no specific powers or rights in planning enquiries; they are able to make representations to an inspector or to the Secretary of State, like any other interested party to an appeal.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

45. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been paid out to owners of sites of special scientific interest since the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Nature Conservancy Council has paid the following amounts to owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest:

Year	*£*
1982-83	243,000
1983-84	361,000
1984-85	1,145,000
Total	£1,749,000

Urban Regeneration

46. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report progress on his policy of encouraging private investment in urban regeneration.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to my speech in the House on 20 December 1985, at columns 714-18.

Housing Standards (Northern Region)

48. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were below fitness standards in the northern region for the last year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: Local authorities provided estimates of unfit dwellings at 1 April 1985, in their housing investment programme returns. Including allowance for any missing returns, the estimated number in the north region was 23,100. Local authorities' estimates are not necessarily comparable, as their criteria may differ, and for England as a whole the figures are not consistent with estimates from the 1981 English "House Condition Survey".

Local Authority Staff

50. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on agreements made with trade unions regarding salary and compensation arrangements for metropolitan county council staff going to work for metropolitan district councils.

Mr. Tracey: Agreements between trade unions and local authorities as employers are not matters for the Government. Regulations prescribing the detailed arrangements for compensation, including compensation for financial detriment, will be made shortly.

55. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the numbers of local government employees in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information relating to Great Britain is as follows:

*General services and police**
Thousands at June of each year

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1960	1,328	381	1,709
1970	1,642	745	2,387
1980	1,883	977	2,860
1985	1,796	987	2,783

* Excludes police civilians and cadets, traffic wardens, staff of magistrates courts, probation service staff, and agency staff, figures for which are not available for the earlier years.

Figures over this period are not strictly comparable because of the changes in functions of local authorities. In particular between 1969 and 1970 about 20,000 employees were transferred to passenger transport executives, and a further 90,000 employees were transferred to PTE's, regional water authorities, and the National Health Service in 1974.

Local Income Tax

51. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has carried out into the suitability of a local income tax.

Mrs. Rumbold: I must ask the hon. Member to wait for the Green Paper which we will be publishing very shortly.

GLC Research Library

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations and letters he has received supporting the continuation of the Greater London council research library and its Acompline database; if he will publish a list of those making representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Since the passage of the Local Government Act, about 25 such representations have been received in my Department from hon. Members, members of the public, and professional associations. The future of the research library is a matter for the London boroughs and other successors.

Corby (Grants)

Mr. William Powell asked the secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* all allocations made to the Corby district under the urban programme since 1979-80.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

	Total urban programme new approvals £
1979-80	10,500
1980-81	114,680
1981-82	95,895
1982-83	178,183
1983-84	152,580
1984-85	60,040
1985-86	221,279
	833,157

Notes:

1. Totals include allocations made to Northamptonshire county council for projects in Corby.
2. Totals include approvals for holiday projects.
3. Totals exclude allocations in respect of commitments on ongoing projects.

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total of derelict land grants made to Corby development area in each year since 1979-80 and in 1985-86 to date.

Sir George Young: The total of derelict land grants paid to Corby district council in each of the years requested is as follows:

DLG paid to Corby DC

	£m
1979-80	Nil
1980-81	Nil
1981-82	1·26
1982-83	1·51
1983-84	4·31
1984-85	2·21
1985-86*	2·09
Total	11·38

* To date.

The Corby development area covers parts of East Northants district council and Kettering district council. No derelict land grant has been paid in these areas to those district councils.

Grace and Favour Residences

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of grace and favour residences for which he is responsible, their location, and the total cost of repairs, maintenance and modernisation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Tracey: My Department is responsible for the maintenance of 141 occupied grace and favour residences in Buckingham palace mews, Windsor castle and associated parks, Kensington palace, St. James's palace, Hampton Court palace and Hyde park. Information on expenditure on maintenance and modernisation of such residences is not kept separately and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department is currently taking part in the central programme of ethnic surveys of civil servants. The programme is proceeding on a region-by-region basis, with the London and south-east region, where all my Department's private offices are located, due to be covered later this year. By agreement with the Civil Service unions the information gathered on ethnic origins is subject to strict rules of confidentiality in relation to individuals.

Merseyside Residuary Body

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to appoint a chairman to the Merseyside Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has appointed the deputy chairman of the Merseyside Residuary Body, Mr. Norman Brodrick, to the Chairmanship in succession to Mr. Leslie Pocock, CBE.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Brook Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he decided that there should be public consultation on the South-East Thames regional health authority's proposal to remove the neuro-sciences unit from the Brook hospital, Woolwich; what form the consultation will take; and who will be responsible for undertaking it.

Mr. Whitney: It has always been the intention that full public consultation would take place on this proposal. We asked the regional health authority in August 1985 to ensure that consultation took place before the regional health authority sought the Department's approval in principle for a new unit. The regional health authority has agreed that details of the major options considered will be set out in the consultation document. It is for the Greenwich health authority and South-East Thames regional health authority to decide whether to undertake a joint consultation exercise.

Asthma (Registers)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the establishment by hospitals of local asthmatic registers and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We would welcome any arrangement that contributes to the care that consultants can provide for patients suffering from asthma. We understand that some consultants keep registers of patients at risk, but it is up to individual clinicians to decide what local arrangements to adopt.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the consequences to treatment of patients in mixed university/National Health Service service units, of discrepancies in pay between National Health Service and university clinical staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is our objective to maintain the welcome contribution to patient care made by clinical

academic staff with honorary contracts in the National Health Service. Their pay is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

RAWP Formula

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the National Health Service management board to have completed its review of the operation of the resource allocation working party formula.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Frind has asked the National Health Service management board to report to him by the end of 1986.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under the proposals for the social fund, what will be the basis for deciding whether a payment should be a grant or a loan.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, under the proposals for the social fund, how a decision will be made as to whether a payment is made by a loan or a grant.

Mr. Newton: In reaching their decisions, social fund officers will follow guidance and directions issued by the Secretary of State. These will be published in due course. The main circumstances in which grants and loans will be made are set out in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691).

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what transitional arrangements are proposed under the Government's White Paper, "Reform of Social Security", for the phasing out of additional payments and the phasing in of the disability premium.

Mr. Newton: As paragraph 1.45 of the White Paper makes clear, transitional protection will ensure that, at the point of introduction, income support will make up claimants weekly cash income to at least the same level as supplementary benefit did before the change. It will take the form of an addition to benefit which will remain in payment until the amount of income support is equal to or exceeds the amount of supplementary benefit, including additional requirements, to which a claimant was entitled at the point of change.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, under the Government's proposals in "The Reform of Social Security", if the surrender value of life insurance policies and savings from mobility allowance will be disregarded for the purposes of assessing capital limits.

Mr. Newton: Decisions have not yet been taken on the specific points raised by the right hon. Member which, along with other detailed matters in the current regulations, will be considered in the light of the proposals for income support, including the proposed easement of the general capital rule by comparison with that applying to the current supplementary benefit scheme.

Organ Donor Cards

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent in each of the years from 1980 to 1985 on encouraging members of the public to carry organ donor cards.

Mr. Whitney: Departmental expenditure on encouraging members of the public to carry organ donor cards was as follows:

	£
1980	39,752
1981-82	65,081
1982-83	21,995
1983-84	802,705
1984-85	351,951

The Department is also indebted to health authorities and voluntary organisations which carry out complementary campaigns to supplement departmental publicity; details of such expenditure are not known centrally.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is at present being undertaken to investigate the possible connection between the use of aspirin by children and the disease Reye's syndrome.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is not currently funding any studies specifically into Reye's syndrome. However, I understand that the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre, London, has been undertaking surveillance of Reye's syndrome. This includes a risk factor study which has investigated all pre-admission medications including aspirin.

Child Abuse

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to how many children below the age of 11 years have suffered serious injuries whilst unsupervised by a responsible adult, in each of the last five years;

(2) what records are kept by his Department of serious injuries suffered by children whilst unsupervised by a responsible adult.

Mr. Whitney: The Department does not maintain records of or collect statistics about injuries suffered by children whilst unsupervised by a responsible adult.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people qualify for supplementary benefit additions for *(a)* domestic help, *(b)* heating, *(c)* disabled persons heating, *(d)* diet, *(e)* laundry, *(f)* special clothing, *(g)* attendance costs, *(h)* bathing needs and *(i)* blindness; and how many people qualify for (i) all of these, (ii) seven to eight of these, (iii) four to six of these, (iv) two to three of these and (v) one of these.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average value of additional supplementary benefit allowances claimed by any one person; and what is the maximum claimed and by how many people.

Mr. Newton: At December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, the average amount for those receiving one or more additions was £3·46. This figure does not take account of the effect of the available scale margin in relevant cases, so the average amount of additional benefit actually received would be somewhat lower than this. It is regretted that information is not available about the maximum amount.

Cancer

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been treated for malignant neoplasm and carcinoma of the cervix in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many of these patients were in the following age groups in each of those years *(a)* under 24 years, *(b)* 24 to 40 years and *(c)* over 40 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Cervical Cancer

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will inaugurate an educational campaign to warn teenage girls about the causes and risks of cervical cancer.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no plans to mount an educational campaign aimed specifically at teenage girls. Providing information about cervical cancer forms part of the Health Education Council's activities related to cancer prevention in general.

Contraceptives (Minors)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will include in the revised departmental guidelines for the prescription of contraceptives to minors specific advice on the action to be taken by the doctor if the minor is believed to be the victim of incestuous sexual abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion. However, we hope shortly to publish a consultative document on the procedures to be used in handling cases of child abuse, including sexual abuse. This will contain guidance on the role of doctors and other health professionals.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many employees in agriculture receive family income supplement; and what percentage this is of the total employed work force in agriculture.

Mr. Major: At June 1985, the latest date for which information is available, there were about 8,000 families in receipt of family income supplement where the head was employed in agriculture. This represents about 2·5 per cent. of the total employed work force in agriculture.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the estimates of total births, births to mothers of non-United Kingdom or Irish origin and births to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistan origin, both in numerical and percentage terms for each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Whitney: The following table shows the information collected at the registration of births to women born outside the British Isles and in the New Commonwealth and Pakistan respectively. The figures include births to women of British origin and descent who were born outside the British Isles. On the other hand, they exclude births to women of overseas origin who were themselves born in the United Kingdom. There is additional information for 1983 and 1984 from the Labour Force Survey. Taken in conjunction with the information from birth registration, this suggests that the total number of births to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistan origin may currently be about 60,000 a year, or about 8·5 per cent. of all births occurring in Great Britain.

Births by birthplace of mother, 1970 to 1984—Great Britain

Year	*Total births*	*Births to mothers born outside British Isles*		*Births to mothers born in the NCWP countries*	
	Number	*Number*	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*
1970*	871,821	78,817	9·0	46,896	5·4
1971	869,883	74,103	8·5	46,031	5·3
1972	803,990	68,675	8·5	43,838	5·5
1973	750,344	64,889	8·6	41,876	5·6
1974	709,977	63,178	8·9	40,828	5·8
1975	671,388	62,279	9·3	40,850	6·1
1976	649,165	63,916	9·8	42,915	6·6
1977	631,601	66,691	10·6	45,410	7·2
1978	660,712	71,309	10·8	49,124	7·4
1979	706,394	76,791	10·9	53,508	7·6
1980	725,126	80,767	11·1	56,836	7·8
1981	703,546	77,626	11·0	54,619	7·8
1982	692,127	77,153	11·1	54,712	7·9
1983	694,212	75,965	10·9	53,598	7·7
1984	701,924	76,855	10·9	53,963	7·7

* 1970 is the first year for which this information was collected.

Occupational Asthma

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on occupational asthma is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report was published yesterday. It recommends widening the terms of prescription for occupational asthma to cover seven new sensitising agents, namely: antibiotics; cimetidine; wood dust; ispaghula; castor bean dust; ipecacuanha and azodicarbonamide. It also makes two minor recommendations to clarify the existing law. The Government accept the council's recommendations and regulations will be laid to bring them into operation by September 1986.

Claimants

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many claimants were the responsibility of the Harlesden office of his Department as at May 1979, December 1984 and the latest available date; and how many staff there were in the office for the same period;

(2) how many claimants were the responsibility of the Neasden office of his Department as at May 1979, December 1984 and the latest available date; and how many staff there were in the office for the same periods;

(3) how many claimants were the responsibility of the Cricklewood office of his Department as at May 1979, December 1984 and the latest available date; and how many staff there were in the office for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *695-6*]: The information requested for December 1984 and December 1985 is shown in the table. Information is no longer held for May 1979.

	December 1984			*December 1985*		
	Harlesden	*Neasden*	*Cricklewood*	*Harlesden*	*Neasden*	*Cricklewood*
Number of supplementary benefit claimants	10,722	10,819	8,326	11,536	12,237	8,999
Number of short-term benefit claimants	1,478	1,892	960	1,766	1,988	1,067
Total staff in post	133·5	149·5	100·5	135	146·5	95·5

Short-term benefits include sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, maternity allowance and combined sickness/supplementary benefit. Other benefits are administered centrally.

Maternity Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide an estimate of the public expenditure saving as a result of the changes proposed to the maternity benefits including the abolition of the maternity grant, *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each benefit.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *699*]: As regards maternity allowance, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 16 January at column *698*: I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply when the information is available. The net effect on public expenditure of replacing the maternity grant and supplementary benefit single payments for maternity expenses with payments from the social fund will depend on how much would otherwise have been spent on single payments in 1987-88—for which precise estimates are not available—and on the likely cost and number of social fund payments for maternity needs, on which I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 20 December at column *436*.

DEFENCE

Ulster Defence Regiment

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about changes in the composition, training and operational practice of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans to change the structure or operational role of the Ulster Defence Regiment, which has played such a vital part in supporting the Royal Ulster Constabulary in combatng terrorism. Details of a number of improvements in the training of the UDR were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 19 December 1985, at c. *245-6*.

Shorts Tucano (Inaugural Flight)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of Defence what information he has as to when and where the Shorts Tucano will make its inaugural flight with its new engine.

Mr. Lamont: A prototype Shorts Tucano with a Garrett engine is expected to fly next month in Brazil.

Iraq

Mrs Clwyd asked the Secretary of Defence how many members of Her Majesty's Government's armed forces are currently serving in Iraq.

Mr. Stanley: Apart from the attachés and their staff at Her Majesty's embassy in Baghdad (who total four in number) there are no British service men in Iraq.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of Defence if he will state the number from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Advertising

Mr. Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament over each of the last 10 years, respectively; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Lee: [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 December 1985, c. *593*]: The only advertising campaigns conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Defence have been those run for recruiting purposes (both service and civilian). Twelve companies have been engaged on such campaigns. The following table provides the costs over the last five financial years for which figures are available:

Year	*Total £ million*
1980-81	5.576
1981-82	3.611
1982-83	2.763
1983-84	4.473
1984-85	6.001

Figures are in full cost terms and include VAT where applicable. Separate campaigns for the individual services are included in these totals.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 January 1986

SCOTLAND

Wrongful Conviction (Compensation)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement with regard to the payment of compensation to persons who have been wrongly convicted of criminal offences.

Mr. Rifkind: There is no statutory provision for the payment of compensation from public funds to persons whose convictions are quashed on appeal, or to those granted free pardons by exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy. For many years, however, it has been the practice for the Secretary of State, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise ex gratia payments from public funds to persons who have been detained in custody as a result of a wrongful conviction.

I remain prepared to pay compensation to all such persons where this is required by our international obligations. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 14.6) provides:

"When a person has by a final decision been convicted of a criminal offence and when subsequently his conviction has been reversed, or he has been pardoned, on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the person who has suffered punishment as a result of such conviction shall be compensated according to law, unless it is proved that the non-disclosure of the unknown fact in time is wholly or partly attributable to him."

I am, moreover, prepared to pay compensation to people who do not fall within the terms of the proceeding paragraph, but who have spent a period in custody following a wrongful conviction or charge, where I am satisfied that this has resulted from serious default on the part of a member of a police force or of some other public authority; and there may be exceptional circumstances that justify compensation in cases outside these categories. I will not, however, be prepared to pay compensation simply because at the trial or on appeal the prosecution was unable to sustain the burden of proof beyond reasonable doubt in relation to the specific charge that was brought.

It has been the practice since 1957 for the amount of compensation to be fixed on the advice and recommendation of an independent assessor who, in considering claims, applies principles analogous to those on which claims for damages arising from civil wrongs are settled. Although successive Secretaries of State have always accepted the assessor's advice, they have not been bound to do so. In future, however, I shall regard any recommendation as to amount made by the assessor in accordance with those principles as binding upon me.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any of the civil defence plans submitted by local authorities to his Department include completed sections on each of the 12 subjects specified in schedule 2 to the Cvil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983;

(2) which local authorities have submitted civil defence plans to his Department; and if he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. John MacKay: Plans, including material on the subjects specified in schedule 2 to the 1983 regulations for Scotland, have been received so far from Borders, Central, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Highland and Tayside regional councils and are being assessed. It would not be appropriate for me to place them in the Library as they are documents belonging to and prepared by local authorities.

Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen (Incident)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the circumstances in which a prisoner from Peterhead prison held a student nurse as a hostage for 90 minutes at Woodend hospital, Aberdeen, on Saturday 18 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The incident on 18 January is the subject of investigation by the police. I cannot comment on the events which occurred while these matters are under investigation and, therefore, sub-judice.

9 Seamore Street/209 Maryhill Road, Maryhill

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill's letter of 8 January concerning 9 Seamore street/209 Maryhill road and the urgency of a decision on the declaration of a housing action area.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

School Meals

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January 1985; how these compare with the corresponding 1984 results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

School meals	*1985*		*1984*	
	Number	*As percentage of pupils present*	*Number*	*As percentage of pupils present*
Pupils present on census day	752,073	—	756,735	—
Pupils taking school meals—				
On payment	182,255	24·2	182,455	24·1
Free	136,669	18·2	129,335	17·1
Total	318,924	42·4	311,790	41·2
Pupils bringing own food	75,951	10·1	77,266	10·2

A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as percentages of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary and secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	Primary 1985 percentage	1984 percentage	Secondary 1985 percentage	1984 percentage
Pupils taking school meals	47·5	46·6	38·2	35·9
Pupils bringing own food	15·5	14·9	4·5	5·4

All authorities continue to provide the fixed traditional two-course meals, but there has been an increase in the demand for cafeteria style snacks. Twelve and a half per cent. of all pupils present on the day of census had a snack meal, accounting for nearly 30 per cent. of all meals served. The figures are as follows:

	1985 Paid	1985 Free	1985 Total	1985 Percentage of pupils present	1984 Paid	1984 Free	1984 Total	1984 Percentage of pupils present
Pupils taking fixed meals	112,849	111,715	224,564	29·9	120,304	108,426	228,730	30·2
Pupils taking cafeteria meals	69,406	24,954	94,360	12·5	62,151	20,909	83,060	11·0

Free School Transport

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the number of pupils for whom education authorities in Scotland provide free school transport.

Mr. Rifkind: The information taken from the survey of school transport undertaken in September 1985 is as follows:

	Pupils Attending Primary Schools	Pupils Attending Secondary Schools	Pupils Attending Special Schools or Classes	Total Pupils
Free transport provided under section 50 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980	38,715	103,598	9,304	151,617
Free transport provided in spare seats under section 51(2) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980	2,989	1,684	4	4,677
Scotland Total	41,704	105,282	9,308	156.294

I have arranged for a copy of the return from each authority to be placed in the Library.

WALES

Planning Appeals

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of planning appeals was upheld by him in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Calendar Year	Appeals allowed expressed as percentage of appeals decided
1976	29
1977	35
1978	31
1979	31
1980	32
1981	32
1982	29
1983	36
1984	36
1985	42

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of staff engaged on press and public relations work and the budgets for audio-visual, exhibitions and publicity work in my Department in each of the past five years were as follows:

Financial Year	Staff	Budget* £
1980-81	29·5	159,400
1981-82	29	173,200
1982-83	29	175,000
1983-84	28	235,400
1984-85	28·5	248,000

* Staff and staff-related costs are not readily identifiable, and are not included.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judges (Interests)

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General what guidance is given to judges about the implications of the existence of material interests of their own, or of relatives, as to whether they should sit in judgment on particular cases.

The Attorney-General: Judges are under an obligation to declare any interest of which they are aware and, where the interest is substantial, to disqualify themselves from sitting. Failure by a judge to disclose a substantial interest, or to disqualify himself, is a matter which can be raised and decided on an appeal. In doubtful cases the judge should explain to both parties what his arguable interest might be and is often wise to ask each party whether they have any objection to his continuing in the circumstances to adjudicate. Should any party then object and the judge continue to adjudicate, the Court of Appeal would then have to decide whether in the light of the principle stated above the judge acted correctly. These are principles of law and not guidance.

Supergrass Trials

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General how many people currently await trial on the evidence of converted terrorists; what proportion of these persons have been refused bail; and what is the average period of remand for which persons detained without bail have been held to date after being charged on the evidence of a converted terrorist, irrespective of whether that person has been brought to trial.

The Attorney-General: Four persons currently await trail on the evidence of a convicted terrorist. Of these bail has been refused in the High Court in Northern Ireland to three persons, each of whom stands charged with murder. In addition a number of other persons, in respect of whom the director has not yet received an investigation file, is on remand having been charged with serious terrorist offences on the evidence of an accomplice who will shortly be committed for trial. Information on average periods spend on remand by those who have been charged on the evidence of a convicted terrorist is not separately available and could be obtained only by a special exercise at disproportionate cost.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General how many cases in the last calendar year and the year to date involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Attorney-General: Figures for cases considered between 1 January 1985 and 15 January 1986 by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland involving persons killed or injured by alleged use of baton rounds are as follows:

	Number
Cases	9
Persons injured	15
Persons killed	1
Prosecutions directed	1
No prosecution directed	7

In one case, a final direction pends the outcome of other proceedings.

Northern Ireland (Criminal Trials)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Attorney-General in how many criminal cases in Northern Ireland courts accomplices of an accused have turned Queen's evidence; in how many cases this evidence has been uncorroborated; and what has been the result of such cases in the latest calendar year and year to date.

The Attorney-General: The law and practice in Northern Ireland, as in England and Wales, has always permitted the use of the evidence of accomplices in criminal trials. It is not something which has happened only in the context of the prosecution of terrorists or only in the situation which currently obtains in Northern Ireland. However, I take the present question to be directed at cases where such evidence has been used in recent years and specifically at trials for offences which are scheduled offences under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. In respect, therefore, of trials on indictment for scheduled offences where evidence was given by an accomplice, the position for the years 1982 to date is as follows:

Year	Number of trials	Persons acquitted	Persons convicted or pleading guilty
1982	1	0	4
1983	4	13	55
1984	3	46	26
1985	3	41	41
1986 to date	0	0	0

In 1984, the convictions of 14 of the persons tried in 1983 were quashed on appeal to the Court of Appeal.

It must be borne in mind that the persons numbered above as having been convicted or as pleading guilty were not necessarily convicted on the evidence of an accomplice. For example, in one trial in 1985 the trial judge rejected the evidence of the accomplice but convicted five of the accused on other evidence which was before the court.

There is no comprehensive record of, and it is not now feasible to identify without disproportionate cost, all the evidence which was before the court in relation to individual charges or whether such evidence was capable of constituting corroboration.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Industry

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will describe the types of information published by his Department in respect of accidents, incidents and untoward occurrences, including those without any radiological consequences, at licensed nuclear sites and at other nuclear sites; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will describe the types of information published by *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuels plc and *(c)* the Atomic Energy Authority in respect of accidents, incidents and untoward occurrences, including those without any radiological consequences, at licensed nuclear sites and at other nuclear sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB publishes accident statistics in its annual report; they are also recorded in the annual report of the Electricity Council's chief safety officer and the quarterly safety reviews issued by the Electricity Council. The UKAEA sets out details of any radiological incidents and non-radiological accidents occurring at authority establishments in the authority's "Annual Report on Radiological Protection and Occupational Health" which is made available on request. British Nuclear Fuels plc publishes an annual report on occupational safety, which includes incidents reportable to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with schedule 1 of the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, and details of deaths and major injuries. The industry also reports to the NII on those incidents which fall within the criteria announced in the House of Commons on 26 July 1982 by the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy; they are later summarised in reports published by the Health and Safety Executive. There are no separate Department of Energy publications.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total number of staff employed by my Department's information division in January in each of the past five years and their costs are:

	Staff in post	*Annual Cost* £
1981	31½	606,207
1982	27½	565,328
1983	27½	615,988
1984	26½	614,373
1985	27½	685,847

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Funding

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in the level of home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provisions for changes in arrangements for capital in recurrent expenditure, local authority rates and additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 21 January at columns 149-52.

Universities (Clinical Staff)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards financing the salaries of clinical staff in universities over the next three years.

Mr. Walden: The financing of the salaries of clinical staff in universities is under consideration following the representations my right hon. Friend has received from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students taking teacher training courses in physics, mathematics, craft, design or technology have responded to the financial inducement offered of £1,200 to students taking these courses.

Mr. Chris Patten: The bursary scheme for students entering one or two year initial training courses in mathematics, physics or craft, design and technology was launched this week. It is too early to assess the possible impact of the scheme on recruitment to the relevant training courses.

AIDS

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science in his Department's educational material for schools about drug misuse, what mention there is of the danger of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Dunn: The Department recently issued guidance on AIDS in draft form to the local education authorities, and it is intended that, following consultation, this should be formally published in the near future.

The Education Departments' booklet "Drug Misuse and the Young" does not mention AIDS specifically, but in the section dealing with the physical dangers of drug taking it draws attention to the risk of unsterile injecting practices in general.

Lunchtime Supervision

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has in respect of local authorities which have indicated that they do not intend to take up education support grants in respect of lunchtime supervision under the provisions of the Education (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Chris Patten: No authority has written to inform the Department that it has no intention of taking up education support grant for midday supervision. A few have indicated formally or informally that they do not

expect to submit bids for 1985-86 and press reports suggest that others will not settle details until the present teachers' disruption ceases.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has advised local education authorities or education committee chairmen to exclude teachers from contracts for lunchtime supervision under the Education (Amendment) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No such advice has been issued to LEAs or education committee chairmen. We have made it clear that it is entirely for LEAs to decide who should be employed.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Communications (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the London borough of Merton's code of conduct on communications with the media as it applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff employed by that authority; if he has received any representations on the implications of this code; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that the code is an internal document which offers guidance to employees of the borough on dealing with the media. My right hon. Friend has received no representations about this code.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department offers to local education authorities on the optimum size for secondary schools without sixth forms.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the right hon. Member to paragraph 275 of the White Paper "Better Schools", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Fluoridated Milk

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many education authorities supply fluoridated milk to schoolchildren.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

Students (Travel Awards)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department has increased the travel award for students studying from the parental home.

Sir Keith Joseph: The travel element contained within the maintenance grant of mandatory award holders has been increased for all students.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Australia (Bicentenary)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made with plans to mark the Australian bicentenary in 1988.

Mr. Eggar: The British-Australia Bicentennial Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Gadsden, is co-ordinating Britain's participation in this event. It is the Government's intention to invite Parliament to vote some £1 million to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for use on the bicentenary. It is envisaged that £850,000 of this should be used in 1987-88 to provide a specially commissioned sail training ship as Britain's official gift to Australia and the balance to cover other bicentenary events and administrative expenses. Appropriate estimates will be laid before Parliament in due course.

British Embassy, Washington

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds his Department has opposed the re-naming of the avenue in Washington containing the British embassy in honour of Nelson and Winnie Mandela.

Mrs. Chalker: We are aware of this idea; it is entirely a matter for the relevant United States authorities. We have not objected and will not do so.

Right of Abode

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the current waiting time for the right of abode in the United Kingdom from time of application for British overseas subjects, broken down by each country of application.

Mr. Eggar: As at 31 December 1985, applicants in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India with a prime facie claim to the right of abode in this country were waiting three months or less from application to first interview. Waiting times to decision vary from case to case.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library as much information as is in his possession about Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of a document produced by the Swedish Government last year which brought together the main evidence then available. The Swedes also have available in Stockholm several volumes of evidence that has not been translated into English. As has been made clear on many occasions in the past, we stand ready to help the Swedish Government with their inquiries to establish with greater clarity what has happened to Mr. Wallenberg.

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the full text of the report handed to the Swedish ambassador by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1957 of the alleged death of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: An unofficial translation of the 1957 note has been placed in the Library of the House.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the current expected waiting time from application to interview for entry clearance by *(a)* fiancé(es) and *(b)* spouses at ports in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar: Those applying on 31 December 1985 would expect to wait for the following times for first interview (in months):—

	Dhaka	*New Delhi*	*Bombay*	*Islamabad*	*Karachi*
Queue 1	3	2½	3	3	3
Queue 2	13	5½	6	11	6
Queue 3	13	7	9	14	11
Queue 4	23	10	10	15	12

The queues are made up as follows:

Queue 1
1. Persons with a claim to the right of abode.
2. Dependent relatives over 70 years.
3. Special compassionate cases.

Queue 2
1. All spouses.
2. All children under 18 years.

Queue 3
1. Fiancé(es).
2. Other applicants for settlement.

Queue 4
Re-applicants.

Spouses and fiancé(es) submitting first time applications are placed in queues 2 and 3 respectively. However, those with a claim to the right of abode and certain compassionate cases are placed in queue 1. All re-applicants are placed in Queue 4.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many clearance officers were employed in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh in 1979; and what is the total number employed at the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given in the following table:

	December 1979	*January 1986*
Pakistan	21	16
India	10	11
Bangladesh	14	15

These figures do not include temporary entry clearance officers, sent to cover leave absences and seasonal increases in work load. (In April 1986 the permanent complement in Pakistan and Bangladesh will be increased to 18 and 17 respectively.)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the average waiting time for persons wishing to enter the United Kingdom from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh in 1979; and what is the waiting time at the latest date.

Mr. Eggar: Details for 1979 are given in table 5 of Cmnd. 9544 "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1984".

As at 31 December 1985 those called for first interview in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh had waited (in months) as follows:

	Queue 1	*Queue 2*	*Queue 3*	*Queue 4*
Islamabad	3	12	14	15
Karachi	3	7	12	12
New Delhi	3	6	10½	10
Bombay	3	6	9	9
Dhaka	3	18	18	25

Waiting times to decision varied from case to case.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Eggar: The size and costs of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office news department and the ODA press office during the last five years have been:

Year	*Staff*	*Cost* £
1981-82	26	447,000
1982-83	27	483,000
1983-84	26	475,500
1984-85	26	498,000
1985-86	26·5	543,500

Immigration (DNA Fingerprinting)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 20 January, when and how he disclosed to the Bangladesh Home Minister and Home Secretary the intention of the British Government to carry out an experimental scheme in Dhaka using the DNA fingerprinting techniques; what the reaction of Bangladeshi Ministers was; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I indicated our intention to introduce the DNA technique on an experimental basis to the Bangladeshi Home Minister and senior officials in Dhaka during my visit from 7 to 10 January. Subsequent to our discussions they indicated some anxiety. The High Commissioner in Bangladesh is continuing to discuss the matter with the Bangladesh authorities.

East Timor (Atrocities)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Indonesia concerning atrocities by Indonesian soldiers in East Timor.

Mr. Eggar: The Indonesian Government are well aware of our position on human rights. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 11 November 1985 at column *60*.

Sahel Grant

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase his proposed grant to the United Nations

Association international service programme in the Sahel for the next two financial years to no less than the present level.

Mr. Eggar: We propose, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase the amount to the United Nations Association international service for 1986-87 to £360,000. This grant is not offered on a geographical basis and it is for the United Nations Association international service to put forward proposals about how and where the grant might be best deployed. No decisions have been made about the level of grant for 1987-88.

Human Rights

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries to which he has made recent representations concerning human rights violations.

Mr. Eggar: We deplore violations of human rights and make our views known when meeting Ministers or representatives of countries where such violations occur. In some case representations are more productive if undertaken without publicity, and it would not be helpful to disclose full details.

Torture

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens, or the relations of British citizens, have complained to his Department on the grounds that they have been tortured while abroad since 1976.

Mr. Eggar: Specific complaints of torture have been received in respect of one British citizen in the last three years. We raised the allegation with the authorities concerned but they have denied them. Information on allegations of torture made between 1976 and 1982 is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the European convention for prevention of torture.

Mr. Eggar: The text of the draft European convention on torture is currently being discussed in Strasbourg by a committee of experts on which the United Kingdom is represented. Our aim is to reach agreement on a convention that can be signed and ratified by all members of the Council of Europe.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

7. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to raise the public profile of civil defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. My colleagues and I will take all suitable opportunities to explain the need to plan against a range of emergencies including war. Later this year we plan to produce new information material including a film to promote this all hazards approach.

9. **Sir Anthony Kershaw** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any further civil defence handbooks are in preparation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Handbooks of guidance to local authorities on communications and on environmental health are in preparation.

33. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take against local authorities which do not fulfil their obligations under the civil defence regulations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend will consider this when the assessment of progress on implementation of the 1983 regulations is complete. The Government are determined to ensure that all local authorities meet their obligations under the civil defence regulations and will take whatever steps are necessary.

43. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in support of 100 per cent. grant-aid for emergency planning staff salaries.

56. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in support of 100 per cent. grant-aid for all civil defence expenditure incurred by local authorities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Support has been expressed by the National Council of Civil Defence, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils and other interested organisations.

49. **Mr Waller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to issue local authorities with a staged programme for civil defence progress.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We plan to do so by the middle of the year.

59. **Mr. Norris** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to provide direct communication links between county emergency centres and local British Broadcasting Corporation and commercial radio and television stations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In a war emergency, local authorities would have access to the wartime broadcasting service through the regional government headquarters. There are no plans to provide direct links as such.

64. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is conducting any studies about emergency resource data for civil defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A pilot study is being undertaken in three areas to examine the need for resources registers for emergency planning and ways of identifying, collecting, storing and accessing data. The study is expected to be complete by the end of 1987.

65. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to protect emergency communications against the effects of electromagnetic pulse.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) on 5 December, at column 316.

70. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has carried out any studies to investigate the public's general perception of civil defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Research looking at people's general perception of civil defence was carried out last year. I referred to it, and its relevance to the preparation of new public information material, in my speech to the County Emergency Planning Officers' Society annual study on 30 October, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which local authorities have submitted civil defence plans to his Department; and if he will place copies in the Library;

(2) if any of the civil defence plans submitted by local authorities to his Department include completed sections on each of the 12 subjects specified in schedule 2 to the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received plans from the vast majority of county authorities and are in touch with the remainder. It would not be appropriate to give further details until our assessment is complete, nor to place copies in the Library. My right hon. Friend will make a report to the House in due course.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill

18. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received about the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have consulted widely in the preparation and introduction of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill, now in another place, and during this process my right hon. Friend has received representations from a variety of organisations and individuals. The Bill, which repeals the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 and establishes an entirely new system of controls over scientific procedures on living animals, has been widely welcomed by the moderate animal welfare movements and by science and industry.

Community Policing

19. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has further to develop community policing.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Although it is a matter for the judgment of chief officers how they deploy the officers and resources at their disposal, my right hon. Friend has made clear his support for the concept of community policing, which means essentially that police officers should know and understand the people whom they protect and serve. To carry out this task successfully the police need, and are entitled to expect, the support and co-operation of the citizen.

72. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation of police community forums.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which came into force on 1 January 1985, requires all police authorities (and the Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis and of the City of London) to make arrangements for obtaining the views of local people on matters concerning the policing of their area. Although not required to establish consultative committees, the Home Office guidance encourages them to do so. In almost all police areas the arrangements made include the establishment of consultative committees in at least part of the area. These committees are in various stages of development and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary continue to keep us informed of progress.

Properly representative consultative committees have a vital role to play in ensuring that the police and local people are able regularly to exchange views and information on the policing of the area. Such exchanges help to encourage positive relations between the police and the public locally and may lead to practical forms of co-operation, particularly in crime prevention. Consultative committees are not to be confused with the police committees established by a number of Labour-controlled London boroughs and some districts outside London, which are aimed, not at improving relations between the police and the public, but at securing political control over the police.

Chief Constables (Statements)

20. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to prohibit chief constables from making partisan political statements.

Mr. Hurd: Police regulations already require officers of all ranks to abstain at all times from any activity which is likely to interfere with the impartial discharge of their duties or to give rise to the impression amongst members of the public that it may do so.

Channel Tunnel

21. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his Department's areas of responsibility of a fixed Channel link.

Mr. Waddington: The Department has been closely involved in the assessment of proposals for the construction and operation of a Channel fixed link. This enabled matters within my right hon. Friend's area of responsibility to be taken properly into account in reaching the decision which was announced on Monday.

Crime Victims

22. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has carried out any studies of the factors which make it increasingly likely that a person will become a victim of a crime of violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. Data from the British crime survey show that over the country as a whole the chances of becoming a victim of a crime of violence are quite small, and that the highest risk group are young, single males living in the inner cities who go out a lot, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.

Prisoners on Remand

23. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners on remand in prison at the latest available date and the number of those who had been awaiting trial for *(a)* over 18 months, *(b)* over one year, *(c)* over nine months and *(d)* over six months.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 November 1985 there were about 7,900 untried and 1,500 convicted unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales. Information is not available on the numbers still awaiting commencement of their trial or on how long they had been waiting. However, about five of the untried prisoners had been first remanded in custody over 18 months earlier, about 150 over 12 months earlier, about 380 over nine months earlier and about 890 over six months earlier. These periods include any time which was spent on bail following the initial remand in custody.

Official Secrets Act (Alleged Breaches)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the progress of inquiries involving alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts, involving the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) and Miss Sarah Keays.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to his question by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General on 13 January, at columns 770-71.

British Broadcasting Corporation

25. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects the Peacock committee on the financing of the British Broadcasting Corporation to report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We expect the committee's report in the summer.

71. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the director general of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend expects to lunch with him on 12 February.

Crime Prevention

26. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of Government initiatives in the field of crime prevention.

73. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of Her Majesty's Government's initiatives on crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The recent crime prevention seminar chaired by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister resulted in agreement on a range of initiatives by industry, commerce and the Government which will be followed up by a seminar to be chaired by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the summer. They include:

—a British Standard for car security, which will be prepared by the British Standards Institution with the help of the motor manufacturers;

—the insurance industry will consider what scope there is to encourage policy holders to improve the security of their homes;

—advisory packages on security in inner city households and commercial premises will be produced;

—studies will be established and completed urgently on crime on the London Underground, security on new residential estates and violence to bus crews and to helath service staff.

Work is progressing well on the five local crime prevention projects and the national community programme crime prevention initiative announced last autumn. Following encouraging results in London and the midlands, the "Magpies" television and press crime prevention campaign is shortly to be extended to the north of England.

31. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the percentage of homes in England and Wales which now have burglar alarms or efficient door and window locking systems.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Precise figures are not available. It has been estimated, however, that only some 30 per cent. of homes in England and Wales are fitted with effective door and window locks and considerably fewer with burglar alarms. We shall continue to emphasise in our crime prevention advice the importance of fitting and using effective security devices to protect property in the home.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what crime prevention measures the Metropolitan police have instituted.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In his recently published strategy report (a copy of which is in the Library), the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has emphasised that crime prevention will remain of central importance in his force goal for 1986 with priority being given to the reduction of criminal opportunity through community involvement and co-operation.

Measures include:

continued support for crime preventio panels;

the further development of;

(a) neighbourhood watch;

(b) measures to divert young people from crime and other anti-social activities;

(c) a publicity campaign to combat auto-crime;

(d) force training to improve the crime prevention skills of all officers;

(e) schemes to provide reduced house contents insurance premiums for participants in neighbourhood watch schemes, in conjunction with the insurance industry; and

(f) guidance and support for architects and planners;

the preparation of practical advice to the public, in particular women, on ways to prevent and respond to physical attack; the introduction of business watch; and the setting up of crime prevention shops in vacant premises.

In addition, more attention is to be paid to helping victims of crime.

Crime Statistics

27. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department collects on the number, sex, age, race and occupation of victims of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to a question by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 5 December 1985, at column 308. I understand that the Criminal Injuries Compensation

Board records information on the age, sex, and occupation of victims of crimes of violence who apply for compensation.

36. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving the use of firearms were made known to the police in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals five and 10 years previously.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms of all types, including air weapons, were reported to have been used are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the lastest edition for 1984, Cmnd. 9621). Eight thousand three hundred and seventy-six such offences were recorded in 1984, 6,547 in 1979 and 2,828 in 1974.

39. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases brought to the attention of the police involved firearms in *(a)* England and *(b)* the three Yorkshire local authorities for the most recent six-month period for which statistics are available.

Mr. Mellor: Annual figures of notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used are published annually for each police force area in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales,"(Supplementary tables, vol. 3 (table S.3.1. (a) of the issue for 1984). Figures for the latest available six months are given in the table.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used.

1 July-31 December 1984			
North Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	England
26	129	183	3,761

42. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of victims of crime during the 12 months ended September 1985: and what were the figures to the 12 months ended March 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available. Statistics of individual victims of crime are not collected centrally except for homicide. The statistics that are available relate to notifiable offences recorded by the police, including those which do not have personal victims and those which have more than one victim. Statistics of notifiable offences are published annually in chapter 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales".

66. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of crimes cleared up by the police as a percentage of notified crime for both 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The proportion of notifiable offences by the police in 1979 which were cleared up was 41 per cent. The corresponding figure for 1984 was 35 per cent. These figures have been published in table 2.17 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9621). However, although the proportion of recorded offences which have been cleared up has fallen, the number cleared up has risen from 1 million in 1979 to 1·15 million in 1984.

67. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the increase from October to September 1985 over the previous 12 months in the number of offences of violence against the person.

Mr. Mellor: The police recorded 119,410 offences of violence against the person from October 1984 to September 1985, 6,560 more than in the preceding 12 months. The latest statistics of recorded offences are published in Home Office "Statistical Bulletin," issue No. 34/85.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk aked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and percentage increase in violent offences against women recorded in each police authority area between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The figures relating to offences of rape and of indecent assault on a female recorded by the police are given in the following tables. Where the numbers of offences are small the changes shown are subject to wide variation and may therefore be misleading. No information is separately available for offences of woundings of or common assault on a woman because the information collected centrally does not include the sex of the victim.

Offences of Rape recorded by the Police

England and Wales

Police force area	*1979*	*1984*	*Change 1979-84*	
	Number of offences		*Number*	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	32	39	7	+22
Bedfordshire	12	23	11	+92
Cambridgeshire	16	22	6	+38
Cheshire	13	9	−4	−31
Cleveland	8	18	10	+125
Cumbria	7	8	1	+14
Derbyshire	17	18	1	+6
Devon and Cornwall	29	22	−7	−24
Dorset	8	7	−1	−12
Durham	10	20	10	+100
Essex	27	26	−1	−4
Gloucestershire	11	9	−2	−18

Police force area	1979 Number of offences	1984	Change 1979-84 Number	Percentage
Greater Manchester	31	52	21	+68
Hampshire	40	36	−4	−10
Hertfordshire	22	17	−5	−23
Humberside	25	27	2	+8
Kent	20	23	3	+15
Lancashire	12	16	4	+33
Leicestershire	13	12	−1	−8
Lincolnshire	18	18	0	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	43	60	17	+40
Metropolitan Police	247	365	118	+48
Norfolk	13	24	11	+85
Northamptonshire	12	14	2	+17
Northumbria	19	48	29	+153
North Yorkshire	13	8	−5	−38
Nottinghamshire	28	23	−5	−18
South Yorkshire	35	41	6	+17
Staffordshire	21	15	−6	−28
Suffolk	10	14	4	+40
Surrey	19	10	−9	−47
Sussex	17	35	18	+106
Thames Valley	52	52	0	—
Warwickshire	9	6	−3	−33
West Mercia	14	27	13	+93
West Midlands	81	104	23	+28
West Yorkshire	79	65	−14	−18
Wiltshire	20	17	−3	−15
Dyfed Powys	9	15	6	+67
Gwent	16	17	1	+6
North Wales	12	19	7	+58
South Wales	30	32	2	+7
England and Wales	1,170	1,433	263	+22

Offences of indecent assault on a female recorded by the Police

England and Wales

Police force area	1979 Number of offences	1984	Change 1979-84 Number	Percentage
Avon and Somerset	253	303	50	+20
Bedfordshire	154	127	−27	−18
Cambridgeshire	135	157	22	+16
Cheshire	173	139	−34	−20
Cleveland	135	131	−4	−3
Cumbria	65	71	6	+9
Derbyshire	226	200	−26	−12
Devon and Cornwall	293	270	−23	−8
Dorset	129	78	−51	−40
Durham	120	137	17	+14
Essex	292	269	−23	−8
Gloucestershire	119	62	−57	−48
Greater Manchester	726	612	−114	−16
Hampshire	449	368	−81	−18
Hertfordshire	162	165	3	+2
Humberside	335	312	−23	−7
Kent	294	248	−46	−16
Lancashire	273	227	−46	−17
Leicestershire	184	169	−15	−8

Police force area	1979 Number of offences	1984	Change 1979-84 Number	Percentage
Lincolnshire	126	107	−19	−15
London, City of	12	15	3	+25
Merseyside	294	354	60	+20
Metropolitan Police	1,693	1,735	42	+2
Norfolk	104	119	15	+14
Northamptonshire	110	104	−6	−6
Northumbria	395	369	−26	−7
North Yorkshire	104	100	−4	−4
Nottinghamshire	553	359	−194	−35
South Yorkshire	394	278	−116	−29
Staffordshire	207	232	25	+12
Suffolk	103	93	−10	−10
Surrey	161	190	29	+18
Sussex	293	222	−71	−24
Thames Valley	374	359	−15	−4
Warwickshire	86	92	6	+7
West Mercia	176	220	44	+25
West Midlands	805	788	−17	−2
West Yorkshire	543	533	−10	−2
Wiltshire	147	101	−46	−31
Dyfed Powys	109	50	−59	−54
Gwent	114	100	−14	−12
North Wales	172	111	−61	−36
South Wales	242	161	−81	−34
England and Wales	11,834	10,837	−997	−8

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the clear-up rate for each police force area in each year since 1979 for the offence involving robbery, rape or violent assault against women.

Mr. Mellor: The following table gives clear-up rates for recorded offences of rape, indecent assault on a female and robbery in aggregate for the period 1979 to 1984. Annual clear-up figures are subject to wide variation and may be misleading.

Clear up rates for certain offences recorded by the Police—by Police Force Area, 1979-84

England and Wales *Percentage of recorded offences cleared up*

Police force area	Rape	Indecent assault on a female	Robbery
Avon and Somerset	77	66	32
Bedfordshire	69	49	31
Cambridgeshire	72	66	41
Cheshire	84	82	53
Cleveland	72	65	46
Cumbria	83	75	55
Derbyshire	84	80	48
Devon and Cornwall	82	73	41
Dorset	75	61	41
Durham	77	74	54
Essex	78	59	45
Gloucestershire	48	65	39
Greater Manchester	72	67	31
Hampshire	60	61	36
Hertfordshire	76	63	57
Humberside	74	65	37
Kent	72	63	46
Lancashire	88	70	50
Leicestershire	83	69	44
Lincolnshire	84	76	54
London City of	67	37	24
Merseyside	64	43	20
Metropolitan Police	56	34	16
Norfolk	69	74	51
Northamptonshire	70	72	44
Northumbria	73	53	37
North Yorkshire	87	71	49
Nottinghamshire	66	66	32
South Yorkshire	86	70	43
Staffordshire	84	75	48
Suffolk	91	71	48
Surrey	66	62	39
Sussex	64	68	40
Thames Valley	71	62	42
Warwickshire	78	70	53
West Mercia	88	77	53
West Midlands	57	43	27
West Yorkshire	76	65	39
Wiltshire	74	68	32
Dyfed Powys	91	89	79
Gwent	92	82	60
North Wales	65	71	41
South Wales	91	75	49
England and Wales	69	60	25

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing how many in the 71 to 80-year-old age group in England and Wales had hospital treatment after being mugged or robbed; and how many people became immobile as a result of the injuries they received over the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parents were prosecuted in each of the last 10 years in respect of offences allegedly committed

by their children; how many parents did not pay fines imposed following convictions; and if he will publish figures for the average fines imposed for particular categories of offences.

Mr. Mellor: The recording of these cases may be incomplete in the information available to me which is given in the table. More detailed information for indictable offences in 1982 and 1984 is published in table 7C of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1984" (Cmnd. 9621), and provisional information for the period July 1983 to June 1984 was included in table 5 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin", issue 12/85. Details of amounts of fines are published annually in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (in the issue for 1984 in volume 4, table S4.4*(a)* (age of offender) and table S4.4*(b)* (offence)).

Parent or guardian ordered to pay fine for indictable and summary (excluding motoring) offences at all courts in England and Wales and persons received into prison for default of payment

Number of persons

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Parent or guardian ordered to pay	700	4,350	6,500
Parent or guardian received into prison in default of payment	6	2	2

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing, for England and Wales over the past 10 years, the number of people convicted of offences involving *(a)* murder, *(b)* rape, *(c)* robbery and *(d)* mugging, who (i) were given a custodial sentence, (ii) served the full length of a custodial sentence, (iii) were given a suspended sentence and (iv) were subsequently convicted of further offences after completion of the first sentence.

Mr. Mellor: Information on sentences for offences of murder, rape or robbery is published annually under offence classifications 1, 19 and 34 respectively in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" in volume 1, table s1.1(A) for magistrates courts and in volume 2, table s2.1(A) for Crown Courts. These statistics do not separately distinguish offences of "mugging", a term which has no legal definition; most offences of the type frequently referred to as "mugging" are recorded as offences of robbery.

The information requested on subsequent convictions could be provided, in the form requested, only at disproportionate cost. However, estimates of the reconviction rates for those given custodial sentences for selected types of offence and discharged from custody in 1981 are published in table 8(h) of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9622). Reconviction rates for a sample of persons convicted in 1971 of selected types of offence are published in table 3.1 of "Previous Convictions, Sentence and Reconviction", Home Office research study No. 53. Information on those convicted of murder who were subsequently convicted of homicide is published in table 8.10 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1984". (Cmnd. 9621.)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many crimes involving mugging, theft, murder or rape were committed and recorded in Wales and England over the past 10 years *(a)* by the 14 to 16 year age group, *(b)* by the 17 to 20 year age group, *(c)* by the 21 to 25 year age group, *(d)* by the 26 to 30 year age group, *(e)* by the 31 to 35 year age group and *(f)* by the 36 to 45 year age group;

(2) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* how many people in the 40 to 50-year-old age group in England and Wales were mugged and robbed by the 14 to 16-year-old age group, *(b)* how many in the 51 to 60-year-old age group were mugged and robbed by the 16 to 20-year-old age group, *(c)* how many in the 61 to 70-year-old age group were mugged and robbed by the 16 to 20-year-old age group, *(d)* how many in the 71 to 80-year-old age group were mugged and robbed by the 14 to 25-year-old age group, *(e)* how many in the 40 to 50-year-old age group had hospital treatment after bring mugged or robbed and *(f)* how many in the 61 to 70-year-old age group had hospital treatment after being mugged or robbed over the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The age of the offender is known only when found guilty or cautioned by the police. The available information on findings of guilt and cautions is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9621) and in the associated supplementary tables. For 1984, details of persons found guilty by age group are published in supplementary tables volume 4, table S4.1(A), under offence classifications 1, 19, 34 and 39-54; corresponding information for persons cautioned is published in table S4.1(C). Information on the ages (and other characteristics) of victims of robbery is not regularly collected centrally.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people were prosecuted for offences related to robbery or mugging committed in the Cardiff, West constituency in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many of the robberies or muggings committed in the Cardiff, West constituency in each of the last 10 years were committed by people in the 14 to 25 age group;

(3) how many of those convicted for robbery or mugging in the Cardiff, West constituency in each of the past 10 years have been *(a)* given a custodial sentence, *(b)* given a suspended sentence, *(c)* fined and *(d)* given a community service order.

Mr. Mellor: The available information, which may be incomplete, is given in the table. The age of offenders can be given only where there has been a finding of guilt. To produce corresponding figures for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against for offences of robbery at Cardiff Petty Sessional Division or Crown Court

Number of persons

Year	All ages						Aged 14-20
	Proceeded against	*Found guilty*	*Fine*	*Community service order*	*Fully suspended sentence*	*Immediate custody*	*Found guilty*
1979	22	20	—	2	—	20	16
1980	52	16	—	—	1	15	13
1981	53	51	—	3	2	41	38
1982	66	42	—	—	5	38	23
1983	51	31	—	—	—	31	21
1984	40	40	—	1	—	32	29

Police (Resources and Equipment)

28. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with police authorities about resources and equipment needs for the coming year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We consulted the local authority associations which represent police authority interests in deciding the appropriate level of national provision for the police service in 1986-87 to be included in the rate support grant settlement. The level of resources and the equipment to be provided to each force are for individual police authorities to determine.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications for his general policies on police equipment of the West Midlands county council's recent hostility to certain equipment procurement requirements of the chief constable.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As my right hon. Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, Mid-West (Mr. Lyell) on 26 November, at columns 515-16, where a chief officer of police concludes that he requires plastic baton rounds, and this is endorsed by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary, we regard it as essential that the equipment should be made available to the force concerned. We very much hope that in these circumstances police authorities will support chief officers by making the equipment available. If necessary, the equipment and training in its use will be provided centrally under Home Office auspices.

Licensing Laws

29. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of representations he has received regarding the liberalisation of licensing laws in England and Wales; and what proposals he will make in this matter.

Mr. Mellor: Since 2 December we have received seven letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents, two from organisations and 32 letters from members of the public about the licensing hours. Thirty five of these supported relaxations in the law and six were opposed.

We shall want to look fully into the evidence on the effect of flexible licensing hours in Scotland before deciding whether the licensing hours in England and Wales should be changed.

Hampshire Constabulary

30. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received since October concerning the case for increasing the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My hon. Friend and I had a meeting on 12 November. We have not received any application recently from the Hampshire police authority for an increase in the authorised establishment of the Hampshire constabulary. One hundred and thirty four additional police posts have been approved for the force since May 1979.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent initiatives taken within the Government's overall strategy for tackling drug abuse.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to give a very high priority to our comprehensive strategy for tackling drug misuse. Since 1 January we have announced record provisional figures for customs' seizures in 1985; and the continuation of our successful prevention campaign, beginning with the launch of a two-part video package for young people. Our Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, which is now before Parliament, constitutes a further major initiative against drug trafficking. We have also recently announced the provision of an additional £5 million a year to health authorities from 1986-87 specifically for the expansion of services for drug misusers.

45. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will itemise the special resources which Her Majesty's Government have so far committed to the main elements of their strategy on drug misuse.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1 January 1985 we have announced provision for:

(i) £1·5 million over three years to combat drug production and trafficking in South America and elsewhere;
(ii) a further £2·4 million aid grant to help to eradicate opium poppy cultivation in Pakistan;
(iii) the creation of drugs wings in police regional crime squads, involving a 20 per cent. increase in their manpower, and the enhancement of the national drugs intelligence unit;
(iv) 50 more customs specialist investigators in 1985-86;
(v) 350 additional posts in 1986-87 for customs work (mainly on the prevention of drug smuggling);
(vi) a projected rise of over £12 million from 1984-85 and 1988-89 in customs expenditure on equipment and other drug-related items;
(vii) an increase to over £17 million of the fund to pump-prime local projects for drug misusers for three years;

(viii) from 1986-87, an additional £5 million a year to health authorities specifically for the expansion of services for drug misusers.

Many of our main continuing programmes also contribute to our strategy: for example, the value of urban programme support for drug projects is now nearly £1 million each year.

Racial Attacks

34. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase in the number of racial attacks in the metropolitan police area in each year since records were kept.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 10 December 1985, at column 583.

35. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken by his Department and the police service to seek to combat racially motivated attacks.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Last October the Association of Chief Police Officers issued guidance to police forces on the handling of racial attacks. The guidance emphasised the importance of collecting and collating reliable local information about racial incidents and the need for a vigorous and sympathetic police response to these. The guidance supported the training being given to officers working in multiracial areas to heighten their awareness of racism in society and to help them secure the confidence and co-operation of the communities they serve. We have warmly welcomed this constructive document and the Department will be taking a close interest in the steps taken by police forces to combat racially motivated attacks.

Visiting Forces Act

37. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any representations on the Visiting Forces Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We received three letters during 1985 about the implementation of the Act. In reply we explained our view that amendment to its provisions on jurisdiction was unnecessary and that a case had not been made out for collecting statistics on the number of cases on which a visiting force had claimed primary jurisdiction.

Closed Prisons

38. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many closed prisons there are; and, of this number, how many are in need of refurbishment or replacement.

Mr. Mellor: There are 90 closed prisons, remand centres and youth custody centres in England and Wales. Major capital schemes to refurbish, replace or add to the existing accommodation at 77 of these establishments are currently included in the five-year forward building programme. Of the remaining 13, three are planned to be replaced and closed, while almost all the rest are post-war establishments with no immediate need for major capital investment. All establishments are subject to regular programmes of repair, maintenance and redecoration.

Basildon (Courthouse)

40. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the prospects for a new courthouse in Basildon.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Essex county council is responsible for providing the new magistrates courthouse, in consultation with the magistrates courts committee. We offered the council a building start date of 1987-88 and this has been accepted. At present further action on the scheme rests with the council.

Fraud and Forgery

41. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for each year since 1978, the total sums involved in offences of fraud and forgery, and the total recovered for victims.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available. Statistics of offenders ordered to pay compensation for fraud and forgery, analysed by amount of compensation, are published annually, (Tables S4.11(a)(i) and S4.11(b)(i) of "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Tables, Volume 4" for 1984).

Riot Control Equipment

44. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place with chief constables concerning the purchase, storage and use of riot control equipment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department's officials and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary are in regular contact with chief officers of police in England and Wales about equipment for use in situations of serious public disorder.

Television Licences

46. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent meetings he has had with the pensioners' groups regarding free television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No such meetings have taken place recently, and we have no plans to introduce free television licences for pensioners.

Television (Violence)

47. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about violence on television.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In recent weeks my right hon. Friend has received representations from hon. Members and from viewers' organisations and substantial correspondence from members of the public about what is felt to be excessive violence on television.

63. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with representatives of (i) the British Broadcasting Corporation and (ii) the Independent Broadcasting Authority concerning the portrayal of violence on television; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman and directors general of the BBC and IBA on 17

December to discuss public anxieties about violent and offensive programmes on television. The broadcasters described their research, monitoring and advisory arrangements in this area; the IBA reported that it had last reviewed its guidelines on these matters in April 1985 and the BBC that it was now reviewing its guidelines. They agreed to consider how the guidelines have been implemented in the past, and what further measures may need to be taken in the future to meet legitimate public concern.

Thames Valley Police

48. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on the application from Thames Valley police for an increase in establishment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Thames Valley police authority has been informed that, as a first step, my right hon. Friend is prepared to approve an increase of 50 police posts in the authorised establishment of the force for the financial year 1986-87, on the understanding that the police authority agrees to find its share of the necessary finance for these posts and its proposed civilianisation programme. He has also approved the police authority's application for 14 supernumerary posts for specific operational purposes.

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on police manning levels in the Thames Valley force.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *168*]: There were 3,292 police officers and 1,183 civilian staff in the Thames Valley police on 30 November 1985. This is an increase of 852 (639 police officers and 213 civilians) since May 1979. A total of 320 additional police posts have been approved for the Thames Valley police since May 1979; the present police establishment of the force is 3,317. The police authority has been informed that, as a first step, my right hon. Friend is prepared to approve a further increase of 50 police posts for the financial year 1986-87 and 14 supernumerary posts for specific operational purposes.

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

50. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received about the contents of the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill.

Mr. Mellor: Since the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill was published on 19 December we have received written representations from one hon. Member. In addition, we received comments from three hon. Members and four members of the public following the publication of a statement about the proposed contents of the legislation on 11 November.

Heathrow Airport (Immigration Officers)

51. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase staffing levels of immigration officers at terminals two and three, Heathrow airport.

Mr. Waddington: Immigration service staffing requirements at Heathrow will need to take account of the changed traffic patterns at the three existing terminals once terminal 4 opens in April. Provision will be made for the necessary staff at terminal 4, and the other terminals, in the light of a current review of conditions at peak periods during 1985 and of prospective workloads.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

52. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes were operative at the end of 1985; how this compares with a year previously; and if he has any indication as to the effectiveness of such schemes in preventing crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Some 8,000 neighbourhood watch schemes were operating in England and Wales at the end of 1985, more than double the number in existence a year earlier. As to the effectiveness of such schemes, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) on 14 January 1986, at column 547.

Animals (Removal)

53. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for the removal of specified classes of animal from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no plans for legislation to provide for the removal from the United Kingdom of animals of any species which have been legally imported and properly held in compliance with our quarantine regulations.

Rape

54. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received the recommendations from the Women's National Commission regarding under-reporting of rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a copy of the report by the Women's National Commission on violence against women. We welcome the constructive approach which the report has adopted and are anxious to take effective action to reduce the risks to which women are exposed, and to ensure that victims are treated with proper consideration. The report's recommendations cover a wide range of issues, including the reporting of offences of rape. Changes in police practice in recent years, both as regards recording of reported offences and interviewing of victims, have been in the direction favoured by the report and we shall be considering the issues raised in the report with the police and the judiciary, to see what scope there may be for further action.

Shops Bill

55. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of letters he has received on the subject of Sunday trading this Session, identifying the number in support of and in opposition to the Government's proposals, respectively.

60. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning the possible effects of enactment of the Shops Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Waddington: Since the beginning of the Session my right hon. Friend has received 20,795 letters about Sunday trading, 32 supporting and 20,763 opposing the Government's proposals.

West Midlands County Police

57. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what authorisations or assurances have been given to the chief constable of the West Midlands to borrow on permanent loan plastic baton rounds from the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement on the expenditure involved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Arrangements for the loan of items of equipment between forces are the responsibility of the chief officers of police concerned, in the first instance. I understand that the chief constable of the West Midlands has no plans at present to borrow plastic baton rounds from the Metropolitan police.

58. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the West Midlands county police establishment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The West Midlands police authority is responsible for fixing the authorised establishment of the force, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval. He will be looking carefully at the manpower plans of the new West Midlands police authority, which will take over responsibility on 1 April 1986, under the Local Government Act 1985. At present the force has vacancies for both police officers and civilian staff.

Nuclear Attack (Casualties)

61. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of casualties that would result from a nuclear attack on Britain.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government do not make detailed estimates of casualties, which would depend on the strategic intentions of the enemy at the time and other factors which cannot be predicted.

Naturalisation

62. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to introduce any changes to speed up the procedures for dealing with applications for naturalisation.

Mr. Waddington: We are always ready to implement changes which speed up the handling of applications if we can do so without greatly increasing the cost to applicants or adversely affecting the proper exercise of my right hon. Friend's discretion. We will continue to look for such opportunities in the coming months.

Firearms

68. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review controls on the illegal use of firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We keep these matters under continuing review. My right hon. Friend is currently considering whether to require shotgun certificate holders to keep their weapons secure when not in use, in order to make it more difficult for criminals to obtain shotguns. The existing penalties for the unauthorised possession of firearms are already severe, but it is our intention at a suitable legislative opportunity to increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in furtherance of crime.

Police Establishments

69. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any further plans to increase police establishments.

74. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about present levels of police manpower.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend to the reply given to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 13 January 1986, at column 456, for information about the applications received from police authorities for increases in their police establishments for the financial year 1985-86 or later. One hundred and eleven additional posts had already been approved for seven forces, and eight other applications were under consideration. The following seven police authorities have recently been informed that my right hon. Friend is prepared to approve additional posts:

Police authority/force	*Increase applied for*	*Increase approved*
City of London	6	*6
Cumbria	14	†10
Devon and Cornwall	18	18
Northamptonshire	23	23
Thames Valley	200	‡64
Warwickshire	29	12
Wiltshire	11	||11

* Supernumeray posts.
† Includes eight supernumerary posts.
‡ Includes 14 supernumerary posts.
|| Includes seven supernumerary posts.

My right hon. Friend will be giving further consideration to the remaining applications in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary.

Crime Forfeiture of Goods

75. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the proposals of the Epping Forest district Metropolitan police liaison committee that the confiscation of motor cycles should be made part of the penalty for certain offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The power of the courts to order the forfeiture of goods is generally restricted to offences which are punishable on indictment with at least two years' imprisonment. We are, however, considering whether the courts' general power to order forfeiture should be extended, and hope shortly to be in a position to announce our proposals.

Immigration

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Pakistan; and what proportion are refused;

(2) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Sri Lanka; and what proportion are refused;

(3) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Canada; and what proportion are refused;

(4) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Nigeria; and what proportion were refused;

(5) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Ghana; and what proportion were refused;

(6) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from the United States of America; and what proportion were refused;

(7) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the last period for which figures are available come from Bangladesh; and what proportion are refused;

(8) what proportion of those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors in the latest period for which figures are available came from India; and what proportion were refused.

Mr. Waddington: The table gives, for the 12 months ending June 1985, the numbers of passengers of each of the nationalities requested admitted as visitors to the United Kingdom expressed as a percentage of all non-European Community nationals admitted as visitors. It also gives the refusal rate for each nationality (that is the numbers of passengers of that nationality refused entry and removed from the United Kingdom expressed as a percentage of all passengers of that same nationality seeking entry). The statistics on refusals do not distinguish passengers seeking entry as visitors.

Nationality	*Number, admitted as visitors as a percentage of all non-EC nationals so admitted*	*Number refused and removed as a percentage of all arrivals for nationality*
Pakistan	1·2	1·3
Sri Lanka	0·3	1·7
Canada	6·1	*
Nigeria	2·1	1·3
Ghana	0·4	3·7
United States of America	39·2	*
Bangladesh	0·1	2·1
India	2·6	0·8

* Negligible.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were awaiting entry certificates in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, respectively, in 1979; and what were the corresponding numbers at the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the following table:

*Persons awaiting a decision on their application for entry clearance to the United Kingdom**

Indian sub-continent *Number*

	End December 1979	*End September 1985*
Pakistan	14,900	7,400
India	8,500	3,000
Bangladesh	21,300	12,800
TOTAL	44,700	23,200

* For immediate settlement or temporary admission, including those who have been interviewed but whose application remains undetermined.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government intend introducing legislation to seek to make it a continuing offence for a person subject to immigration control to remain in the United Kingdom when he knows that his limited leave to be here has expired.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. The Immigration Act 1971 provides that a person who is not a British citizen shall be liable to deportation from the United Kingdom if, having only a limited leave to enter or remain, he remains beyond the time limited by the leave, that is he overstays. The Act also provides that such a person commits an offence if he knowingly overstays. A person who is convicted of such an offence may, if he has attained the age of 17, be recommended for deportation by a court. The Government believe that in the case of a person who knowingly overstays it is preferable, rather than use the administrative deportation powers, that he should normally be prosecuted and if appropriate, deported from the United Kingdom following a court recommendation. However, the House of Lords held in Grant v. Borg in 1982 that the offence of overstaying can be committed only on the day immediately after the leave expires. Accordingly, it is intended that legislation should be introduced in the lifetime of this Parliament to the effect that the offence is committed on the day when the overstayer first knows that his leave has expired and that it continues to be committed throughout any period during which he remains in the United Kingdom thereafter.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time per day that prisoners in C1 unit at Holloway prison spent in their cells in the most recent convenient period.

Mr. Mellor: During the week beginning 6 January prisoners on C1 unit spent an average of three hours each day engaged in out-of-cell activities or attending court. Addition time out-of-cell which cannot be quantified, was spent bathing, receiving visits and at interviews.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in the C1 unit at Holloway prison had access to the skills training unit, and for how many hours, in the most convenient period.

Mr. Mellor: In the week beginning 6 January 1986 the attendance was as follows:

Monday 6 January—am none; pm 15 for 1½ hours
Tuesday 7 January—am 15 for 1½ hours; pm 15 for 2 hours

Wednesday 8 January—am none; pm 15 for 2 hours
Thursday 9 January—am 18 for 2 hours; pm 22 for 2 hours
Friday 10 January—am none; pm 20 for 2 hours

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attempts at self-mutilation and how many cases of attempted and actual suicide have occurred in C1 unit at Holloway prison each week since the end of July.

Mr. Mellor: There were 82 attempts at self injury (involving 25 inmates), one attempted suicide and one death (still subject to an inquest) on C1 unit between 1 August 1985 and 17 January 1986.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers and how many nurses currently staff the C1 unit at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: The staffing level, which is related to the needs of the routine, varies throughout the day. During the morning there are five nurses and 10 officers on duty; in the afternoon there are eight nurses and eight officers; in the evening there are three nurses and five officers; and during the night there are two nurses and two officers.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held in the C1 unit at Holloway prison; and of these how many are remand prisoners and how many are sentenced.

Mr. Mellor: On Monday 20 January 1986 there were 34 prisoners on C1 unit, of whom 22 were on remand and 12 sentenced.

Martial Arts

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *570*, he will make public the recommendations of the Martial Arts Commission as to the contents of the new guidelines as to the sale of martial arts weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This has already been done. Copies of the guidance notice to traders, which incorporates fully the views of the Martial Arts Commission, were attached to a Home Office press release on the topic on 15 January. Copies of both were also sent to all trading standards officers and to the Sports Council.

Police Posts (Civilianisation)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the number of police posts civilianised in each of the past three years for *(a)* the metropolitan police area and *(b)* all other force areas where such information is available without incurring such disproportionate cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Styal and Rudgate Prisons

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present staffing establishment at Her Majesty's prison, Styal; how many staff of prison officer grade or above were on night duty there on 16-17 January; what was the corresponding number for the night of 31 December 1985-1 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The staffing establishment is as follows:

Grade	*Authorised staffing level*	*Staff in post (as at 1 January 1986)*
Governor Grade II	1	1
Governor Grade IV	1	1
Assistant Governor	4	3
Higher Executive Officer	1	1
Executive Officer	2	2
Clerical Officer	8½	7½
Clerical Assistant	½	½
Chaplain	1	1
Principal Sister	1	1
Senior Sister	2	2
Nursing Sister	8½	6½
State Enrolled Nurse	3	3
Medical Officer	½	½
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade III	6	6
Civilian Instructional Officer Grade IV	4	5
Typist	3½	3½
Storeman	2	2
Assistant Storeman	1	1
Craftsman (Works)	15	15
Non-craftsman (Works)	2	—
Stoker Plant attendant	1	2
Driver (Civilian)	2	2
Farm Foreman Grade I	1	1
Estate Craftsman	2	—
Estate Ordinary Worker	—	2
Chief Officer II	1	1
Principal Officer	6	5
Senior Officer	14	12
Officer	88	76½
Prison Auxiliary Officer	4	4
Night Patrol Officer	18	17
Senior Officer PE Instructor	1	1
Officer PE Instructor	2	2
Chief Officer II (Works)	1	1
Principal Officer (Works)	2	2
Senior Trades Officer	2	1
Trades Officer	4	4
Senior Officer Caterer	1	1
Office Caterer	1	1

The authorised night manning levels are one senior officer, one officer and 11 night patrol officers. On the night of 16-17 January staff on duty comprised one senior officer, three officers and nine night patrol officers. On new years' eve the numbers were one senior officer, six officers and six night patrol officers.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about recent disturbances at Her Majesty's prisons Rudgate and Styal.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what disturbances took place at Her Majesty's prison Styal on the night of 31 December 1985; what further disturbances have taken place since then; and what action he proposes to take to prevent further disturbances;

(2) why no statement or press release was issued by his Department on the recent disturbances in Her Majesty's prison, Styal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Between midnight and 2 am on 1 January, a number of inmates at Styal left their houses through the fire doors which set off the alarms. Staff were thus quickly aware of this and took the necessary action. No statement or press release was made: the incident was not reported to headquarters until the deputy director general routinely visited Styal on 16 January, when he discussed the incident with the governor, the local branch of the Prison Officer's

Association, and the chairman of the board of visitors, as a result of which the regional director is considering whether any further action is necessary.

There has been no recent disturbance at Ridgegate.

Young Offenders

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many young offenders under the age of 21 years were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody in 1984;

(2) how many young offenders who were sentenced to periods of youth custody in 1984 received sentences in excess of 12 months;

(3) how many young offenders under the age of 21 years were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody for offences of theft or burglary where the value of the property stolen was less than £50;

(4) how many young offenders under the age of 21 years were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody in 1984 for offences of attempted theft or attempted burglary;

(5) how many young offenders under the age of 21 years were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody in 1984 where the court had found it unnecessary to obtain a social inquiry report;

(6) what proportion of those young offenders who were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody in 1984 had declared themselves unwilling or unable to comply with a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. Mellor: The available information on persons sentenced to detention centre or youth custody is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Supplementary tables, volume 1, s1.1(c) and s1.1(d) show, for offences aged 14 and under 17 and 17 and under 21 respectively, the number of offenders sentenced in magistrates courts. Corresponding information for the Crown court is published in volume 2, s2.1(c) and s2.1(d). Attempts to commit offences are classified under the substantive offence. Information on the length of sentence for youth custody at the Crown court is shown in volume 2, table s2.5. The information is summarised in tables 7.15, 7.16 and 7.17 of the Command Paper for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621). Information on the value of property stolen and on whether a social inquiry report was made is not collected centrally in the results of court proceedings.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders under the age of 21 years were sentenced to detention centre or youth custody in 1984 who had not previously been the subject of either a supervision order, a probation order or a community service order.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available centrally.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Hurd: The numbers of people employed in the Home Office public relations branch and their estimated salary, accommodation and service costs are as follows:

Financial Year	*Staff of all grades in post on 1 January*	*Estimated salary and other costs* £
1981-82	35	448,000
1982-83	31	429,000
1983-84	32	545,000
1984-85	36	596,000
1985-86	36	646,000

NB The basis for estimating staff costs was widened to include all over-heads from 1983-84.

Heathrow (Armed Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals are permitted to carry firearms at Heathrow; and what is their nationality.

Mr. Hurd: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the employees of, or those associated with, foreign airline companies. No such persons have been granted permission to carry firearms in connection with the performance of their duties at Heathrow.

Political Refugees

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of applications received in each year since 1980 for *(a)* political asylum and *(b)* refugee status; and how many of each were granted.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Applications for asylum	2,352	2,425	4,223	4,296	3,478
Granted refugee status	1,073	1,249	1,371	872	574
Granted asylum without refugee status	74	224	356	313	*10

* In July 1984 the category of "asylum without refugee status" was abolished. Since then all persons granted asylum have been recognised as refugees.

Final figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Community Radio

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce a decision on the north London community radio franchise.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A decision will be made when my right hon. Friend has had an opportunity to consider the recommendations of the Advisory Panel on Community Radio, whose advice he hopes to receive within the next few weeks.

Greenham Common (Soviet Agents)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has that Soviet agents have infiltrated the women's camps round Greenham common at any time.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the practice to comment on security matters of this kind, but I am satisfied that the security authorities are fully alert to the need for suitable measures against espionage, sabotage and comparable threats, from whatever quarter.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motorists have been prosecuted in England and Wales and Greater London, respectively, in each quarter since 1 January 1982 for failing to observe traffic lights, distinguishing between those cases involving injury, death and no injury.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. 569]: The available information relates to proceedings at magistrates' courts for failing to comply with traffic signals, other than those at pedestrian light-controlled crossings and is given in the table. Whether injuries or deaths were associated with these alleged offences is not recorded centrally. However, proceedings for the offences "causing death by reckless driving" and "causing bodily harm by furious driving" are separately recorded and these figures are also shown. Further information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Proceedings at magistrates' courts for certain offences

Number of offences

Offence	*Year*	*Quarter*	*England (excluding MPD and City of London)*	*Wales*	*Metropolitan Police District and City of London*	*Total*
*Failing to comply with traffic signals**						
	1983	1	6,106	362	3,297	9,765
		2	5,782	315	3,509	9,606
		3	5,470	334	3,123	8,927
		4	4,979	315	3,596	8,890
	1984	1	5,846	389	4,101	10,336
		2	5,241	339	3,930	9,510
		3	4,322	285	3,343	7,950
		4	4,128	255	3,272	7,655
	1983		22,337	1,326	13,525	37,188
	1984		19,537	1,268	14,646	35,451
Causing death by reckless driving						
	1983		171	17	21	209
	1984		194	20	16	230
Causing bodily harm by furious driving						
	1983		58	8	17	83
	1984		53	8	26	87

* Excluding those at pedestrian light-controlled crossings

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radio Paging (Band 3)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he anticipates making the award of licences in band 3 for radio paging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Director General of Telecommunications expects to be in a position to provide advice on the award of licences for national and London private mobile radio networks in band 3 soon. Subject to this, I should be in a position to announce the names of the successful applicants for national London and regional band 3 networks by the end of February. The actual issue of licences will depend on further discussions with the successful applicants to define certain system details and the licence conditions to be applied.

I expect the decisions on the issue of further licences for wide area paging frequencies, which are not in band 3, to follow a similar timetable.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the representations that have been made to him and the meetings that have been held with interested bodies in preparation for his negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: In preparation for negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement I have held frequent meetings with organisations representing employers and employees in the textile and clothing industry, consumers, importers and retailers. I have received a large number of representations on this subject from all of these sources and from individuals writing mainly on behalf either of the industry or of the development movement. I have also received representations on the subject from some local authorities.

This week I have met the Consumers' Association, the National Consumer Council, the British Textile Confederation, the British Clothing Industry Association, the Knitting Industries Federation, the British Importers Confederation, the Retail Consortium and the TUC Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industries Committee.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many deals involving interest rate support, whether in sterling or foreign currencies, in respect of exports to other European Economic Community countries have been arranged by the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and how many of them have been arranged with the involvement of third, non-EEC, countries since March 1978.

Mr. Channon: The Export Credits Guarantee Department does not itself arrange export transactions. Information on transactions which it has supported is not kept in a form to provide the information requested.

Regional Development and Selective Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each year until 1989 his estimate, in real terms at 1985 prices, of expenditure on *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance; if he will list expenditure on both in 1979-80 and 1984-85 at 1985 prices; and if he will provide an estimate of expenditure on regional development grant and selective assistance for each regional area for 1979-80, 1984-85, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

GEC (Takeover Bid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he took of GEC's involvement in the proposed European consortium seeking to purchase a stake in Westland plc in deciding whether to refer GEC's bid for Plessey to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: None. The decision to refer this proposed merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was made strictly in accordance with my statutory responsibilities, and on the recommendation of the Director-General of Fair Trading.

Lloyd's (Inquiry)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure a wide spread of interest on the inquiry into Lloyd's and appoint representatives of trade unions and consumers.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

President Reagan (SDI)

Q13. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister whether she will seek to meet President Reagan to discuss the research programme to investigate the feasibility of strategic defence.

The Prime Minister: No. I have already discussed the strategic defence initiative with President Reagan on a number of occasions. Our jointly agreed position on this subject is recorded in the statement I made in the United States on 22 December 1984.

Turkey

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister what representations she intends to make to the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Turgut Ozal, about civil rights in Turkey when he visits the United Kingdom on 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to holding wide-ranging talks with Mr. Ozal. I shall welcome the progress made by his Government on human rights while, as on previous occasions, expressing our hope that Turkey will continue its efforts to achieve full normalisation in these matters.

Engagements

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

Mr. Stern asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to attend a reception in honour of the Prime Minister of Israel, and shall later be presiding at a dinner for the NSPCC.

Gifts (Brunei Visit)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if she will list, describe and estimate the value of the gifts she received, together with their donors, while in Brunei in June 1985.

The Prime Minister: I am not prepared to give details of the individual gifts which I have received; to do so would risk discourtesy to the donors. Such gifts have been dealt with according to the rules, to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 15 January, at column 578.

Airport Security

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *521*, what were the total costs and numbers of personnel involved in the exercise at Heathrow airport.

The Prime Minister: The exercises are part of the training of the troops concerned, and no significant additional costs were incurred. The numbers deployed have varied on the different occasions. It would not be in the interests of security to reveal how many are normally deployed or are available for this task.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *521*, whether the Home Secretary, as the police authority for London, was informed of the decision to send military personnel to Heathrow airport.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *521*, what were the reasons for the deployment of military personnel at Heathrow airport; and on what dates the exercises were carried out.

The Prime Minister: These exercises are held at the request of the police and with the approval of my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. They are held to familiarise the troops concerned with the duties they would carry out in an emergency, and for deterrent purposes. They have been carried out on the following dates:

Heathrow

1981
4 March
5 August
3 December

1982
10 February
25 June
17 August
23 November

1983
4 March
6 July
21 July
28 September
29 November
20 December

1984
12 January
14 May
1 June
17 October
26 November
19 December

1985
18 March
4 April
30 April
26 June
5 July
15 August
14 October

Gatwick

1983
1 December

1986
1 January to 9 January

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *521*, on how many occasions firearms were issued to military personnel on exercises at Heathrow airport.

The Prime Minister: Firearms are a normal part of the equipment of the troops concerned, and have been issued on each occasion when exercises at Heathrow have been carried out.

Appointments

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *421-24*, if she will list the names of all those people whom she has appointed to public bodies in each of the past five years.

The Prime Minister: All appointments are announced when made and it would involve disproportionate cost to list in arrears the large number of names appointed or reappointed to these public bodies over the years in question.

Westland plc

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she instructed the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, prior to his statement at 3.30 pm on Monday 13 January, to refuse to acknowledge the existence of the letter of that date from Sir Austin Pearce to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my, and my right hon. and learned Friend's earlier statements on this matter.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Start Project

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures for the number of people who have qualified for the £20 a week special allowance in the nine areas in which the job start project has been initiated by his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the first two weeks of the pilot scheme—that is, up to 17 January—10 people qualified for the job start allowance.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the failure rate of businesses in the three months after the completion of the 12-month period under the enterprise allowance scheme; and what is the failure rate of businesses run by disabled people.

Mr. Trippier: A survey of former enterprise allowance scheme participants three months after the allowance had stopped showed that, of those taking advantage of a full year on the scheme, 14 per cent. had ceased to trade at the time of the survey. No comparable figure is available for businesses run by disabled people.

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General how many people were participating in the enterprise allowance scheme at the latest date for which figures are available; and, of these, how many were disabled.

Mr. Trippier: Fifty-two thousand, four hundred and one people were in receipt of the enterprise allowance on 16 January 1986. No statistics are kept of the numbers of disabled people on the scheme.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Details of the numbers of information officer group staff employed in Department of Employment group press and public relations offices are given below. These figures do not include administrative and clerical staff who work in support of these offices.

	1 April 1982 Staff numbers	1 January 1983 Staff numbers	1 January 1984 Staff numbers	1 January 1985 Staff numbers	1 January 1986 Staff numbers
Department of Employment	8	8	8	7	8
Manpower Services Commission	7	7	7	7	8
Health and Safety Commission/Executive	5	5	7	7	6
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	4	4	3	3	2

Budget information prior to 1985-86 is not available, but salary costs were as follows:

	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	Budget 1985-86 £
Department of Employment	107,000	121,000	127,000	112,000	147,000
Manpower Services Commission	92,000	101,000	118,000	135,000	144,000
Health and Safety Commission/Executive	73,000	82,000	116,000	122,000	109,000
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	62,000	65,000	54,000	47,000	49,000

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Rost asked the Paymaster General what action he proposes to take in the light of the refusal by Derbyshire county council to comply with his request under the Employment and Training Act 1973 that unreasonable refusers of youth training scheme offers should be reported to his Department by county careers officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have asked officials to discuss the matter with the director of education. In my view the requirement placed on local education authorities is reasonable and should be complied with.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from within which heads of expenditure in the Overseas Development Administration budget he has taken the additional £5 million announced by the Minister for Overseas Development on 13 January, *Official Report*, column 723, to be made available to the Save the Children Fund and the £200,000 to Oxfam; and if he will state, in each case, the residual amounts left in each budget so reduced.

Mr. Raison: As I announced on 13 January, an additional £5 million has been made available through Save the Children Fund, mainly to meet the costs of urgent food distribution in Darfur. The requirement falls mainly in the first half of 1986, and will be met in part this financial year (that is, up to 31 March) and in part next. The amount required this financial year, estimated at up to £2 million, and the £200,000 for Oxfam are available as a result of unavoidable slippage in other programmes. The scope for these new allocations has been identified by an assessment of the forecast of overall spending against the total resources available; they cannot meaningfully be related to reduced spending forecasts for other individual programme items.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all Overseas Development Administration programmes which have suffered unavoidable slippage to the year to date; and by how much he estimates he will *(a)* overspend and *(b)* underspend and what will be the net total.

Mr. Raison: I am not prepared to publish such a list. Forecasts of the spending outturn for each aid programme item are the subject of a continual process of assessment throughout the year; most are subject to frequent revision reflecting the changes in the many factors usually affecting the rate of spending. Publication of such figures for particular points in time during the financial year would in my view serve little purpose.

On present forecasts for 1985-86 I expect to neither overspend nor underspend the total aid resources available.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what programmes he has allocated the current year's contingency reserve; and how much remains to be allocated.

Mr. Raison: The aid programme's contingency reserve for 1985-86 has been fully allocated. Its distribution by Supply Estimates subheads is as follows:

		£ million
Emergency assistance for disasters and refugee relief (Subheads A15, A16 and C1 of the Supply Estimates) of which—		35·4
Africa	£29 million	
Elsewhere	£6·4 million	
Bilateral country programme (Subheads B1 and B3)		21·9
Other programmes including: WHO Action Programme on Essential Drugs and Vaccines (Subhead A8) United Nations Office of Emergency Operations in Africa (Subhead A8)		0·3
Total		57·6

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions are being made for 1986 to *(a)* the International Planned Parenthood Federation, *(b)* The United Nations Fund for

Population Activities and *(c)* the World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction.

Mr. Raison: We have made the following pledges for 1986, subject to parliamentary approval:

(a) International Planned Parenthood Federation: £5·3 million;

(b) United Nations Fund for Population Activities: £4·5 million;

(c) World Health Organisation's Special Programme on Human Reproduction: £2·2 million.

Sudan

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the further sums of £5 million and £200,000 for aid projects in the Sudan, referred to in the answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *773*, are in addition to the total figures for the overseas development budget given in the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Raison: No.

Country Review Programmes

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will place in the Library the most recent country review programmes.

Mr. Raison: A country policy review paper is produced every year for major aid recipients. It is an internal management document which assists Ministers to reach decisions on the future size and scope of the bilateral aid programme under review. It is not suitable for publication.

Project Framework Systems

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the new project framework systems referred to on page 58, paragraph 37 of volume II of the "Government's Expenditure Plans" (Cmnd. 9701-II) differs from the aid framework used by his Department in previous years.

Mr. Raison: The aid framework is the planning mechanism whereby aid resources in total are allocated to specific uses and programmes, multilateral and bilateral, over a three-year forward period. It will continue to operate as in the past.

The project framework, which was introduced recently into the Overseas Development Administration, is a new approach to project planning and implementation. Its main purpose is to set out in a clear and logical way, at the time a project is proposed, the link between the resources put into the project and what it is expected to achieve, in terms of both detailed and broader objectives.

Centre for World Development Education

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the prospects of closure of the Centre for World Development Education, London;

(2) if he will make a statement on the financial position of the Centre for World Development Education, London.

Mr. Raison: At the request of CWDE and five of the main voluntary agencies, I have agreed to make a special grant of £25,000 towards a rescue package which will resolve the Centre's immediate problems. This assistance is additional to the Overseas Development Administration's annual grant to the Centre of £100,000 which will continue until the end of the forthcoming financial year.

I am not able to give any commitment of ODA support beyond that date pending a review of our policy towards development education in general and CWDE in particular. I expect to announce the results of this review later in the year.

British Council

Sir Peter Tapsell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role the British Council will play in respect of the expenditure released by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: The British Council will be involved, in either an advisory or administrative capacity or both, in the following schemes mentioned in my reply of 19 December at column *241* to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen):

The ODA Technical Co-operation Training Programme;
a joint scheme for scholarships in the United Kingdom for Chinese students;
the Key English Language Teaching Programme;
a Commonwealth training scheme for black South Africans at Post-Graduate level;
the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarships and Awards Scheme.

These schemes are expected to receive about 80 per cent. of the re-allocated total of £6·4 million.

International Council of Scientific Unions

Sir Peter Tapsell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether financial support will be provided for the International Council of Scientific Unions from the savings of the British contribution to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: Yes. Money will be allotted to the International Council of Scientific Unions and some of its constituent scientific unions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Jopling: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number employed*
1981-82	99
1982-83	95
1983-84	95
1984-85	94
1985-86	94

Total administration expenditure on press liaison, information policy and technical visual aids for the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 was £2·1 million and £2·3 million, respectively.

Annual expenditure for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Battery Hens

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will be seeking the phasing-out of the keeping of battery hens.

Mrs. Fenner: I have no such plans. Instead, we are seeking agreement within the European Community on minimum welfare standards for hens in battery cages.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Departmental Select Committees

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many days are estimated to have been worked by specialist advisers in respect of each departmental Select Committee for each year since their appointment, together with the total number of days worked for each year.

Mr. Biffen: The information is set out in the following table.

Days worked for which payment made in financial years

	1979-80 Days worked	*1980-81* Days worked	*1981-82* Days worked	*1982-83* Days worked	*1983-84* Days worked	*1984-85* Days worked	*1985-86 (to date)* Days worked
Agriculture	21	109	29	29	1	17	21
Defence	9	106	123	189	43	162	95
Education, Science and Arts	15	116	237	411	58	55	39
Employment	14	55	94	47	6	25	45
Energy	16	258	307	207	82	163	115
Environment	15	407	134	174	23	81	40
Foreign Affairs	7	345	352	449	64	46	25
Home Affairs	5	59	35	—	—	—	—
Industry and Trade	—	107	149	128	32	66	23
Scottish Affairs	—	38	60	29	28	39	10
Social Services	—	251	155	116	47	90	37
Treasury and Civil Service	—	221	209	273	112	202	147
Transport	6	54	134	78	6	36	3
Welsh Affairs	—	76	25	70	16	114	44
TOTALS	108	2,202	2,043	2,200	518	1,096	644

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many witnesses have appeared before each of the departmental Select Committees and their Sub-Committees for each Session since their establishment; how many times they have given evidence; what is the rank of each of the official witnesses concerned; and if he will give the same information for Cabinet Ministers and other Ministers.

Mr. Biffen: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many visits have been made by each of the departmental Select Committees, including visits by Sub-Committees, since their appointment, abroad and within the United Kingdom; and what is the total cost for each Committee, together with the global cost for each Committee and for all departmental Committees since their inception.

Mr. Biffen: The information is set out in the following table.

Parliamentary Sessions

Committee	*Number of visits*	*1979-80* £	*Number of visits*	*1980-81* £	*Number of visits*	*1981-82* £	*Number of visits*	*1982-83* £	*Number of visits*	*1983-84* £	*Number of visits*	*1984-85* £	*Number of visits*	*1985-86* £	*Grand total*
Agriculture															
Abroad	2	6,656	3	5,422	3	4,720	1	15,598	2	4,698	2	9,290	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	2	1,802	5	2,226	2	4,198	2	143	2	1,521	3	2,971	—	—	
Total	4	8,458	8	7,648	5	8,918	3	15,741	4	6,219	5	12,261	—	—	59,245
Defence															
Abroad	2	5,393	2	14,357	4	36,564	2	25,167	4	7,703	5	28,189	2	379	
Within United Kingdom	7	6,738	5	1,007	4	336	—	—	9	4,479	2	258	1	760	
Total	9	12,131	7	15,364	8	36,900	2	25,167	13	12,182	7	28,447	3	1,139	131,330
Education, Science and Arts															
Abroad	2	8,367	4	19,190	—	—	1	9,021	—	—	1	2,533	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	16	1,639	8	520	8	7,180	9	2,080	1	1,406	4	4,551	1	25	
Total	18	10,006	12	19,710	8	7,180	10	11,101	1	1,406	5	7,084	1	25	56,512
Employment															
Abroad	1	11,025	2	5,289	4	29,851	—	—	2	26,559	—	—	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	10	4,420	3	1,983	2	914	1	259	—	—	1	19	—	—	

Committee	Number of visits	1979-80 £	Number of visits	1980-81 £	Number of visits	1981-82 £	Number of visits	1982-83 £	Number of visits	1983-84 £	Number of visits	1984-85 £	Number of visits	1985-86 £	Grand total
Total	11	15,445	5	7,272	6	30,765	1	259	2	26,559	1	19	—	—	80,319
Energy															
Abroad	2	18,542	1	20,691	1	6,593	1	5,571	1	31,105	1	1,249	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	4	153	2	877	5	1,570	—	—	2	85	5	2,869	2	—	
Total	6	18,695	3	21,568	6	8,163	1	5,571	3	31,190	6	4,118	2	—	89,305
Environment															
Abroad	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	11,693	3	17,252	3	17,280	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	1	23	1	38	—	—	4	2,838	3	4,173	6	6,024	—	—	
Total	1	23	1	38	—	—	5	14,531	6	21,425	9	23,304	—	—	59,321
Foreign Affairs															
Abroad	2	22,322	5	33,680	3	42,355	5	21,246	3	28,940	5	23,126	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	—	—	1	18	—	—	3	190	—	—	2	365	—	—	
Total	2	22,322	6	33,698	3	42,355	8	21,436	3	28,940	7	23,491	—	—	172,242
Home Affairs															
Abroad	—	—	1	10,592	2	19,392	—	—	2	17,982	3	22,628	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	2	1,152	4	259	—	—	6	949	9	3,380	5	1,868	—	—	
Total	2	1,152	5	10,851	2	19,392	6	949	11	21,362	8	24,496	—	—	78,202
Industry and Trade															
Abroad	2	31,006	1	3,003	1	2,606	1	28,633	1	1,554	1	12,029	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	—	—	—	—	2	1,153	2	196	3	1,127	9	8,317	—	—	
Total	2	31,006	1	3,003	3	3,759	3	28,829	4	2,681	10	20,346	—	—	89,624
Scottish Affairs															
Abroad	1	1,915	1	2,837	3	11,994	—	—	1	7,483	—	—	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	16	7,211	10	3,190	8	4,357	7	4,131	6	11,793	2	4,839	—	—	
Total	17	9,126	11	6,027	11	16,351	7	4,131	7	19,276	2	4,839	—	—	59,750
Social Services															
Abroad	—	—	1	8,362	1	4,541	1	3,249	1	21,654	—	—	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	2	753	4	3,535	—	—	3	2,763	8	6,588	10	3,504	2	55	
Total	2	753	5	11,897	1	4,541	4	6,012	9	28,242	10	3,504	2	55	55,004
Treasury and Civil Service															
Abroad	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	17,659	—	—	2	6,486	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	193	1	85	—	—	
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	17,659	1	193	3	6,571	—	—	24,423
Transport															
Abroad	2	3,072	2	21,374	—	—	2	9,701	2	36,130	1	3,048	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	2	19	—	—	1	1,046	4	1,942	6	8,460	11	6,068	2	602	
Total	4	3,091	2	21,374	1	1,046	6	11,643	8	44,590	12	9,116	2	602	91,462
Welsh Affairs															
Abroad	—	—	—	—	1	2,427	2	9,682	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Within United Kingdom	1	472	1	866	1	286	1	10	1	404	6	6,058	3	1,042	
Total	1	472	1	866	2	2,713	3	9,692	1	404	6	6,058	3	1,042	21,242
Grand totals	79	132,680	67	159,316	56	182,083	60	172,721	73	244,669	91	173,654	13	2,863	1,067,986

The accounts for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are not yet complete.

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many reports have been published by each departmental Select Committee for each Session since their appointment; and if he will list those published in the last Session.

Mr. Biffen: The following table shows the number of reports published by each departmental Select Committee in each Session since their appointment.

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Agriculture	1(1)	2(3)	2	1(1)	2	6(3)	(1)
Defence	3(2)	4(3)	2(1)	4(1)	3	5	1
Education	5(1)	3	9	2(1)	2	1	0
Employment	2(2)	3(1)	5(6)	(2)	2	1	0
Energy	(2)	3	5(1)	3(1)	12	7	0

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Environment	1	3	2	3(2)	4(5)	4(3)	0
Foreign Affairs	5(1)	7	5(1)	4(2)	5(1)	5(1)	1
Home Affairs	5	5	7	3	1	7	0
Scottish Affairs	2(1)	2(3)	2(2)	2(1)	2(1)	2	1
Social Services	3	4(1)	3	1(1)	4(1)	8	0
Trade and Industry	4	5(4)	8(3)	3(3)	4(5)	3(4)	1
Transport	2(1)	5(3)	5(1)	3(3)	2(1)	7	1
Treasury and Civil Service	5(3)	8(2)	6(2)	5(3)	8(5)	13	2
Welsh Affairs	1(1)	2(1)	1(1)	1(1)	1(2)	1	1

The numbers in parenthesis refer to special reports published.

The following reports were published in the last Session:-

AGRICULTURE

First Special Report—The Effect of Feedstuff Prices on the United Kingdom Pig and Poultry Industries (Government Response)

First Report—The Implementation of Dairy Quotas

Second Special Report—The Beef Variable Premium Scheme

Second Report—Comment on the Government's Response to the Committee's Report on the Implementation of Dairy Quotas

Third Report — The Financing and Organisation of the Aujeszky's Disease Eradication Scheme

Fourth Report—The Beef Variable Premium Scheme

Fifth Report—The Accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC, with Special Reference to United Kingdom Agricultrual and Food Imports and Exports

Sixth Report—The United Kingdom Government Agricultural Development and Advisory Services, including Lower Input Farming

Third Special Report—The Accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC, with Special Reference to United Kingdom Agricultural and Food Imports and Exports

DEFENCE

First Report — The Use of Merchant Shipping for Defence Purposes (HC 114)

Second Report — Security at Royal Ordnance Factories and Nuclear Bases (HC 217)

Third Report—Defence Commitments and Resources and the Defence Estimates 1985-86 (HC 37)

Fourth Report—The Future of the Royal Dockyards (HC 453)

Fifth Report—The Appointment and Objectives of the Chief of Defence Procurement (HC 430)

Sixth Report—the Trident Programme (HC 479)

EDUCATION

First Report: The Future of the Science Budget HC 46.

EMPLOYMENT

First—Equal Opportunities Commission draft Code of Practice

Second—Proposals for Changes in Skillcentres

Third—Implications for industrial relations and employment of the introduction of the polygraph

Fourth—MSC Corporate Plan 1985-89

Fifth—Wages Councils

Sixth—Dismissal of NCB employees.

ENERGY

(b) 1984-85

First—The Report and Accounts of the Electricity and Gas Industries for 1983-84—HC 34

Second—The Government's Response to Committee's Ninth Report (Session 1983-84) on Energy Research, Development and Demonstration in the United Kingdom —HC 75

Evidence relating to the Gas Depletion Enquiry — HC 76-i to 76-ix

Third—The Government's Observations on the Committee's Tenth Report (Session 1983-84) on the Implications of the Petroleum Stocks (Amendment) Order 1983—HC 88

Fourth—The Winter Supplementary Estimate for £45 million in respect of BNOC—HC 126

Energy Efficiency Office Minutes of Evidence from the Secretary of State—HC 87-i

Fifth — Government Oil Price Policy and the Spring Supplementary Estimate for £20 million in respect of BNOC—HC 234

Sixth—Her Majesty's Treasury's Consultation Proposals for Legislation in respect of the Nationalised Industries—HC 302

Seventh—Development and Depletion of United Kingdom's Gas Resources—HC 76

Eighth—The Energy Efficiency Office—HC 87

First Special—The Government's Response to the Committee's Seventh Report on the Development and Depletion of the United Kingdom's Gas Resources—HC 621

ENVIRONMENT

First Report Session 1984-85—Operation and Effectiveness of Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (HC 6)

Second Report Session 1984-85—British Board of Agrément (HC 156)

Third Report Session 1984-85—Department of the Environment Main Estimates for 1985-86 (HC 414)

Fourth Report Session 1984-85—Property Services Agency Main Estimates for 1985-86 (HC 415)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

First—Abuse of Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges (HC 127)

Second—Famine in Africa (HC 56)

Third—Events Surrounding the Weekend of 1-2 May 1982 (HC 11)

Fourth—1985-86 Overseas Programme Expenditure (HC 295)

Fifth—United Kingdom membership of UNESCO (HC 461)

First Special — 1-2 May 1982: Allegations against the hon. Member for Linlithgow (HC 568)

HOME AFFAIRS

First Report on 'Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime'

Second Report on the 'Chinese Community in Britain'

Third Report on 'Refugees and Asylum, with special reference to the Vietnamese'

Fourth Report on 'Special Branch'

Fifth Report on 'Misuse of hard drugs (Interim Report)'

Sixth Report on 'Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office'

Seventh Report on 'United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service'

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

First Report—The Impact of Airport Privatisation on Scottish Lowlands Airport Policy (HC 117)

Second Report—Highlands and Islands Development Board (HC 22).

SOCIAL SERVICES

DHSS Supplementary Estimates, Class XI, Vote 1, Subhead F5, Compensation Payments to NHS Staff—HC No. 112.

Community Care, with special reference to adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people—HC No. 13.

UGC Cuts and Medical Services Report: Follow-up—HC No. 397.

Misuse of Drugs, with special reference to treatment and rehabilitation of misusers of hard drugs—HC No. 208.

Medical Education Report: Follow-up—HC No. 303.

Public Expenditure on the Social Services—HC No. 339.

Government Reply to the First Report—HC No. 380.

The Government's Green Paper "Reform of Social Security"—HC No. 451.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

(b)

1. The Operation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.
2. The British Steel Corporation.
3. Trade with China.

TRANSPORT
First Special Report—Government Observations on the 1st and 2nd Reports 1983-84.
Second Special Report—Government Observations on the 1st and 2nd Reports 1984-85.
First Report—Road Safety.
Second Report—"Buses" White Paper.
Third Report—Her Majesty's Treasury's Consultation Proposals in respect of Nationalised Industries.
Fourth Report — Transport Aspects of the 1985 Public Expenditure White Paper.
Fifth Report—Marine Pilotage.

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE
1st — The Government's Economic Policy: Autumn Statement.
2nd — The Structure and Form of Financial Documents presented to Parliament.
3rd — Special Supplementary Estimate, Class II, Vote 10 (Budget of the European Communities).
4th—The Financial and Economic Consequences of United Kingdom Membership of the European Communities: Harmonisation of VAT.
5th—Exchange Rate Policy.
6th — The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88.
7th—Financial Documents and Budget Papers.
8th—The 1985 Budget.
9th — The Government's Response to the Sixth Report (Public Expenditure White Paper).
10th—Financial Documents: Treasury Proposals.
11th—The 1985 Budget Report: The Treasury Reply.
12th—International Monetary Arrangements.
13th—The Financial and Economic Consequences of United Kingdom Membership of the European Communities: the European Monetary System.

WELSH AFFAIRS
Public Transport in Wales HC 35, Session 1984-85.

ENVIRONMENT

Land Compensation Acts (Claims)

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether any progress has been made on facilitating the payment of compound interest on claims under the Land Compensation Acts;

(2) what representations he has received in the last three years regarding the payment and taxation of interest on claims under the Land Compensation Acts; when these representations were received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: A consultation paper on interest on land compensation was issued on 16 March 1984. The paper proposed that simple interest should continue to be payable on land compensation, but that part payments should be made at regular intervals prior to the settlement of a claim on an estimated basis. Including direct responses to this consultation paper, in the last three years the Department has received correspondence from 43 bodies and individuals, a few of whom have written on more than one occasion. Most accepted the proposals in the consultation paper, although some have said that they prefer the payment of compound interest as an alternative. I am not at present in a position to say when any legislation might be introduced on this subject.

Sandwell Council

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to provide additional funds to the Sandwell metropolitan borough council to assist the council in meeting its obligations under the Housing Defects Act following the designation of Smith type houses under the Act.

Sir George Young: Sandwell metropolitan borough council's obligations under the Housing Defects Act, including those likely to arise following the designation of Smith houses, were taken into account, within the resources available, in making the 1986-87 housing investment programme allocations.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with Sandwell metropolitan borough council about next year's rate support grant; and what discussions are planned.

Mrs. Rumbold: I exchanged correspondence last year with the chairman of the council's finance committee. No meeting has been sought. I should be happy to meet a deputation from the council if it wishes.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in percentage terms the proportion of total local authority expenditure met by rate support grant by the Sandwell metropolitan borough council for each year since 1977.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures before 1981-82 are not comparable with later years. The grant figures and percentages below are after holdback of block grant. Those for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are final entitlements; those for subsequent years are latest entitlements.

Year	*Rate support Grant £*	*Total Expenditure per cent.*
1981-82	40,476,440	48·1
1982-83	46,361,960	46·7
1983-84	53,009,218	48·2
1984-85	54,652,740	48·6
1985-86	53,171,046	45·7

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his Department's allocation for housing expenditure to the Sandwell metropolitan borough for each year since 1977.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocations for Sandwell metropolitan borough council since 1977-78 have been as follows:

	£ million
1977-78	15·649
1978-79	18·039
1979-80	18·119
1980-81	19·869
1981-82	14·684
1982-83	15·834
1983-84	16·668
1984-85	14·664
1985-86	13·153
1986-87	12·343

Since 1981-82 authorities have been able to augment their allocations by spending the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts.

Urban Programme

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the projects which have

received assistance in Manchester under the traditional urban programme, the enhanced urban programme and the urban development grant schemes since 1979; and what is the total cost of these schemes to Government funds.

Mr. John Patten: Manchester city council is a partnership authority which, since 1979, has been allocated in total some £80 million urban programme resources. In 1984-85 alone the allocation was some £12 million and over 400 projects were considered. In addition, many GMC projects also benefitted the Manchester area. Four projects have received urban development grant totalling £5·2 million. It is impracticable to give details of all projects over the six-year period.

Watercourses (Mercury Contamination)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which stretches of rivers and watercourses in England contain levels of mercury which are *(a)* above and *(b)* over twice the level of the limit set down by the European Economic Community;

(2) if he will list those rivers and watercourses or areas of still water where the levels of mercury are such as to present a hazard to the public.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The required information is published each year in the form of a Management Information System for Ministers (MINIS) and is available in the House of Commons Library. The latest, MINIS 6, was published on 24 July 1985.

GLC (Grant Consent)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the factors which have hitherto inhibited him from giving consent to a grant to the All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism for which the Greater London council applied on 17 May 1985.

Mr. Tracey: No. Consent to the council's application has been refused.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply of 20 January, he will make it his policy to reach a decision on each of the consents sought before the end of January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 January, at column 142.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 20 January, *Official Report*, column *52*, what further information has been requested by his Department from the Greater London council regarding each of the four consents listed in the questions.

Mr. Tracey: On each case, the GLC has been asked to provide such further information and justification as is necessary to enable my right hon. Friend to reach a decision as quickly as possible.

Capital Expenditure Allocations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what capital expenditure allocation was requested by each fire and civil defence authority for 1986-87; and which of these allocations were granted.

Mrs. Rumbold: In determining the Other Services block allocations, my right hon. Friend seeks recommendations from the relevant local authority associations rather than direct bids from the authorities. In the case of the metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities, he accepted the recommendations received from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. The allocation to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority was made following discussions between the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and representatives of the authority, taking account of the resources available overall within the block.

Housing (Langbaurgh)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *574*, how many WCs were in the Normandy three bedroomed and the Ormesby two bedroomed houses, respectively, at the Spencerbeck estate in Langbaurgh (i) before and (ii) after refurbishment.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors affecting existing occupiers he took into account before approving the urban development grant for the Spencerbeck estate in Langbaurgh.

Mr. John Patten: As indicated in my reply of Wednesday 15 January 1986, at column *574*, part of the estate had become difficult to let. Relocation of the remaining tenants is a matter for Langbaurgh borough council. I understand that alternative accommodation and home loss and disturbance payments were offered to the tenants concerned.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the houses on the Spencerbeck estate in Langbaurgh in respect of which he approved an urban development grant do not carry a 10 year NHBC certificate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This is a matter for the housebuilder who is carrying out the scheme.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if all the dwellings shown in the photographs accompanying the application for an urban development grant for the Spencerbeck estate in Langbaurgh were included in the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: One hundred and seventy-seven dwellings are being sold by Langbaurgh borough council to the developers who are carrying out the scheme approved for urban development grant. This accorded with the plans and drawings submitted in support of the application, which did not identify the properties concerned by means of photographs.

Neighbourhood Watch Notices (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the decision of the London borough of Camden to prevent the display of neighbourhood watch notices on lamp posts in the borough, he will amend the regulations so as to exempt such notices from local authority planning control.

Mr. Tracey: I understand that the London borough of Camden has not yet determined the advertisement application to which my hon. Friend refers. If consent is refused or is granted subject to conditions with which the applicant is dissatisfied, there will be a right of appeal to my right hon. Friend against the council's decision.

As my right hon. Friend told my hon. Friend in a letter of 25 November 1985, if there is evidence of any general difficulty with neighbourhood watch signs, we would consider whether the Control of Advertisement Regulations should be amended.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to restrict the direct labour organisations of those local authorities which currently produce and sell their own windows; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: While it is not for me to interpret the law, it appears to empower local authorities to make window frames. However, the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 restricts the sale of such products to other local authorities and certain public bodies. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to introduce further restrictions.

Ministry of Defence Houses (Maidenhead)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when disposing of the Ministry of Defence houses at White Waltham, Maidenhead, he will consider applications from housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. The 38 Ministry of Defence houses and land at White Waltham are being offered for sale by tender on 6 February 1986. Bona fide tenders from any source, including housing associations, will be considered.

Local Authority Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report* all the assumptions as to the level of local authority expenditure in 1986-87, in aggregate and for each individual authority, and all other assumptions behind the calculations in the paper, "Grant Re-cycling 1986-87"; and when the information contained in this document was first made available to him.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The assumption was that initial grant claims by local authorities in England amount to £400 million less than the amount provided for in the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement. There are many different expenditures, both in aggregate and at the individual authority level, which would lead to this result. The figures contained in the document were first made available to me on Saturday 18 January.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on progress of The Queen Elizabeth II conference centre being built at Broad Sanctuary, and its cost.

Sir George Young: In my answer of 5 March 1984, at column 425, I said that overall completion was due in April 1986. This is still expected to be achieved. Some construction work will be completed from January to April concurrently with the fitting out.

The estimated cost of the construction and fitting out of the superstructure including the fitting out of the extension to the parliamentary telephone exchange, contractors' claims paid to date, inflation and variation of price payments is £50·4 million. The estimated cost of furnishing remains at £5·3 million.

Kenwood House

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on the land he intends to transfer with Kenwood House to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: My noble Friend the Minister of State made an announcement today in another place on this subject:

The Government have now decided on the area appropriate as a setting for Kenwood house and which it is proper for the proprietors of the house to manage. It comprises the land specified in the Iveagh Bequest Act together with the walled garden, and the remainder of the area enclosed by the existing fence erected by the London county council. This consists for the most part, of Southwood and the wooded area, including the lakes which is the centrepiece for the summer concerts. This land will be precisely delineated in a map shortly to be published with the main property transfer order.

It is important that Kenwood house and its surrounding area is managed and presented effectively. I know that English Heritage is committed to working closely with the London Residuary Body which will assume responsibility temporarily for Hampstead heath and, in the longer term, with the ultimate authority for the heath.

Communications Code (Merton)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the code of conduct on communications with the media introduced in 1985 by the London borough of Merton; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware of the code of conduct, which is an internal management document of the London borough of Merton.

CIVIL SERVICE

Photocopying

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister for the Civil Service in which Government Departments routine photocopying is permitted only on completion of a form or forms; in which Departments such forms have to be completed in duplicate; if this practice has been introduced in any Department during the last seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I regret that this information cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources. However, I will write to the hon. Member explaining this further.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service

Mr. Alexander asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated number of additional civil servants that will be needed to cope with the extra work arising out of the disbanding of the £8,500 threshold relating to P11Ds income tax form.

Mr. Moore: It is estimated that if the £8,500 threshold were abolished, the additional staff cost for the Inland Revenue would be about 200 units.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sum in value added tax has been collected from gaming machines by Her Majesty's Government in each financial year from 1 November 1975 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: Businesses registered for value added tax are not required to make returns of the tax charged on particular supplies of goods or services, and the information sought is therefore not directly available. Nor, I regret, is sufficiently detailed information available from other sources in this instance on which to base a reliable estimate.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much licence duty has been collected by Her Majesty's Government from gaming machines in each financial year from 1 October 1966 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: The amount of gaming machine licence duty received in each financial year since 1966-67 was as follows:

	(£,000)
1966-67	2,689
1967-68	2,861
1968-69	2,935
1969-70	7,705
1970-71	7,910
1971-72	7,787
1972-73	7,576
1973-74	8,266
1974-75	9,235
1975-76	8,222
1976-77	8,951
1977-78	9,959
1978-79	11,662
1979-80	13,912
1980-81	17,746
1981-82	26,243
1982-83	57,244
1983-84	62,917
1984-85	53,180
1985-86*	47,897

* April-September.

Depatmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. MacGregor: The information sought is a follows:

	Numbers employed	*Cost £ thousand*
1982-83	22	404
1983-84	21	456
1984-85	21	508
1985-86*	21	574

* Forecast outturn.

Comparable figures for the year 1981-82 are not available because of machinery of Government changes.

British Legion (VAT)

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received seeking exemption of the British Legion from liability to value added tax.

Mr. Brooke: Since May 1985 my colleagues and I have received 77 letters about the VAT position of the Royal British Legion. Some two-thirds of these have been concerned about the supposed imposition of VAT on Remembrance Day poppies. As was made clear in replies to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 19 November at columns *91-2* and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 15 November at column *273* there is no VAT on the giving of a token in recognition of a donation nor on the donation itself. Like other charities, the Royal British Legion bears VAT which it cannot recover on its non-business purchases; in this respect the treatment of charities in the United Kingdom is the same as in the rest of the European Community.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hicks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the standard rate of value added tax in all European Community countries, and, where appropriate, the preferential rate of value added tax for hotel accommodation and meals taken in restaurants.

Mr. Brooke: The latest information available is as follows:

	Standard rate	*Hotel accommodation*	*Restaurant meals*
Belgium	19	6	17
Denmark	22	22	22
France	18·6	7, 18·6*	18·6
Germany	14	14	14
Greece	VAT has not yet been introduced		
Ireland	23	10	23
Italy	18	9, 18*	9
Luxembourg	12	6	6
Netherlands	19	5	5
Portugal	16 (12)†	8 (6)†	8 (6)†
Spain	12	6, 12*	6
United Kingdom	15	15	15

* The higher rate applies to luxury hotels.

† The rate in brackets applies to the Autonomous Regions of the Madeira and Azores Archipelagoes.

Council of Finance Ministers

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Council of Finance Ministers.

Mr. Brooke: The EC Economic and Finance Council met in Brussels on 20 January. The United Kingdom was represented by its permanent representative.

The Council adopted a negotiating mandate on commercial interest reference rates, for discussions in the OECD on export credits.

The Council also decided on the terms of reference for the work of the high level group on indirect tax approximation, which it set up at its December meeting. The remit is a wide ranging one, and will allow the group to look at all aspects of indirect tax in the context of completion of the internal market.

TRANSPORT

Road Traffic Law

76. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to improve and simplify road traffic law.

Mr. Ridley: On 31 January 1985, I announced the setting up of a review body under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter North to examine a number of the most important and pressing issues of our road traffic law. These include the struture of offences relating to reckless and careless driving; the penalty points system and the possibility of new types of penalty for traffic offences. The review body is currently studying responses to the consultation document issued in July, a copy of which is in the Library.

Aviation Security

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will comment on the work that has been undertaken to improve international standards of aviation security in view of the security incidents that occurred during 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have been very much encouraged by the work of the International Civil Aviation Organisation in revising international standards of aviation security. This work was set in hand at the ICAO council meeting which I attended on 27 June, following the TWA hijacking and other recent attacks on civil aviation. On 19 December the ICAO adopted a revised annex 17 to the Chicago convention containing more rigorous international standards and improved recommended practices for aviation security. I have written to the secretary general of the ICAO and the president of the ICAO council to congratulate them on having carried out this work at a speed that few other international organisations have ever matched.

Roads (Investment)

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Transport what the figure of £1·50 for every £1 spent given in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper volume II, page 127, as being the estimated total user and safety benefit, for new investmen in trunk roads, produces as an annual rate of return; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Broadly equivalent to an internal rate of return of 12 per cent. The ratio of £1·50 benefit for every £1 spent is calculated by comparing the discounted value of the benefits from estimated savings in travel time, vehicle operating costs and accidents of schemes due to be completed in the period 1985-86 to 1988-89 with their discounted capital costs, using the Department's standard COBA cost benefit techniques. The discount rate used is 7 per cent. in real terms. The internal rate of return is the discount rate which equates the value of the benefits with the costs.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the British Airports Authority about disposal of their landholdings in the safeguarded area around Stansted airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The BAA has submitted proposals for a reduction in the area of safeguarded land at Stansted and I am considering these with my ministerial colleagues in the Department of the Environment. I expect to announce details of the new safeguarded area shortly; BAA will then dispose of land outside that area.

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposals he has received from British Rail concerning a rail link to Stansted airport and on progress with their considerations.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board submitted an investment proposal last November for a double track spur from the Liverpool street-Cambridge line to a new station to be constructed beneath the new airport terminal building. The board believes such a link would be financially justified. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are now considering the proposal and will reach a decision as soon as possible.

Drink-Drive Campaigns

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his objectives for Christmas drink and drive campaigns; and if he will print a table showing the change in the number of accidents achieved during the 1983 and 1984 campaigns, and the best available statistical estimates of the outcome of the 1985 campaign.

Mr. Ridley: The purpose of the Department's publicity campaigns has been to draw the attention of the public to the law on drinking and driving.

Information on casualties and breath tests and positive results during the period of the 1983 and 1984 campaigns is contained in the review section of "Road Accidents Great Britain" for those years, copies of which are in the Library. It is too early to make any statistical assessment of the 1985 campaign.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Ridley: Staff numbers and costs for the information division of my Department are available only

for the last four years. Before that, organisational and costing arrangements reflected a gradual change from the point where all information functions were performed within the information directorate of the Department of the Environment. From 1982-83, my Department's information staff and operating costs were separately identifiable, although some continued to provide a common service to the Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport. The scale of information division work also grew from 1983 as a result of the transfer of marine, aviation and other policy responsibilities from the Department of Trade to my Department.

The table shows, for the four most recent years, the numbers and costs of the specialist and support staff in my Department's information division.

	Staff in Post (at 1 January)	*Cost at outturn prices (£'000)*
1982-83	18	409
1983-84	28	559
1984-85	36	760
1985-86	35	758

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1984-85, in Wales, by operator group.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *55*]: The number of vehicles which failed the test at the first attempt is as follows:

1984-85 Wales

Operator	*Total number of tests*	*Number of failures*	*Failure rate per cent.*
NBC	1,271	355	27·9
Local authority	511	193	37·8
Private	2,666	1,278	47·9

If vehicles which passed after minor repairs were carried out at the testing stations are excluded, the number which failed the test is as follows:

	Number of failures	*Failure rate per cent.*
NBC	89	7·0
Local authority	42	8·2
Private	768	28·8

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1984-85, in Great Britain, by operator group.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *55*]: The number of vehicles which failed the test at the first attempt is as follows:

1984-85 Great Britain

Operator	*Total number of tests*	*Number of failures*	*Failure rate per cent.*
NBC	11,471	4,167	36·3
PTE	8,740	3,669	42·0
Local authority	4,789	1,355	28·3
Nat: Travel	825	216	26·2
SBE	3,010	1,042	34·6
Private	26,773	11,318	42·3
LTE	4,636	1,499	32·3
LCB	1,044	377	36·1

If vehicles which passed after minor repairs were carried out at the testing stations are excluded, the number which failed the test is as follows:

	Number of failures	*Failure rate per cent*
NBC	1,059	9·2
PTE	1,370	15·7
Local authority	386	8·1
Nat: Travel	81	9·8
SBG	753	25·0
Private	7,673	28·7
LTE	248	5·3
LCB	176	16·8

Helicopter Rescue Service (Stornoway)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate consultations about the possibility of locating a helicoper rescue service in Stornoway to cover the northern and western Highlands and Islands and the Minch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Following the loss of th Bon Ami I am considering whether the United Kingdom search and rescue committee should initiate consultations about the possibility of locating a helicopter rescue service in Stornoway.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the economic impact on the British pharmaceutical industry of the Government's restriction on the range of drugs permissible for prescription by general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: Inevitably the diversion of expenditure on medicines to meet other National Health Service needs has had an impact on some pharmaceutical companies, varying according to the circumstances of the company.

However, the savings of £75 million expected from the selected list in 1985-86 amount to about 6 per cent. of the National Health Service drugs bill, and since the list was introduced a number of companies have announced substantial further investments in the United Kingdom. We believe that the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry continues to have a bright future.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the statistical health hazards of *(a)* using Skoal Bandits, *(b)* using cigars and *(c)* using pipe tobaccos.

Mr. Whitney: Prolonged use of moist tobacco snuff in the mouth has been associated with an increased risk of oral cancer of a similar magnitude to that seen in pipe and cigar smokers and comparable effects are anticipated with the recently introduced Skoal Bandits.

In reviewing the evidence regarding the health hazards of cigar and pipe smoking, the American Surgeon General's report of 1979 concluded that although the overall risk is small relative to the enourmous risk of smoking cigarettes, the risks of the less common, but very serious cancers of the mouth and larynx, are similar to those of cigarette smokers, namely 20-30 times greater than those of non-smokers.

AIDS

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department is giving to health authorities about methods of dealing with acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following guidance has been issued:

1. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)—Interim Guidelines: Advisory Committee on Dangerous pathogens—HC(85)1: January 1985.
2. Health Service Management leaflet: AIDS—Important New Advice for Blood Donors—HC(85)3: January 1985.
3. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): Screening Test for Blood Donations: February 1985.
4. AIDS Booklet 1: General Information for Doctors—CMO(85)1: May 1985.
5. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): Facilities for testing outside the Blood Transfusion Service—July 1985.
6. Infection Control Guidelines for the Community Care of AIDS patients and other HTLVIII positive clients—July 1985.
7. Evaluation of Screening Test Kits for HTLVIII antikbody—August 1985.
8. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): HTLVIII Antibody Testing outside the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS). CMO(85)11: September 1985.
9. AIDS leaflet for Blood Donors—September 1985.
10. AIDS Booklet 2: Information for Doctors concerning the Introduction of the HTLVIII Antibody Test—CMO(85)12: October 1985.
11. HTLVIII Infection in laboratory workers—DCMO(85)2: December 1985.
12. Children at School and problems related to AIDS—CMO(86)1: January 1986.
13. HTLVIII Antibody Testing of Blood Donations outside the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS)—DA(86)1: January 1986.

Other advice is in an advanced stage of preparation and will be issued shortly.

Maternity Grant

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current value of the maternity grant in real terms compared with its value in 1969.

Mr. Major: On the basis of the movement of the retail prices index, the current value of the maternity grant is £4·60 compared with its value in November 1969.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to increase the annual inspection charges for private homes for the handicapped, the elderly and the mentally ill; whether he will consider providing for more than one inspection each year to be covered by the new registration fee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Consultation is at present taking place on recommendations to increase the fees payable for the registration and inspection of residential care homes and nursing homes but there is no proposal to increase the minimum frequency of inspections for those homes. Copies of the consultative documents have been placed in the Library.

Artificial Limb and Appliance Service

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he or his Department has received from Hangars plc any correspondence offering to take over administration of the artificial limb and appliance service;

(2) what representations he has received on the prospects for privatisation of the artificial limb and appliance service; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. included the proposal in evidence to the working party on the services of artificial limb and appliance centres, a copy of which was sent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. Its receipt has been acknowledged.

McColl Report

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) on what date he received the amendments to the McColl report on the artificial limb and appliance service referred to in his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *599*;

(2) if he will distinguish in the published version of the McColl report on the artificial limb and appliance service those passages which were the subject of amendment subsequent to its original submission to the Minister.

Mr. Newton: The working party's final amendments were submitted on 8 January. None of the amendments affects a point of substance or any of the working party's conclusions or recommendations, and I see no need to distinguish them.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North of 20 January, in which areas payments are to be made for severe weather to date this winter.

Mr. Newton: It is for adjudication officers to decide whether a period of exceptionally severe weather has occurred in any local office area. If such a period is declared, payments will be made in accordance with the guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on 6 December 1985.

Mrs. Gladys Smith

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be replying to the letter written to him on 18 September 1985 about Mrs. Gladys Smith, Silverdale nursing home, Egerton Park, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, and about which a reminder was sent on 22 November 1985.

Mr. Major: I wrote to the hon. Member earlier today.

Speech Therapists

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, now that all entrants are required to be graduates, he will give speech therapists parity with other graduate professions in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: This is a matter for negotiation within the Whitley council. The management side has already undertaken to examine jointly with the staff side the arguments which bear upon the claim for pay parity.

Maternity Expenses

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions will be made for the payment of help with maternity expenses to mothers in low income working families between April 1987, when the maternity grant is abolished, and April 1988 when family credit is introduced to ensure that all those who would be entitled to family credit will not lose the right to any help with maternity expenses.

Mr. Newton: The new arrangements for maternity expenses from April 1987 will be broadly consistent with the approach we shall adopt when the full social fund is implemented, as outlined in chapter 4 of the White Paper. Payments will be made to those receiving family income supplement until it is replaced by family credit in April 1988.

Furniture Grants

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide the latest figures available for the number of single payments made for furniture in the course of a year, the average payment made, the total expenditure on furniture grants and a breakdown of the categories of claimants who receive them.

Mr. Major: The latest available information is contained in table 19.2 of the Annual Statistical Inquiry 1983, a copy of which is in the Library. It should be noted that the table relates to single payments made during the 12 months preceding the date of the inquiry to persons still in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of the inquiry and does not, therefore, record all the single payments made during the year.

Free School Meals

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of schoolchildren who currently receive free school meals who are in families who will receive neither income support nor family credit under the proposals contained in Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Newton: These will almost all be children who currently receive free school meals under local authority discretionary schemes. Because the latter are individual local schemes and entitlement conditions vary a reliable estimate of how many of the children are in families who will receive neither income support nor family credit is not possible.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people currently receive (i) housing benefit and (ii) supplementary benefit broken down into client group and family status categories used in the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security"; and how many receive (i) rent rebate/allowance and (ii) rate rebate broken down into the categories of pensioners, working households with children and working households without children.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Soial Security Regulations

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes any amendment to, or any abolition of, existing social security regulations prior to the passage of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: Yes; for example, those on various proposed changes which are currently the subject of consultation, and those which will be required for the July 1986 uprating of benefits.

Single Payments and Heating Additions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what he estimates he will spend on single payments in 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88; and if he will publish a table showing the real value of single payments in these years compared with 1984-85;

(2) what he estimates he will spend on heating additions in the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will publish a table showing the real value of heating additions in these years compared with 1984-85.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Single Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments are made for sums of less than £30.

Mr. Major: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of children for whom family credit will be paid on the assumptions used in Cmnd. 9691; and how many of these children he estimates are of school age.

Mr. Newton: The figures are 870,000 and 610,000, respectively.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will launch an immediate inquiry into available hospital beds and the closure of the casualty unit at Manchester royal infirmary.

Mr. Whitney: These are matters for Central Manchester health authority which is responsible for the management of Manchester royal infirmary. The hon. Member may like to address his question to the chairman of that authority.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why severe disablement allowance is not paid to persons from 29 November 1984 who were born prior to 29 November 1949 but are not yet 50 years of age.

Mr. Newton: For administrative reasons the introduction of severe disablement allowance was made in two stages by age of beneficiary, new claimants aged under 35, and 50 and over, qualified from 29 November 1984; while those aged 35 to 49 qualified from 28 November 1985. Those already drawing a non-contributory invalidity pension were automatically transferred to severe disablement allowance from 29 November 1984, irrespective of their age.

Pharmacists

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the difference between the level of services of pharmacists in the National Health Service and outside the service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not believe it is meaningful or practicable to compare the pharmacy service in National Health Service hospitals and elsewhere in this way.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funds are being made available to attract more pharmacists into the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Proposals for substantial increases in the pay of basic and staff grade pharmacists have been made by the management side of the Pharmaceutical Whitley council, the cost of which, if accepted, will be met out of health authority allocations.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the effect on (i) patient services, (ii) control of drug expenditure and (iii) licensing of pharmacists, of the loss of pharmacists from the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no information to demonstrate the relationship of staffing levels, staff recruitment or staff loss in the hospital pharmacy service to the three areas listed.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Pharmaceutical Society and the Pharmaceutical Whitley council on the loss of pharmacists from the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I received a letter from the president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain dated 9 October 1985. The letter raised a number of issues, including the staffing of the hospital pharmaceutical service, and I replied to it on 11 January 1986. I have not received, and would not expect to receive, representations from the pharmaceutical Whitley council. The management side of that council made revised proposals on 17 January about the pay of hospital pharmacists designed, amongst other things, to aid recruitment. These proposals are under consideration by the staff side.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake a review of the National Health Service pharmaceutical services.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Departmental Local Offices

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate for each of his offices in Greater London for the years 1980 and 1985 *(a)* the numbers of staff, *(b)* persons in receipt of supplementary benefit and *(c)* the approximate percentage of *(b)* arising from retirement pensioners and others, respectively.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 January 1986, c. *740*]: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Judicial Process and Prison System

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations have been made by the Government of the Irish Republic since the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish agreement about the judicial process and the prison system in Northern Ireland; and with what effect.

Mr. Tom King: These matters have been discussed in the first three meetings of the intergovernmental Conference. The details are as follows:

(a) The joint statement after the first meeting of the conference on 11 December 1985 recorded that "The Conference agreed to establish a working group of officials to consider the machinery for the further discussion of legal matters, including the administration of justice."

(b) The joint statement issued after the second (special) meeting of the conference on 30 December 1985 indicated that the meeting was mostly concerned with prisons matters but recorded that the Irish Government also "put forward views and proposals designed to give substantial expression to the aim of ensuring public confidence in the administration of justice".

(c) The joint statement issued after the third meeting of the conference on 10 January 1986 recorded that: "British and Irish officials reported to the Conference on ways in which the discussion of legal matters could best be pursued. The British side emphasised the need for an early review of policy aspects of extradition and related matters. The Irish side stressed the importance they attached to measures designed to underline public confidence in the administration of justice. The Conference instructed officials to continue their discussions with a view to a meeting, before the next meeting of the Conference, of a sub-group of the Conference comprising, on the British side, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Attorney General and, on the Irish side the Minister for Justice and the Attorney General."

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving the amounts in the latest fiscal year of payments made to *(a)* civilians under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (N.I.), Order 1977, *(b)* members of the security forces, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, the British Army and the Ulster Defence Regiment under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 and *(c)* compensation payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Mr. Scott: The information for the financial year 1984-85 is as follows:

	£
Payments under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977	
Paid to civilians	4,948,306
Paid to members of the security forces	3,468,510
Payments under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978	235,384

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the latest fiscal year payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973.

Mr. Scott: No payments are made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973. However, during the 1984-85 financial year 613 payments totalling £235,384 were made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Subventions

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount of the direct subvention by the Exchequer to Northern Ireland for the latest financial year; and what are the amounts budgeted for in future periods.

Dr. Boyson: The subvention for 1985-86 is estimated to be £1,573 million. Estimates are not available for future years because a number of the figures which form part of the calculation can only be forecast accurately on an in-year basis.

Security Staff Premium

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of security staff premium paid by the Government in the latest fiscal year.

Mr. Scott: £1,299,640 in 1984-85.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the date and place of each meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference held since 15 November 1985 and the Ministers who were present from both Governments at each meeting.

Mr. Tom King: The Intergovernmental Conference has met on three occasions:

11 December 1985 at Stormont Castle
Ministers present
The Right Hon. Tom King MP
Dr. Rhodes Boyson MP
Mr. Nicholas Scott MP
Mr. Peter Barry TD
Mr. Michael Noonan TD
Mr. Liam Kavanagh TD

30 December 1985 in London
Ministers present
The Right Hon. Tom King MP
Mr. Peter Barry TD

10 January 1986 in London
Ministers present
The Right Hon. Tom King MP
Mr. Nicholas Scott MP
Mr. Peter Barry TD
Mr. Michael Noonan TD

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the secretariat described in article 3 of the Anglo-Irish agreement dated 15 November 1985, Cmnd. 9657, has been set up; and how many members of the secretariat have been or will be provided by each Government.

Mr. Tom King: A secretariat has been established under Article 3. The United Kingdom side of the Secretariat, including support staff, is likely to total about 6; the number of staff on the Irish side is likely to be of the same order but this is a matter for the Irish Government.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals have been put forward by the Irish Government in accordance with article 2(b) of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Article 2(b) states the general principle that the Irish Government may put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland within the field of activity of the Intergovernmental Conference in so far as those matters are not the responsibility of a devolved administration in Northern Ireland. Any views or proposals put at the meetings of the conference therefore fall within the terms of this article. The joint statements, issued after each of the three meetings of the conference, set out the matters that were raised. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which are the matters referred to in article 4(a) of the Anglo-Irish agreement which it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government should be devolved within Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The matters referred to in article 4(a) of the agreement are those listed in article 2. The powers immediately available for devolution to a Northern Ireland administration are those which are classified as "transferred" by the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. Essentially, they comprise economic and social matters administered by the Northern Ireland Departments.

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals have been put forward by the Irish Government in accordance with article 4*(c)* of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: None.

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what views and proposals have been put forward by the Irish Government in accordance with article 5*(c)* of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Article 5*(c)* provides that if it should prove impossible to achieve and sustain devolution on a basis which secures widespread acceptance in Northern Ireland, the conference shall be a framework within which the Irish Government may, where the interests of the minority community are significantly or especially affected, put forward views on proposals for major legislation and on major policy issues, which are within the purview of the Northern Ireland Departments and which remain the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. As the joint statements record, no views on proposals have yet been put forward in accordance with this article in the conference.

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what views and proposals have been put forward by the Irish Government in accordance with article 6 of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The Irish Government have offered views on the consultative paper published in 1985 on the police complaints procedure in Northern Ireland, including the role of the Police Complaints Board. We undertook to consider these together with the views of the other respondents to the consultative paper before decisions were made. While I can confirm that the Irish Government have as yet made no proposals in connection with the composition of the bodies, referred to in article 6, matters relating to the appointments of particular individuals will be treated in confidence.

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what programme of special measures in Northern Ireland has been agreed in accordance with article 7(c) of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: At its meeting on 11 December 1985 the Intergovernmental Conference discussed the development of a programme of measures to improve relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland. It was informed by the Chief Constable of measures already instituted to improve relations between the security forces and the minority community. It was also informed of the various steps currently under consideration by the Chief Constable. It was recognised that the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the armed forces must not only discharge their duties even-handedly and with equal respect for the unionist and nationalist identities and traditions, but be seen by both communities to be doing so. A joint statement on the meeting of 11 December has been placed in the Library.

Departmental Manpower

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants are employed in the Northern Ireland Office, excluding Northern Ireland Departments; and how many of the 30 most senior civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office were born in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: On 1 January 1986 there were 1,238 civil servants employed in the Northern Ireland Office. (This figure relates to those in administrative grades and excludes, for example, prison officers.)

Of the 28 administrative grade officers at grade 5 level and above, nine were born in Northern Ireland.

Motor Vehicles (Incidents)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of persons proceeded against since 1982 for offences relating to the taking of motor vehicles without their owners' consent.

Mr. Scott: The number of persons proceeded against for offences relating to the taking of motor vehicles without the owner's consent was 740 in 1982, 640 in 1983 and 645 in 1984. The 1985 figures are not yet available.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, in December; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making an appearance at Armagh courthouse on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During December 1985 a total of 34 searches were carried out on 21 prisoners; 10 prisoners were searched once, 10 were searched twice, and one prisoner was searched on four occasions. No prohibited article was found during these searches, and no prisoner refused to be searched. Searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	Number
First admission on remand or whilst awaiting trial	11
First Admission on sentence or on final discharge	4
Attending Armagh remand court	1
Attending other remand courts	1
Attending trial	3
Bail Court appearance	10
Going on, or returning from, home leave	4
TOTAL	34

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Tom King: The number of staff in information officer grades employed in the information service of the Northern Ireland Office on 1 January in the past five years is as follows:

	Northern Ireland Office (London)	*Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) and Northern Ireland Departments*
1985	4	14
1984	4	15
1983	3	15
1982	4	15
1981	5	15

These officers were supported by the following number of staff in the administrative, clerical and other grades:

	Northern Ireland Office (London)	*Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) and Northern Ireland Departments*
1985	3	16
1984	3	16
1983	4	16
1982	4	17
1981	4	19

The actual expenditure on general promotional activities in the last five financial years by the part of the information service which covers the Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) and Northern Ireland Departments was as follows:

	£
1984-85	130,256
1983-84	124,257
1982-83	140,594
1981-82	129,349
1980-81	181,931

Information about expenditure by members of the information service in London has not been kept separately and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 24 January 1986

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thefts

Mr. Onslow asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the items that are known to have been stolen from the precincts of the Palace of Westminster during each of the last three years.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is given in the table below:

Thefts reported to the police commited within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster and outbuildings between 1 January 1983 and 31 December 1985

Items	*Number of Articles or Thefts* 1983	1984	1985
Motor Cycle gauntlets	1	—	—
Vacuum cleaner and hose	1	2	—
Typewriter	1	2	—
Briefcase	1	1	1
Spirits and cigars to the value of	£457·67	—	£120
Cash	£49	£483·50	£696
Tools to the value of approx*	£500	£410	£1,350
Jackets	2	—	—
Cigarette lighter in case	1	—	—
Microwave oven	1	—	—
Books	7	—	2
Copper tubing and fittings	†X	—	—
Meat to the value of	£300	—	£2
Framed prints and photographs	X	2	—
Watch	1	—	—
Electric Kettle	1	1	1
Table lamp	—	1	2
Casette/tape recorders	3	2	3
Motor cycle cowling	1	—	—
Clocks	10	—	1
Dictaphone	1	1	1
Tuner Amplifier	1	—	1
Tape recorder adaptor	—	1	—
Radios	—	1	1
Cast iron crosses	—	3	—
Billiard Cue	—	1	—
Camera	—	1	—
Desk diary	—	1	—
Cheque book	2	—	3
Car pass	—	—	1
Video cassette	—	—	1
Spectacles	—	—	1
Postage stamps to the value of	—	—	£4
Make-up bag	—	—	1
Steam cleaning machine	—	—	1
Telephones	—	—	1
Cycle lamps	—	—	2
Scarf	—	—	1
Coats	1	1	2

* It is difficult to be specific about the value of a number of these items
† X means number unspecified

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities (Science Courses)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university applications for courses in physics have been received by the Universities Central Council on Admissions by the relevant closing date in December of each year since 1979.

Mr. Walden: Information on university applicants received by 15 December each year is not readily available. However, total applicants for admission to a university through UCCA where physics was the preferred subject of study are as follows:

Academic year of entry	*All applications**	*Applications by previous 1 December*
1979	2,878	†
1980	3,188	†
1981	3,406	†
1982	3,899	†
1983	3,717	†
1984	3,520	†
1985	3,117	2,290
1986	—	1,989

* Excluding mathematics and physics and other combinations.
† Not readily available.

Polytechnics (Funding)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give consideration to changing the funding of polytechnics from local education authorities to central Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average length of tenure of civil servants posted to the University Grants Committee over the last 10 years.

Sir Keith Joseph: Four years. This figure takes into account all staff with less than 10 years' service with the University Grants Committee.

Schools (Lunchtime Supervision)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local authorities to the effect that the cost of 30 per cent. of a scheme of lunchtime supervision under the Education (Amendment) Bill will incur grant penalties or clawback.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. In the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr.

Greenway) on 8 November 1985 at column 11, an undertaking was given that the Government would view sympathetically any applications for disregards for such expenditure for the purposes of calculating the hold-back of block grant in respect of 1985-86.

School Curricula

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the objectives of his policy on school curricula; how he is monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's policies are set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469); their principal aims are to raise standards at all levels of ability and to secure the best possible return from the resources which are made available. The arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of these policies are described in chapter 13 of the White Paper.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise

Mr. Roger King asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 5 will be increased by £1,750,000 from £355,082,000 to £356,832,000 to cover the cost of increased operations in particular with regard to the prevention of drug smuggling, a shortfall in fees received from traders for out-of-hours Customs attendance, and payments made in lieu of interest, on payments to certain traders of overpaid VAT following legal decisions on direct selling. Of this increase, £1,050,000 is classified as public expenditure. This will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme (Interest Burden)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the increased burden of interest repayments borne by recipient countries for Her Majesty's Government's future aid programme.

Mr. Raison: Bilateral aid to countries with an income per head of less than $790 in 1983 is provided on grant terms. Aid loans to other countries are at rates of interest well below commercial rates of interest. Twenty one of the poorest countries have already had their past aid debt forgiven under our retrospective terms adjustment policy.

The burden of debt servicing is one factor taken into account in setting the level of our bilateral aid and its forms to particular countries. Many developing countries with debt problems need to adapt their economic policies in order to restore growth and improve their balance of payments position. An important aspect of our aid policy, particularly in Africa, is to support those countries pursuing adjustment and investment programmes agreed with the IMF and the World Bank.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Funerals

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward proposals for price control of funerals.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Lloyd's (Inquiry)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure a wide spread of interest on the inquiry into Lloyd's and appoint representatives of trade unions and consumers.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1986, c. *281*]: I am, of course, carefully considering the composition of the inquiry. I hope to announce its full membership shortly.

WALES

Moorland

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average annual loss of moorland to agricultural or other development in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Moorland is not identified separately from rough grazing in the agricultural census. The reduction in the area of rough grazing between 1975 and 1985 has averaged 7,300 hectares per year.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the average annual loss of agricultural land due to the encroachment of bracken in Wales;

(2) what is the estimated area of land covered by bracken in Wales; and what is the annual rate of encroachment.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Estimates put forward by research organisations suggest that 118,000 hectares in Wales are subject to bracken infestation and that the annual rate of encroachment is between 1 per cent. and 3 per cent.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent bracken processing for use as fuel is carried out in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There is no known commercial processing of bracken for use as a fuel taking place in Wales at the present time.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the extent of application of the chemical asulox, used in the treatment of bracken infestation, in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There is no information available on the use of asulox on bracken in Wales.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Secrets Act (Immunity)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General on what basis he has been asked to authorise a grant of

immunity to a civil servant from prosecution under the Official Secrets Act as part of inquiries into the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter to the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said to the House on this matter, with my agreement, in the statement which she made on 23 January.

SCOTLAND

Sheriff of Kilmarnock

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of the reprimand delivered by the Lord Justice Clerk to the Sheriff of Kilmarnock, Mr. David Smith, in relation to the case of a dismissed coalminer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I take it that the hon. Member's question refers to the opinion of the Lord Justice Clerk delivered on 5 November 1985 in relation to the bills of suspension submitted by 14 miners. I have arranged for a copy of the relevant opinions to be placed in the Library.

Drink-driving Offences

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many charges for drunken driving were brought in Scotland in the three weeks commencing 23 December 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that this information is not available. Monthly returns from police forces for December 1985 and January 1986 are not yet complete; and these do not make it possible to identify the figures for any particular week.

Agriculture Studentships

Mr. Michael Forsyth the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will extend the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland agriculture studentships to include aquaculture training.

Mr. John Mackay: No. The Natural Environment Research Council is responsible for postgraduate training in fisheries and freshwater and marine biology.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which departments and which universities are currently included in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland agriculture studentships scheme.

Mr. John MacKay: Awards under the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries postgraduate agricultural studentship scheme are made to students ordinarily resident in Scotland wishing to study subjects within the fields specified in the rules for the scheme. They are tenable at any university at which the student is accepted for postgraduate studies. Studentships are currently held at the following universities: Glasgow (6), Aberdeen (4), Edinburgh (2), Cambridge (2), Newcastle (1), Strathclyde (1), University college, Aberystwyth (1).

Bridge of Allan (Flood Prevention)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give capital consent for Stirling district council to meet its obligations as riparian owner for remedial works to be carried out by the Central regional council to prevent further flooding in Bridge of Allan.

Mr. Ancram: Local authorities are given consent to incur capital expenditure in the form of block consents and have full discretion in using them. They do not require my right hon. and learned Friend's consent to incur expenditure on individual projects. It is therefore for Stirling district council to determine its own expenditure priorities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the answer of 23 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns *465-6*, in each of the five years 1979 to 1983, how many firearms that were stolen of each type were subsequently found to have been used in crimes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not recorded by chief officers of police. While there is little concrete evidence to show how criminals obtain their weapons, between 2,500 and 3,000 firearms annually were reported stolen since 1979 and one must accept that a number of these will subsequently have been used in further crimes.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made towards establishing a new purpose-built unit to replace the C1 unit at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: A site has been found and work is now going ahead on planning the new accommodation. As recommended by the project committee, advice is being sought from the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in implementing improvements in the C1 unit at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police Research and Telecommunications

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his reply of 20 December, *Official Report*, columns *340-1*, he will give details of the projects covered by the headings "Police Research and Telecommunications".

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Police Complaints Authority

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints were made to the Police Complaints Authority in 1985; and with what result.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is a matter for the Police Complaints Authority, which is an independent body established under the provisions of part IX of the Police

and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The information will be included in the authority's report for 1985. The report will be laid before Parliament and published.

Theft Act

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been convicted of robbery, contrary to section 8(1) of the Theft Act 1968, since that section was enacted; and how many of those persons were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—in table 5.8 of the issue for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621) for persons found guilty and tables 2.4 and 2.5 of the supplementary tables 1984, volume 2, for sentences of life imprisonment and custody for life respectively under offence classification 34. Fifty four thousand five hundred and eighty persons were found guilty of robbery from 1 January 1969 to 31 December 1984; of whom 17 received a sentence of life imprisonment or custody for life. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Human Rights and the Police

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any use is made in the training of police officers of the manual "Human Rights and the Police" published by the Directorate of Human Rights in Strasbourg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This publication is one of many available to police trainers and students in the general field of human rights, an important subject at all levels of training.

Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will arrange for Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha to be deported on the grounds that his continued presence in the United Kingdom is not conducive to the public good; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons why Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha, a person required to leave the United Kingdom following the Libyan embassy siege, has now been re-admitted to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Ben Rabha was one of the 30 occupants of the Libyan people's bureau at the time of the shooting of WPC Fletcher on 17 April 1984. He was not a diplomat, but a locally engaged member of staff employed as a film technician. Following the severance of diplomatic relations with Libya and the lifting of the siege of the bureau, he was escorted along with other members of the bureau to Heathrow and embarked for Tripoli on 27 April 1984.

In September 1984, Mr. Ben Rabha applied in Paris for a visa to enable him to return to the United Kingdom. The application was refused on 15 November 1984 under the immigration rules on the ground that Mr. Ben Rabha's presence in this country would not be conducive to the public good having regard to his former employment at the Libyan people's bureau and the nature of his subsequent departure from the United Kingdom. This decision carried a right of appeal to the independent immigration appellate authorities.

Mr. Ben Rabha exercised his right of appeal, and on 2 September 1985 the appeal was allowed on the ground that, on balance, the strong compassionate circumstances outweighed the case for refusing the application. Mr. Ben Rabha had married a British citizen in 1973, and the couple had been resident in the United Kingdom since 1974. There were five children of the marriage, the youngest having been born in March 1984. There were no grounds in law to challenge the adjudicator's determination and a visa was therefore authorised for Mr. Ben Rabha, who was admitted to the United Kingdom on 30 October 1985 to rejoin his family. He was interviewed by the police on his arrival who intend to bring no charge against him.

Given all these circumstances there is no basis in which I would be justified in starting deportation action against Mr. Ben Rabha.

Libyan Embassy Siege

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in respect of the various Libyan personnel required to leave the United Kingdom following the Libyan embassy siege, any conditions were imposed, then or subsequently, on (i) the circumstances and (ii) the period, within which they could return to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No specific conditions were imposed, but my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary made it clear that he would not hesitate to use to the full the powers contained in the Immigration Act 1971, to ensure the exclusion of the Libyan nationals referred to for so long as it was thought necessary other than in exceptional circumstances. That remains the position.

Sunday Trading

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the extent of the restrictions on Sunday trading in Portugal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 January 1986, c. *220*]: I understand that shops in Portugal may open on any day of the week between 6 am and midnight, subject to local authority approval. Some major supermarkets and shopping complexes open on Sundays but the majority of shops are closed.

EMPLOYMENT

Farm Workers (Accidents)

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what has been the number of accidents involving farm workers in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Trippier: The number of accidents involving agricultural employees in Great Britain in each of the past 10 years is shown in the table below:

	Fatal	*Non-Fatal*
1975	34	5,196
1976	41	5,206
1977	34	4,784

	Fatal	Non-Fatal
1978	25	4,529
1979	34	4,024
1980	25	4,223
1981	31	*7,799
1982	27	*7,118
1983	28	*
1984	27	*

* Not available.
† The Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 came into force on 1 January 1981. The non-fatal accident figures for 1981 and 1982 are not comparable with those from previous years.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what discussion he intends to have with representatives of trade union organisations and the Commission for Racial Equality about monitoring statistics and information relating to ethnic minority unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: As announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 13 December 1985 at column 799, the Department of Employment was to undertake pilot tests in Stockton, Thornton Heath and Toxteth, to assess the feasibility of collecting ethnic minority unemployment statistics through the unemployment benefit service.

These tests were completed on 17 January 1986 and the Department is currently assessing their outcome. The Commission for Racial Equality and departmental trade union representatives will be invited to comment on the pilot tests as part of that assessment.

Unemployment Benefit (Elected Register)

Mr. Cohen asked the Paymaster General whether the electoral register is used in conjuction with the adminstration of unemployment benefit; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine readable form.

Mr. Alan Clark: The electoral register is not used in conjuction with the administration of unemployment benefit and there are no plans to use it in that respect in the future.

Ault and Wiborg Factory

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 11 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *641*, the Health and Safety Executive is now satisfied with the safety standards in force at the Ault and Wiborg paint factory in Perivale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The safety modifications required by the Health and Safety Executive have now been completed. Responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of safety standards at the factory lies with the company. The executive will continue to enforce health and safety legislation at the factory in the normal way.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mobbing and Rioting

Mr. Maclennan asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the Scottish Law Commission on mobbing and rioting.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Scottish Law Commission has consulted widely on this subject and I expect to hear from it in the fairly near future what action it proposes to take as a result of that consultation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on developments arising from his efforts to secure widespread acceptance of the Anglo-Irish agreement among those people of Northern Ireland who wish for no change of status of the Province.

Mr. Tom King: As the Government have repeatedly made clear, the Anglo-Irish agreement has not effected any change in Northern Ireland's constitutional status as part of the United Kingdom. I accept, however, that there is widespread misunderstanding within the Province about both the terms and the operation of the agreement. I will pay particular attention over the coming months to remedying this, and I believe that longer experience of the practical workings of the Intergovernmental Conference will lead to a much wider appreciation of the true nature and advantages of the agreement.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve are currently estimated to be Catholics; what proportion this represents of the manpower of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve separately; and how these proportions compare with the recruitment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve in the latest calendar year.

Mr. Scott: The religious denominations of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its Reserve have not been recorded since 1970. Nevertheless, I understand that about one tenth of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the full-time Reserve are Roman Catholic and that around one tenth of those recruited to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and to the full-time Reserve in 1985 were Roman Catholic. The Royal Ulster Constabulary will continue its efforts to attract suitability qualified recruits from all parts of the community.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the manpower strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland on 1 January, giving details of the number of operatives at that time for the following categories: Royal Ulster Constabulary full-time, Royal Ulster Constabulary full-time Reserve and Royal Ulster Constabulary part-time Reserve.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Number
Royal Ulster Constabulary	8,259
Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (full-time)	2,755
Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (part-time)	1,753
TOTAL	12,767

TRANSPORT

London Country Bus Services Ltd

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce a decision on the future structure of London Country Bus Services Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am considering the matter in consultation with the board of the National Bus Company and an announcement will be made as soon as final decisions have been reached.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from London Regional Transport about the adequacy of the resources it receives from his Department.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The resources provided by my Department to London Regional Transport have matched its needs given its notable success in cutting costs while maintaining services and increasing investment.

Motorways

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what new procedures will be adopted from April 1986 for obtaining the information on the maintenance of motorways currently obtained from the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Ridley: On some lengths of motorway we have appointed consultants or district councils to manage parts of the motorway network who will be required to operate maintenance management systems and to provide information in the same way as our existing agents. On other lengths existing agent authorities will be extending their present maintenance activities into the metropolitan areas, and will provide the information.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many disclosures of names and addresses took place from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre last year; for what purpose those disclosures took place; and which organisations received those names and addresses.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In 1985 there were about 6½ million disclosures of names and addresses from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre. About 5½ million of these disclosures were from the vehicles register and about 1 million from the drivers' register. As far as the vehicles register is concerned the main information was supplied for use in connection with the investigation of an offence to the police, local authorities and other enforcement agencies. In a small proportion of cases information was supplied to those who showed "reasonable cause" for their inquiry as required by regulations and who paid the prescribed fee. Information was also supplied from the vehicle register to vehicle manufacturers for the purpose of safety related recalls. Release of information from the drivers' register only occurs for purposes directly related to driver licensing, road safety and enforcement. This is supplied in the main to the police with a small proportion to other Government Departments and statutory licensing authorities.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the electoral register is currently used in conjunction with the information held at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine readable form.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electoral register is not currently used in conjunction with the information held at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre and there are no plans to do so.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the fatal and reported accident rates for lit and unlit sections of the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield from 1979 annually.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

Accident rates per mile: M1 London-Wakefield (junctions 1-40): by severity, daylight/dark and lighting: 1982-84.

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Daylight lit			
Fatal	0·13	0·07	0·17
All accidents	4·33	3·94	4·76
Daylight unlit			
Fatal	0·06	0·07	0·05
All accidents	2·05	1·91	1·63
Darkness lit			
Fatal	0·09	0·04	0·11
All accidents	2·17	1·60	2·01
Darkness unlit			
Fatal	0·08	0·07	0·04
All accidents	0·94	0·93	1·00
All condition lit			
Fatal	0·22	0·12	0·29
All accidents	6·50	5·54	6·77
All condition unlit			
Fatal	0·14	0·14	0·09
All accidents	2·99	2·84	2·63
All hours, all conditions	4·21	3·82	4·21

I shall make the information for the years 1979-81 available to the right hon. Gentleman very shortly. Data for 1985 are not yet available.

M1 (Lighting)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will identify those junctions on the M1 motorway which are unlit.

Mr. Ridley: Junctions 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 27 to 47 inclusive on the M1 motorway are unlit.

Junctions 15 and 18 are planned to be fully lit later this year.

M25 (Signs)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, now that the M25 is complete, he will ensure that new signs are erected and old ones removed so as to avoid the A423 at Maidenhead Thicket.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Signs indicating A423 A404 as a lorry route between M4 and M40 will be removed shortly. I expect those travelling between points south of London and Oxford generally to use M25 and M40.

I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Thorney Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement in respect of the progress of plans for the proposed Thorney bypass; and when he expects to publish the trunk road order.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A preferred route was announced in 1981, but this is being reviewed to see whether a more economic solution is available. I cannot say when draft orders might be published.

Eye Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the inspector's report in respect of Eye bypass; when he expects to make an announcement as to the result of the public inquiry; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment received the inspector's report in September 1985. Complex issues were raised at the public inquiries including a proposal for an alternative route. Consideration of these issues is necessarily taking some time but I hope that an announcement will not be long delayed.

Car Bumpers (Height)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in introducing a standard height for car bumpers; and whether any proposals for standardisation are being considered by the European Economic Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no generally accepted standard for bumpers on cars sold in Europe, but in practice most car bumpers are around 17 to 18 inches in height from the ground. Bumper height and other characteristics are being considered by the appropriate technical committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in the context of work to make the exterior fittings of vehicles less aggressive to pedestrians.

Manchester-Blackpool Railway

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Transport, following the announcement of 17 January for the Manchester to Blackpool rail route, when the contracts will go out to tender; how many new Sprinter trains will be purchased; and what expenditure is involved in the improvement of this service.

Mr. David Mitchell: The new Sprinter diesel multiple units will be part of a wider programme for introducing new rolling stock in the north-west. The other questions are matters for British Rail.

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate has been made of the increased traffic to be generated at Waterloo station on the opening of the Channel fixed link;

(2) what share of the national traffic to be generated from the Channel fixed link he expects to pass through Waterloo station.

Mr. David Mitchell: Forecasts of this traffic are for the Channel Tunnel Group and British Rail.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what planning procedures will be followed by the Government for the provision of new facilities at Waterloo Station to accommodate new traffic generated by a Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: Powers for British Rail to carry out works and acquire any land will be sought in the hybrid Bill. British Rail will be consulting the local authorities concerned. Bodies and persons whose interests are directly affected may petition and have their cases heard by the Select Committee.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will call in for public inquiry the direct and indirect effects of the Channel fixed link on Waterloo station.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

PRIME MINISTER

Child Nutrition

Dr. Marek asked the Prime Minister what recent studies Her Majesty's Government have made or have available to them on children's diet *(a)* at home and *(b)* at school; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys undertook a dietary survey of school children in 1983 which examined dietary intake at home and at school. Analyses of the data collected in the survey are continuing.

Westland plc

Dr. Gilbert asked the Prime Minister if the inquiry in connection with the leaks of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence has now been completed.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made to the House on 23 January at columns 449-460.

DEFENCE

US Bases (Civilian Staff)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are employed at bases in Britain where United States service men are stationed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Approximately 4,000 United Kingdom Civil Service posts exist at those facilities in the United Kingdom made available for use by the United States forces. Statistics for the employment of United States civilians and United Kingdom civilians other than civil servants are not held centrally, but overall the United States bases make a considerable contribution to employment in the areas in which they are located.

US Service Families

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the number of American service men's families living in the United Kingdom away from their bases; and if he wil make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There are currently about 26,000 dependants of United States service men living in the United Kingdom. It is estimated that about 55 per cent. of families live away from the bases.

Boarding School Allowances

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total and per capita Government expenditure on boarding school allowances for children of armed forces personnel, the number of children covered, and the proportion of children in such schools with parents stationed permanently in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: For the total expenditure on boarding school allowance for children of armed forces personnel and the proportion of those in receipt of the allowance who are currently serving in the United Kingdom I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which I gave him on 26 June 1985 at column 435. Current payments cover some 21,500 children The average annual payment in 1984-85 was some £3,600 a child: it is estimated that about 30 per cent. of this amount would have been recovered by the Inland Revenue in tax.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the costs of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve, divided between wages and salaries, other personnel costs, costs of construction and buildings, investment in military equipment and other costs for the latest fiscal year.

Mr. Lee: Estimated costs for the financial year 1985-86 are in the following form:

	£ million
Wages and salaries	39·1
Support costs	3·2
Capital expenditure on equipment	0·6
Total	42·9

The figures for works costs are not readily available.

Armoured Personnel Carriers

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis an order is to be placed on behalf of the Berlin Brigade for armoured personnel carriers with Thyssen Maschinenbau; what suitable alternatives manufactured by United Kingdom firms were considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Consideration is being given to the purchase from the Berlin occupation costs budget of Thyssen TM170 hard-skinned troop carrying vehicles to provide protected mobility for the British Brigade in Berlin. The vehicles would be used solely for duties relating to Berlin and would be based there permanently. No orders have been signed. The Berlin occupation costs budget covers the extra costs incurred by the allies through stationing troops in the city and is funded by the Federal German Government. Purchases from it are normaliy made in deutschmarks, from within the German economy, and preference is given to equipment of German manufacture when, as in this case, suitable items are available.

Service Pensions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain the criteria currently being used to decide whether compound interest is paid to some service pensioners who are underpaid and only simple interest is being paid to others.

Mr. Lee: There are no such criteria. Where compensation is paid for loss of interest this is calculated on compound terms.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the percentage error rate found in the systematic check of Royal Navy/Royal Marines ratings pension awards; on what percentage of cases in which an error was found no action has been taken; and what proportion of the total are accounted for by *(a)* potential errors where an incorrect award will be made when the Royal Naval-Royal Marine rating reaches 55 years of age and *(b)* cases where the pensioner has died and payment may be due to the estate.

Mr. Lee: The error rate is 2·5 per cent. There are no cases in which an error has been found and where action has not been taken. In 0·16 per cent. of cases checked the error found would have affected the award when the pensioner reached age 55. In 0·03 per cent. of cases checked the pensioner has died and payment will be made to the estate.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what Her Majesty's Government's policy is for correcting all overpayment and underpayment errors discovered on service pension awards.

Mr. Lee: For errors discovered on service pension awards as a result of the current special checks the policy for correcting underpayments and overpayments is for action as follows:

(a) *Underpayments*. The corrected rate of pension to be brought into issue as soon as possible, arrears due to be calculated and paid, and a compensation payment to be made for notional loss of interest.

(b) *Overpayments*. The corrected rate of pension to be brought into issue as soon as possible. Overpayments will be regarded as having been accepted in good faith and, unless there is evidence to the contrary, recovery will not be sought.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence, of the total number of errors found in the current check of service pension awards, what proportion were *(a)* overpayments and *(b)* underpayments; and what was the average amount of error found in *(a)* overpayments and *(b)* underpayments.

Mr. Lee: The overall rate of errors found is 2.4 per cent. Within that rate just under half—45.6 per cent.—of errors have resulted in overpayments and just over half —54.4 per cent.—in underpayments. The average rate of error is £107 per annum for overpayments and £226 per annum for underpayments.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to move from its present location the task of checking for errors on Royal Navy and Royal Marine ratings pension awards.

Mr. Lee: Responsibility for Royal Navy ratings' and Royal Marine other ranks' pensions work is in process of transfer from director general defence accounts Worcester to HMS Centurion, and the remaining task checking for errors forms part of that transfer. From April 1986 responsibility for all Royal Navy and Royal Marine pensions will rest with HMS Centurion.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to process the backlog of errors found but not yet dealt with in Royal Navy and Royal Marine pension awards.

Mr. Lee: There is no backlog in correcting rates of pension in issue. For the cases of underpayment the arrears and associated compensation are currently being calculated and payment will be made shortly.

Light Aircraft (Airspace)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the airspace available for private light aircraft has been restricted, particularly in the case of Upper Heyford; and whether he is considering alternative sites for the training of service pilots.

Mr. Lee: The use of United Kingdom airspace is kept under continual review in order to identify measures which may be necessary to maintain standards of safety. In the particular case of Upper Heyford a working group involving representatives of all interested parties recommended the creation of an area access of which would be controlled by a requirement, before entry, to communicate by radio with Upper Heyford air traffic control. Provided this requirement is met there will be no restriction on access to airspace around Upper Heyford. To safeguard the interests of private aviation this arrangement will be subject to review after a one year trial.

There are no plans to identify alternative sites for the training of service pilots.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Lee: As part of the MOD's defence public relations staff, the defence press office currently employs 11 people. Comparable figures for the last 5 years were:

	Number
1981	12
1982	12
1983	11
1984	11
1985	11

On the basis of official capitation rates, the costs of these staff are calculated as follows:

	£K
1981	203
1982	217
1983	212
1984	226
1985	238

Royal Dockyards (Apprentices)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what would the estimated saving be to his Department if apprentice training in Rosyth and Devonport were transferred to private contractors.

Mr. Lee: The training of apprentices in the royal dockyards has always been based on the need to maintain an adequate work force trained in requisite skills, not only for the dockyards themselves but also to some extent for the rest of the department. No change in this arrangement is planned. The estimated savings from contractorisation of the dockyards are based on the assumption of an overall increase in efficiency under commercial management.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average cost of an apprenticeship in the royal dockyards.

Mr. Lee: The average cost of an apprenticeship in the royal dockyards is some £35,000.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of apprenticeship training schemes in Rosyth and Devonport in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lee: The estimated costs are as follows:

	Devonport dockyard £ million	*Rosyth dockyard £ million*
1983	7·0	4·6
1984	6·8	4·9
1985	6·5	5·5

Helicopters

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there is (i) a requirement or (ii) funding for the purchase of the Blackhawk helicopter in his Department's forward programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Our requirements for support helicopters are currently under review.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to military helicopter types being exported by Westland plc when that helicopter was not also part of the inventory of the British services.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Armament Directors (Meeting)

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the terms of reference and the agenda for the meeting of the national armament directors' meeting called for 29 November 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The national armament directors of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom had been invited by their Defence Ministers to hold a meeting to review progress towards the achievement of the goals set out in the declaration of

principles signed in 1978 by the Defence Ministers of the four nations; and to make recommendations as to how they should be pursued in future.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence when and in what form the invitations were extended to the national armament directors to attend the meeting held on 29 November 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Invitations were issued orally to the national armament directors of France, Germany and Italy by the chief of defence equipment collaboration on 27 and 28 November 1985.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates on which meetings of the national armament directors of Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom or their deputies have been held since 1979; and at which meetings European helicopter collaborative production was discussed in detail.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The national armament directors meet on numerous occasions throughout the year in many fora, including the conference of national armament directors and the independent European programme group and in smaller groupings to discuss many aspects of equipment collaboration, including helicopters as appropriate. Britain's armament director attended 15 such meetings in 1985 when account is taken of those concerned with the European fighter aircraft project. The meeting held in London on 29 November 1985 was however the only recent occasion on which the four armament directors met specifically to discuss helicopters.

Deputies have met 11 times since 1979 in the forum of the four national helicopter steering committee, which is charged with overseeing progress towards implementation of the 1978 declaration of principles. The most recent of these meetings was held in February 1985.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many defence contracts awarded following international competitive tender since 1979 have been placed overseas; and if he will list those contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The answer cannot be provided without disproportinate cost and effort.

Berlin Brigade

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the total expenditure on the Berlin brigade of the British Army in each of the last five years;

(2) how much the German Government have contributed financially to the budget of the Berlin brigade of the British Army in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: The estimated cost of the defence budget of the Berlin brigade in each of the years in question is as follows:

	(£ million)
1981-82	27
1982-83	38
1983-84	42
1984-85	47
1985-86	49

In accordance with the allied "Declaration of Berlin" of 26 May 1952, local expenditure on supplies and services for all British forces in Berlin is met without charge to United Kingdom funds. Total estimated expenditure in each of the years concerned is as follows:

	(£ million)
1981-82	69·3
1982-83	74·9
1983-84	71·8
1984-85	82·3
1985-86	98·7

Note:
All figures quoted are at the prices and exchange rates applying in each financial year.

Information about the attribution of this expenditure to particular elements is not readily available.

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what conditions are laid down by the German Government on how the money provided by the German Government for expenditure on the Berlin brigade is spent.

Mr. Stanley: The Berlin occupation costs budget is designed to meet the extra costs of stationing allied forces in Berlin. The allies agreed in 1952 that as the occupation costs were a charge on the budget of the Federal Republic they would be fixed after consultation with the appropriate German authorities and at the lowest level consistent with maintaining the security of Berlin and the allied forces located there. The details of these consultations are confidential between the Governments concerned.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government (Tendering Questionnaires)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the incidence of local government tendering questionnaires and contracts containing political items and clauses; if he will list the councils involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not have comprehensive information on local authority contracts or tendering questionnaires, but from representations received it would appear that some two dozen or so English local authorities seek non-commercial information from prospective suppliers or contractors. It is estimated that about half a dozen of these authorities indulge in over political discrimination in the award of contracts, and I would hope that such unreasonable action is challenged in the courts soon.

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *778*, why his Department treats as commercially confidential applications which have been approved for schemes involving urban development grant for the refurbishment for sale of local authority housing.

Sir George Young: All urban development grant schemes involve private sector undertakings. In common with other Government Departments administering grant regimes, it is my Department's practice not to disclose information which could be sensitive or of advantage to competitors.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing projects for which he has approved urban development grants, since June 1983.

Sir George Young: Lists of all projects approved for urban development grant are regularly placed in the Library of the House; an updated version was placed there two weeks ago.

Procurator Fiscal (Kirkcaldy)

Mr. Gourlay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the additional building in Kirkcaldy was acquired for the use of the procurator fiscal's department; what is the reason for the delay in making use of the building; and when he expects this additional office will become available for the fiscal's staff.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Grant-related Expenditure

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the grant-related expenditure per head of population for Harborough, Harrow, Hambleton and Holderness, respectively.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows for 1986-87:

Grant-related expenditure per head of population

	£
Harborough	38·55
Harrow	439·03
Hambleton	41·57
Holderness	48·04

The figure for Harrow is not comparable with those for the districts, because London boroughs are responsible for a wider range of services than shire districts.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will list the grant-related expenditure per head of population for each of the local authorities comprising the county, together with the city of Leicester.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows for 1986-87:

Grant-related expenditure per head of population

	£
Blaby	40·91
Charnwood	44·60
Harborough	38·55
Hinckley and Bosworth	40·07
Leicester	94·50
Melton	43·16
North West Leicestershire	44·52
Oadby and Wigston	46·29
Rutland	39·09

The grant-related expenditure per head of population for the county of Leicestershire is £404·35.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 district authorities in England with the highest grant-related expenditure per head of population and list the grant-related expenditure per capita in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows for 1986-87:

Grant-related expenditure per head of population

	£
Manchester	576·83
Liverpool	525·43
Wolverhampton	499·40
Birmingham	497·71
Oldham	483·25
Bradford	477·30
Salford	473·94
Knowsley	472·29
Sandwell	461·06
Bolton	459·14

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 district authorities in England with the lowest grant-related expenditure per head of population and list the grant-related expenditure per capita in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows for 1986-87:

Grant-related expenditure per head

	£
Mid-Bedfordshire	36·48
South Staffordshire	38·45
Harborough	38·55
Rutland	39·09
South Cambridgeshire	39·09
Broadland	39·40
Hart	39·86
South Norfolk	39·87
North Kesteven	39·99
South Northamptonshire	40·03

Bracken (Water Pollution)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the rate of encroachment of bracken on water catchment areas in the United Kingdom and on the problems posed by, and health risks of contamination of, water supplies by chemicals emanating from bracken.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am not aware of any significant encroachment of bracken on water catchment areas in England. There is no evidence to suggest that elements in bracken which could be a health risk are leaching into water supplies.

In other parts of the United Kingdom this is a matter for my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Dogs (Public Health)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received calling for legislation to control dogs in the interests of public health.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received some 1,700 representations since the publication in November 1984 of the consultation paper on the future dog licensing arrangements. Many of these have called for measures to control dogs for reasons of public health.

GLC

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to payments for cyclic and special maintenance, for which the Greater London council applied on 22 October 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of Kings Reach, Stamford Wharf, wall and walk, for which the Greater London council applied on 4 April 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of the Rio Cinema, 103-107 Kingsland high street, Hackney, for which the Greater London council applied on 2 May 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 50-52 King street, Southall for which the Greater London council applied on 20 May 1985;

(5) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of Wilton's music hall, Graces Alley, London E1 for which the Greater London council applied on 19 June 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given him on Tuesday 21 January 1986 at column *141*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much in each year since 1981-82 the Government has allocated to London boroughs in respect of rate support grant, housing subsidy and housing investment programme allocation at 1981-82 prices.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Empty Property (Rating)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will introduce legislation to restore the full rating of empty industrial and commercial property in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. I see no grounds, whether for London or elsewhere, for revoking current legislation which exempts industrial and warehousing property completely from empty property rates, and prevents local authorities levying more than 50 per cent. of the normal rate on commercial properties.

Urban Programme

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will broaden the criteria for urban programme expenditure to enable direct investment by local authorities in local commercial and community enterprises; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give consent to the transfer of the remaining £8 million of the Greater London enterprise board's annual funding from the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

GLC (Property Disposal)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 29,400 sq ft of light industrial units in Monier road for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 17,950 sq ft of light industrial units in Gladstone terrace for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 21,950 sq ft of light industrial units in Heckford street for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 24,100 sq ft of light industrial units in the New Lyndenburg II centre for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer these questions shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sea Bass

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the threat to stocks of sea bass in British waters; what consideration he has given to the introduction of conservation measures, in particular the control of the use of nylon monofilament nets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Over the years a number of representations have been received in my Department from both the angling and commercial fishery interests about the management of the bass fishery. As a result, scientists from my Department have carried out investigations into the state of the bass fishery. An interim report was placed in the House in March 1983, and I hope to be able to present a final report to the House in the spring of this year.

I hope also to be able to present, at the same time, a report on the use of gill nets, including monofilament gill nets. I shall then consider any recommendations resulting from these reports and, in consultation with the fishery interests, decide whether any further conservation measures are required.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the favoured means of dealing with the encroachment of bracken on to agricultural land; and if he will make a statement as to the extent of bracken coverage in the United Kingdom and the problems this poses;

(2) if the Government intend pursuing a bracken eradication programme in the near future.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he is aware of on the health risks posed by the chemical asulox used in the treatment of bracken infestation; and what is the extent of its use in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: There are a number of products containing asulam cleared for use under the pesticides safety precautions scheme (PSPS) two of which, "Asulox" and "Asulox/Dessipron" tank mix are cleared for use on bracken. Asulam was submitted to a full range of toxicity studies before clearance. I have no information of any subsequent studies concerning possible health risk arising from the treatment of bracken infestation. In the most recent period for which figures are available, 1980-83, asulam was used on a total of some 453,000 hectares in England and Wales for agricultural and horticultural purposes. I have no information on how much of this use was on bracken.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations currently restrict the use of the chemical asulox in the treatment of bracken infestation.

Mrs. Fenner: Two formulations containing asulam have clearance for use on bracken under the pesticides safety precautions scheme (PSPS). There are currently no regulations controlling this use of asulam. However the proposed regulations controlling the sale, supply, storage, use and advertisement of pesticides which are to be made under the Food and Environment Protection Act later this year will apply to asulam.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Gould asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantities of European Economic Community intervention stocks are kept at Dagenham docks; what is the cost of storage; and what is the eventual destination of the stocks.

Mr. Gummer: On the 20 January 1986, the latest date for which information is available, 29,994 tonnes of feedwheat were held in the intervention store at Dagenham docks. As this grain may be sold back on to the Community market or exported to non-member countries its eventual destination is not known.

Storage costs at individual stores are not given on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Agricultural Wages

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the aggregate amount of wages paid to employed workers in agriculture at the last date for which statistics are available; what were the equivalent amounts 10 and 20 years previously expressed *(a)* in current terms and *(b)* in real terms; and what, in each year, that aggregate amount was as a percentage of farming income.

Mrs. Fenner: Information on the estimated annual earnings of hired agricultural workers and the imputed annual earnings of family workers and junior partners for the years requested are given in the following table:

Wages and salaries of agricultural labour—United Kingdom

	*1965-66**			*1975*			*1985†*		
	Current prices (£ million)	*Real‡ terms (1975=100)*	*As percentage of farming income*	*Current prices (£ million)*	*Real‡ terms (1975=100)*	*As percentage of farming income*	*Current prices (£ million)*	*Real‡ terms (1975=100)*	*As percentage of farming income*
Hired labour	—	—	—	486·3	100	49	1,238·4	92	107
Family and junior partners' labour¶	—	—	—	209·1	100	21	575·2	99	50
All labour	301·2	98	73	695·4	100	70	1,813·6	94	157

Notes:
* June/May year. Calendar year data are not available before 1970. It is not possible to separate family and hired labour for 1965-66.
† Forecast.
‡ Deflated by the General Index of Retail Prices.
Includes salaried managers and seasonal/casual labour.
¶ Excludes principal farmers and partners and spouses.

Agricultural Workers

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of farms in the United Kingdom employ *(a)* one to five persons, *(b)* five to 10 persons and *(c)* over 10 persons; and what are the equivalent figures for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and each of the standard regions in England.

Mrs. Fenner: This information will take some time to extract and collate. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current estimated expenditure on housing benefit in 1985-86 and 1986-87, distinguishing between rent and rate payments and certificated and non-certificated benefits; and what is the estimated number of recipients in each category of benefit in each year.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

Estimated expenditure	*£ million, Great Britain*	
	1985-86	*1986-87*
Rent Rebate		
Certificated	1,530	1,600
Standard	760	750
Total	2,290	2,350
Rent Allowance		
Certificated	530	550
Standard	250	250
Total	780	800
Rate Rebate		
Certificated	920	950

	£ million, Great Britain 1985-86	1986-87
Estimated expenditure		
Standard	600	550
Total	1,520	1,500
Estimated caseload (thousands)		
Rent Rebate		
Certificated	2,110	2,100
Standard	1,750	1,700
Total	3,860	3,900
Rent Allowance		
Certificated	630	600
Standard	530	500
Total	1,160	1,200
Rate Rebate		
Certificated	3,560	3,600
Standard	3,700	3,300
Total	7,260	6,900

Notes: Estimates for 1985-86 are rounded to the nearest £10 million and 10,000 households; those for 1986-87 to the nearest £50 million and 100,000 households.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services at what levels of gross income entitlement to housing benefit will cease for a working single person, childless couple, couple plus one, two, three and four children and lone parent plus one, two, three and four children, assuming average rent and rates, under the proposals in Cmnd. 9691 and in each case at what income levels entitlement ceases at present.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to the reply*, 15 January 1986, c. 595]: The gross income levels at which entitlement to housing benefit will cease on the illustrative assumptions used in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691 are as follows:

	Household type	Gross income (£s) current scheme	Gross income (£s) proposed scheme
(i)	Single person	91·85	71·52
(ii)	Childless couple	114·35	98·76
(iii)	Couple with one child	132·17	124·65
(iv)	Couple with two children	148·94	139·73
(v)	Couple with three children	163·44	160·01
(vi)	Couple with four children	177·94	180·29
(vii)	Lone parent with one child	132·17	114·53
(viii)	Lone parent with two children	148·94	129·61
(ix)	Lone parent with three children	163·44	149·89
(x)	Lone parent with four children	177·94	170·17

Notes:

1. The following rent and rates levels respectively have been assumed for the various household types: £13.80 and £5.20 for (i) and (ii), £15.40 and £6.20 for (iii) and (vii); £16.50 and £6.30 for (iv), (v), (vi), (viii), (ix) and (x).
2. The current minimum benefit level of 50 pence has been used throughout.
3. The current tax allowances, national insurance rates, and levels of child benefit and one parent benefit, have been used throughout. No account has been taken of possible entitlement to FIS/family credit.
4. The single person has been assumed to be aged over 25.
5. The ages of the children have been assumed to be as follows; under 11 years where only 1 or 2 children; 1 over 11 and 2 under 11 years where 3 children; 2 over 11 and 2 under 11 years where 4 children.
6. It has been assumed in each case that the head of the household only is in work.
7. Other assumptions are based on the illustrative figures used in the Technical Annex to Cmnd. 9691: income support rates as in paragraph 2.4 of the annex; a taper of 60 per cent. for housing benefit in relation to rent and 20 per cent. in relation to rates; and all householders make a minumum contribution of 20 per cent. towards their rates.

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the legal training received and applied by social workers responsible for overseeing cases of children at risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Appropriate training in child care law and practice is clearly essential for social workers, and all qualifying social work in training courses approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work are required to contain such training. The council is engaged in consultations about the present content of social work teaching and the availability of supervised practice in cases of child abuse with a view to establishing the possibilities for improvement in both qualifying and in-service courses. When it comes to applying the law in particular cases, it is for employing local authorities to ensure that legal guidance is available for social workers.

Kidney Transplants

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients in the West Midlands region are presently waiting for a kidney transplant; and how many kidney transplants were carried out in hospitals in the region during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: According to provisional figures from the United Kingdom transplant service, 117 kidney transplant operations were performed during 1985 at the two renal transplant units in the West Midlands region, the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, and the North Staffordshire royal infirmary, Stoke-on-Trent. The number of patients who were registered at the end of 1985 as awaiting a kidney transplant at these two centres was 193.

Mortality (South Lincolnshire)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the perinatal and neonatal mortality figures for South Lincolnshire district health authority for each year from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table. Both sets of figures, but particularly the neonatal mortality rates, are based on small numbers, and are therefore liable to chance variation from year to year.

Perinatal and neonatal mortality rates for South Lincolnshire health areas 1979-1981

	Perinatal mortality rate*	Neonatal mortality rate†
South Lincolnshire health district		
1979	12·9	5·3
1980	9·4	4·6
1981	9·8	5·4
South Lincolnshire district health authority		
1982	12·2	7·4
1983	12·6	6·4
1984	12·3	7·8

* Deaths under one week plus stillbirths per 1,000 total live and still births.

† Deaths under four weeks per 1,000 live births.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what investigations or research have been undertaken on the health risks, including any carcinogenic properties of bracken;

(2) if he has any information on studies linking rates of cancer incidence to the contamination of water supplies by chemicals emanating from bracken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am advised that there is little evidence to link human disease in the United Kingdom with bracken. No research in this field is being undertaken by the Department or by the Medical Research Council which is the main Government-funded body dealing with cancer and is funded from the science vote of the Department of Education and Science.

Drug Abuse (Video)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if his Department's campaign video on drug abuse will be made available without charge to those police forces wishing to use it in police-school liaison activities;

(2) which bodies are to be supplied with free copies of his Department's video on drug abuse; which will be expected to pay; and what charge is to be made.

Mr. Whitney: "Double Take", the video package for young people on drug misuse, was designed primarily for use in schools. A free copy is being offered to every secondary school in England and Wales and to local education authorities and district health education officers. By local agreement these copies could be used for police-school liaison activities. The charge for purchase of the VHS version is £31.

Dogs (Public Health)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the number of cases of eye disease amongst children as a result of contact with dog faeces each year and as to how many result in the loss of sight.

Mr. Whitney: Toxocariasis is the main infection which can cause ocular damage as a result of contact with dog faeces. About 50 cases of ocular toxocariasis are reported each year in England and Wales. Information is not held centrally on the medical complications in individual cases which result from this infection.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his statement of 21 January, he will now publish the list of hospitals whose kitchen conditions are such as would render them liable to prosecution but for Crown immunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Institution of Environmental Health Officers has reported that, in the year to March 1985, 97 hospitals visited were considered by its members to have warranted prosecution under the food hygiene legislation, were it not for Crown immunity. The institution has not been able to provide us with the names of the hospitals concerned.

Medical Practitioners (Declaration of Interest)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social services if he has been approached by the General Medical Council concerning the possible relaxation of the rules relating to declaration of interest by medical practitioners to prospective patients where the practitioner has a financial interest in a private hospital or clinic.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Mortality

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest information he has regarding the mortality rates of people according to socio-economic class; and how this compares with the position 10 years ago.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available figures on social class mortality differentials are for the sample of persons in the OPCS longitudinal study, based on their deaths in 1976-81 and their occupations at the time of the 1971 census. Previous figures were from the Registrar General's Decennial Supplement 1970-72, and these were based on deaths in 1970-72, occupations of the deceased from death registrations, and occupations of the population from the 1971 census. The figures are given below but they are not fully comparable because the occupation shown on the death certificates does not necessarily agree with the occupation recorded in the census. The figures are discussed in an article in *Population Trends* 40, pages 10 to 16.

The table shows the standardised mortality ratios for men aged 15 to 64 from these two sources, taking all men as 100.

Standardised mortality ratios
England and Wales

	Decennial supplement 1970-72	*Longitudinal study 1976-81*
Class I	77	66
II	81	77
III N	99	105
III M	106	96
IV	114	109
V	137	124

Growth Hormone

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect the availability of the new biosynthetic growth hormone will have on treatment in the National Health Service of children suffering from growth hormone deficiency.

Mr. Whitney: All those interested in the treatment of growth hormone deficiency in children will share my relief that an alternative to human growth hormone has become available so soon. The availability of the new product will make treatment more flexible and convenient in that it can now be provided in any hospital or by any general practitioner for any child appropriately diagnosed by a specialist medical practitioner as requiring treatment for growth hormone deficiency. I know that the comparatively high cost of biosynthetic growth hormone has led to suggestions that treatment will be curtailed. I have no

reason to suppose that this will be the case, particularly as those costs will now be spread over the Health Service as a whole rather than falling upon a few health authorities.

Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those statistics which were collected by or for his Department on health and social services matters which are no longer collected as a result of Rayner exercises in Government Departments, health authorities or family practitioners' committees.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *603*]: The Department keeps the content of statistical returns under continuous review and always seeks to end collection of statistics no longer necessary. Statistical returns on health and personal social services whose collection ceased specifically as a result of the report of the DHSS study team in the review of government statistical services are shown in the table. No central data collection has ceased as a result of other Rayner-type efficiency reviews in this field.

A number of recommendations on health statistics in the DHSS study team's report were overtaken by the reports of the health services information steering group, which were published between 1982 and 1985 and are due to be implemented in two phases, on 1 April 1987 and 1 April 1988.

Item	*Recommendation Number**	*Comments*
NHS non-medical manpower		
Census returns of students in the professions supplementary to medicine	15	
The distinction between community health and school health nurses, in the annual returns of primary health care nursing and midwifery staff (SBH2(c))	16	
The annual returns of student radiographers by training school (SBH153); the annual returns of teaching staff and students at schools of physiotherapy (SBH154); the annual return of nurses receiving the geriatric lead payment (SBH155), and the annual regional summary census of nursing and midwifery staff (SBH210)	17	
NHS medical and dental manpower		
The returns on 'joiners and leavers'—both annual (SBH55) and monthly (SBH57)	23	
NHS hospital and community health services		
Mid-year hospital activity return (SBH1)	33	More detailed information continues to be collected on an annual basis on Form SH3
Quarterly return of sexually transmitted diseases (SBH60)	34	Now an annual return
Census of government owned road vehicles (SBH3)	36	The census was for Department of Transport
Part 2 of return on private patients in NHS hospitals by specialty and admitting consultants (SBH211)	38	Part 1 of return continues unchanged. (Total beds, discharges, attendances)
Part of return on school and child guidance clinics dealing with facilities (20M)	40	Whole return discontinued
Personal social services		
Return SSDA103 and parts of return SSDA107 giving (i) stastistics on mentally handicapped and mentally ill persons *(a)* admitted to local authority homes and hostels during the year; *(b)* resident in voluntary and private homes and hostels during year (ii) detailed information on residential places available for mentally handicapped and mentally ill persons	59	
Return on homes and hostels for drug addicts and alcoholics (SSDA111)	60	
Part of return SSDA512 giving statistics on: (i) days adult training centres and day centres normally open; (ii) mentally handicapped persons regularly attending adult training centres and detailed information on places available	61	
Part of return on local authority day nurseries opened or closed during the year (SSDA503)	62	
Part of return giving detailed statistics on the meals services provided for the elderly and/or physically handicapped by various voluntary organisations and the local authority (SSDA302)	63	
Returns on households visited by home helps (SSDA303)	64	
Part of return on persons removed from partially sighted register (SSDA902)	66	Information on registered handicapped persons is now collected triennially rather than annually
Parts of returns SSDA104 and SSDA108 giving (i) detailed information about places, staffing and financial support of children in community homes with education on premises; (ii) information on community homes other than those with education on premises or assessment centres	68	
Part of returns on adoption (SSDA907) and adoption orders (SSDA907B)	70	SSDA907 has now been discontinued in favour of a new return which is completed in the course of the adoption process and analysed by OPCS
Return on financial assistance to children towards expenses of maintenance, education and training (SSDA905)	71	

* The numbers are those of recommendations in the Review of Government Statistical Services—report of the DHSS study team.

Hospital Fires

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he attributes the increase of 9 per cent. in the number of fires in hospitals and nursing homes between 1981 and 1983.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1986, c. *699*]: The numbers of fires of particular types in hospitals and nursing homes are subject to variation from year to year and between 1981 and 1983 they increased by 8 per cent from 2,081 to 2,243. The rise is mainly attributable to an increase in accidental fires ignited by smoker materials and an increase in deliberate or possibly deliberate fires largely ignited by patients in psychiatric hospitals.

ENERGY

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what investigations or research have been carried out into the feasibility of processing bracken for use as fuel.

Mr. David Hunt: Under my Department's biofuels research and development programme, a study has been carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Merlewood, Cumbria on native and naturalised species of plant as potential energy crops. Publication of a report on this work is expected shortly.

The area has also been reviewed by my Department's energy technology support unit—ETSU publication R35 "The potential for catch crops and native vegetation as fuel in the United Kingdom". A copy of this report has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Energy Efficiency Year

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of expenditure in energy efficiency will be committed to the domestic sector; and what is the total amount to be spent.

Mr. David Hunt [*pursuant to the answer*, 20 December 1985, c. *331*]: Total Estimates provision for Energy Efficiency office expenditure in 1985-86 was £20,555,000, of which expenditure on the domestic sector was expected to be £7,471,000. Provisional expenditure plans for 1986-87 call for expenditure of £20,872,000 of which £8,261,000 is expected to be attributable to the domestic sector. Supply Estimates for 1986-87 will be presented to Parliament in due course.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 27 January 1986

DEFENCE

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of persons who have been asked to resign from the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, in 1985 as a result of having been charged with crimes, giving separately details of persons who resigned as a result of being charged with scheduled offences.

Mr. Lee: In 1985 three members of the Ulster Defence Regiment resigned, having been charged with criminal offences. None of these were scheduled offences.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, in 1985 have been found to be members of illegal paramilitary organisations or, separately, legal paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Defence Association or the Third Force.

Mr. Lee: In 1985 no members of the UDR or its reserve were convicted of membership of any organisation proscribed under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve are currently estimated to be Catholics; what proportion this represents of the regiment's manpower; and how these proportions compare with the recruitment of the Ulster Defence Regiment in 1985.

Mr. Lee: Between 2 and 3 per cent. of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have declared their religion as Roman Catholic. In 1985, 4·9 per cent. of those who applied to join the regiment and 4·2 per cent. of those accepted for service during the year declared their religion as Roman Catholic.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning current policy and practice on deployment of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve with particular reference to the areas and circumstances in which it is deemed opportune and inopportune to deploy the regiment.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 11 December 1984 at column *415*. The policy has not changed.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the average time served in the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve by current operatives for 1985 for each group of non-commissioned officers and other men.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is as follows:

	Average time served Years
Officers	7·9
Non-commissioned officers	10·1
Other ranks	4·5

NOTE: Figures cover full and part-time, males and females.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of operatives by rank, separately, of those who have joined the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve, and of those who have resigned from the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve in 1985.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the latest available figures for those male and female officers and other ranks who have joined the UDR and who have left the UDR for reasons other than medical or disciplinary or on death for the period October 1984 to September 1985, are as follows:

	Intake	*Outflow*
Officers		
Male	32	42
Female	Nil	Nil
Other ranks		
Male	868	813
Female	187	139

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve by rank of serving operative as at 31 December 1985.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows. Figures for 31 December 1985 are not yet available and therefore those given are as at the latest date, 31 December 1984.

	Number
Officers	
Lt. colonel	2
Major	79
Captain	112
Lieutenant	81
2nd lieutenant	33
Other ranks	
Warrant officer 1	—
Warrant officer 2	135
Staff sergeant	168
Sergeant	344
Corporal	619
Lance corporal	743
Private	3,466

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the military equipment of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve listing separately firearms and the type of firearms, motor vehicles, armoured vehicles and type and number of radio, radar and electronics surveillance equipment with which the regiment is equipped today and in each year since its inception.

Mr. Lee: Details of equipment allocated to the Ulster Defence Regiment between 1970 and 1983 are not available in the form required. For 1983, I refer the hon. Member for my answer to his question of 11 December 1984 at column *412*. The establishment of vehicles for the

Ulster Defence Regiment has not changed since then. However, the system of accounting for weapons has altered. Like other equipment, weapons are now issued according to the current needs and commitments of each battalion. On 16 January 1986 the following types and numbers of weapons were held:

	Number
Pistol, Walther 7·65mm	*25
Pistol, Walther ·22mm	*2,319
Pistol, 9mm	†983
SMG, 9mm	242
SLR	6,714
LMG/GPMG	163
Shotgun	3

* Personal protection weapons (PPWs).
† Some 50 per cent. of which are issued as PPWs.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its Reserve, as between full-time, part-time, male and female operatives on 31 December of the latest calendar year and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows. Figures for 1 January 1986 are not available, and therefore figures for the latest available date, 30 November 1985 are given.

	Full time	*Part time*	*Total*
As at 31 December 1985			
Male officers	77	209	286
Female officers	10	11	21
Service men	2,406	3,069	5,475
Service women	196	462	658
As at 30 November 1985			
Male officers	88	191	279
Female officers	10	10	20
Service men	2,472	2,996	5,468
Service women	195	516	711

Northern Ireland (Army Personnel)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland on 1 January, giving details of the number of operatives at that time for the following categories: Ulster Defence Regiment, regular British Army and British Territorial Army.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is as follows. Figures for 1 January 1986 are not available and therefore figures for the latest available date, 30 November 1985, are as follows:

	Strength
Ulster Defence Regiment	6,478
Regular Army	9,014
Territorial Army	3,479

The figures for the Ulster Defence Regiment include both full-time and part-time soldiers. Soldiers of the Territorial Army are not used in support of the RUC in counter-terrorist operations.

Submarines

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the refitting of Oberon class patrol submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The refitting of Oberon class submarines is planned to continue into the 1990s. Currently HMS Osiris and HMS Otus are in refit at Devonport dockyard. HMS Onyx is completing refit at Rosyth dockyard with HMS Oracle shortly to commence refit there. HMS Otter is in refit at Humber Shiprepair. There are no plans to invite tenders from commercial yards for any other submarine refit in the immediate future, but we have made clear our intention in the long-term ot introduce the principles of competition to the refitting of naval vessels.

Greenham Common

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he remains satisfied with security at Greenham common.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for security at Greenham common of the lessons learnt from Exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number from an ethnic minority background who are employed in his private office and those of other Ministers in his Department; and what are the positions they occupy.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 January 1986, c. *238*]: A phased programme of surveys to determine the ethnic origin of civilian staff in MOD is now being conducted. Staff in private offices have not yet taken part in these surveys, and as participation in the survey is voluntary, we are not in a position to release any ethnic information in advance. The surveys are being carried out according to an agreed code of practice on confidentiality. This code provides that no statistical data should be published which might make it easy to identify the ethnic origin of individuals.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lotus Cars

Mr. Foulkes asked the Attorney-General if he will institute proceedings against Lotus cars for offences in connection with its criminal involvement with De Lorean; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Royal Ulster Constabulary is investigating certain matters relating to the companies to which the hon. Member refers. At the conclusion of that investigation the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland will consider whether any criminal proceedings are appropriate.

Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha as an accessory after the fact in relation to the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The whole of the law relating to accessories after the fact was repealed by the Criminal

Law Act 1967 and was replaced by a new offence of impeding the apprehension or prosecution of an offender. I take the question to refer to a possible offence under section 4 of the Criminal Law Act 1967. There is no evidence to justify the prosecution of Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha for such or any other offence.

Westland plc

Mr. Bell asked the Attorney-General if he will outline the grounds on which he based his statement to the Prime Minister that he was satisfied that the offer of immunity from prosecution to an individual in connection with the disclosure of official information relating to the Westland affair in no way interfered with the course of justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Winnick asked the Attorney-General when the Solicitor-General was first informed that extracts from his letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence had been publicly disclosed; and how he was so informed.

The Attorney-General: Before I authorised the Head of the Civil Service to inform the person concerned that, provided that she gave a full and truthful account of what she knew about this matter, she would not be prosecuted, I satisfied myself, on the basis of what he was already able to report to me, that she was unwilling, unless given such an assurance, to provide the full and frank account of the facts which was essential if the inquiry was to be successful. I was also satisfied that there was in any event no possibility that proceedings would be instituted against her in respect of the part which she had played in this matter.

Mr. Bell asked the Attorney-General on what date the Director of Public Prosecutions was consulted about the possibility of instituting proceedings against any persons concerned in the disclosure of official information relating to the Westland affair; on what date senior Treasury counsel were consulted on the same question; and what was their specific role in the matter.

The Attorney-General: Both the Director of Public Prosecutions and senior Treasury counsel were consulted on 23 January. Their role was to advise me whether the facts of this case justified the institution of criminal proceedings against any person under section 2 of the Official Secrets Acts 1911. My consultation of them was in accordance with the usual practice in matters of this kind.

Mr. Bell asked the Attorney-General on what date and at what hour his right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General first became aware that extracts from his letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) had been communicated to the Press Association; what was his source of information on this point; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General first learned of the disclosure at about 3 pm on 6 January as a result of my Department being asked to comment on it by representatives of the media shortly before that time.

Mr. Winnick asked the Attorney-General when he was first informed that extracts from the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) had been disclosed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I first learned of the disclosure when I heard reports on the radio at about 5 pm on 6 January.

Mr. Redmond asked the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the full text of *(a)* the letter dated 6 January from his right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence and *(b)* the further letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State relating to Westland plc.

The Attorney-General: A copy of my hon. and learned Friend's letter of 6 January was placed in the Library of the House on 15 January. A copy of his further letter of 7 January has today been placed in the Library. I understand that a copy of the letter of 6 January from my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence to which that further letter was a reply has also been placed in the Library.

Official Information (Disclosures)

Mr. Bell asked the Attorney-General what is his policy towards the offering to named individuals of immunity from prosecution in cases of inquiries into disclosure of official information; what conditions he requires to be fulfilled in such cases before granting his consent to the offering of immunity; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: My policy in this matter is to authorise an assurance being given to a witness that he will himself not be prosecuted only if I am satisfied that it is unlikely that he will otherwise be willing to give a full and truthful account of what he knows and that it is necessary, if the true facts are to be established or, as the case may be, if evidence is to be obtained which may permit proceedings to be instituted against others, that he should give that account. Such an assurance is always conditional upon his telling the truth.

It is often a relevant consideration that there is no prospect of criminal proceedings being instituted against him, whatever his own anxieties on that matter, or that there is no evidence against him upon which such proceedings could be founded other than what he himself may say.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies currently available under the community programme are part-time; and what proportion this number represents of the total number of advertised vacancies under this scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: There were about 17,000 unfilled part-time community programme vacancies on 6 December, which was about 77 per cent. of the total number of unfilled vacancies. Part-time jobs on the programme are defined as those involving work for less than 35 hours per week.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the 50 parliamentary constituencies in which unemployment has increased by the greatest amount, ranked by the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table shows the 50 parliamentary constituents in the United Kingdom in which unemployment has increased by the greatest amount between December 1984 and December 1985, giving the percentage increase in each case.

Parliamentary constituency	*Percentage increase*
Greenock and Port Glasgow	17·08
Barnsley, West and Penistone	15·39
Holland with Boston	15·35
Barnsley, East	15·31
Woolwich	14·61
Dunfermline, East	14·57
Kirkcaldy	14·29
Central Fife	14·11
Moray	14·10
Yeovil	13·66
Bassetlaw	13·00
Bexhill and Battle	12·92
South-West Norfolk	12·63
Penrith and the Borders	12·47
Ceredigion and Pembroke, North	12·31
Southwark and Bermondsey	12·24
Don Valley	11·88
Hemsworth	11·50
Norwich, North	11·50
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	11·46
Great Yarmouth	11·41
Rother Valley	11·06
Dover	10·97
Islwyn	10·71
Doncaster, North	10·26
Wentworth	10·15
Greenwich	10·09
South Norfolk	9·66
Renfrew, West and Inverclyde	9·25
Clwyd, North-West	9·05
Colne Valley	8·86
Enfield, North	8·84
North Antrim	8·52
Torridge and West Devon	8·46
Bury St. Edmunds	8·43
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	8·42
Norwich, South	8·38
North Dorset	8·31
Stafford	8·21
Canterbury	8·20
Bridlington	8·18
Harrogate	7·96
Gainsborough and Horncastle	7·96
Sheffield, Heeley	7·92
Wells	7·91
Westbury	7·91
North Down	7·88
Wigan	7·83
Selby	7·82
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	7·80

Farmer's Lung

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to deal with the high risk of the incidence of farmer's lung following last summer's wet hay harvest.

Mr. Trippier: The increased risk of farmer's lung following a wet hay harvest is well known and advice has been available for some years. This year the problem was anticipated. The Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectors have been reminding farmers of the hazards. A news release has been issued highlighting the dangers.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. Cohen asked the Paymaster General how many fraud investigators his Department employs; and what is his estimate of the amount of public money they saved in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 31 December 1985 there were 548 full-time fraud investigators employed in the Department of Employment. It is estimated that they saved £31·8 million in social security benefits in 1985. This estimate is based on an assumption as to the minimum length of time that claimants would have continued claiming benefit fraudulently.

Staff Training

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what percentage of his Department's annual budget is spent on staff training; and if he will give details for each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

WALES

Farmer's Lung

Mr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will use his best endeavours to bring to the attention of the farming community in Wales the high risk of farmer's lung this winter following 1985's wet hay harvest.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The ways of minimising this risk have already featured at the many open meetings and demonstrations which have been organised by ADAS over the last few months. The five divisional agricultural offices have published relevant articles in their regular bulletins which are circulated to the farming community and ADAS specialists have made radio and TV broadcasts in Wales.

National Museum of Wales

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations the National Museum of Wales had with his Department regarding the proposed conditions prior to the arrangements for the forthcoming exhibitions in Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department was consulted in October 1985 at the time the arrangements which had been made by the then Director and Keeper of Art Earlier in the year were considered by the Museum Council. It was pointed out to the museum that the matter was entirely one for it.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the proposed exhibition in Japan of items from the National Museum of Wales; of these, how many were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Two; one expressed no particular view, the other expressed concern.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in view of the part played by members of its staff in securing the arrangements for the exhibition of items from the National Museum of Wales in Japan, he will initiate an inquiry into the management of the art department of the National Museum of Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Under the terms of the Museum's royal charter the council is responsible for the management of the museum and the superintendence and control of the director and all other officers. It would not be appropriate for me to interfere in these functions. At the same time it is generally recognised that there are problems about housing the visual arts in Wales and I have appointed a small group of experts to inquire into this and report to me with recommendations. I shall write to the hon. Lady and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Jobs

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of jobs in Wales are *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Of women employees in Wales 44·8 per cent. were part-time in June 1985. The latest available figure for males is for September 1981 when 4·7 per cent. were employed part-time.

Dysentery

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh people suffered from dysentery in 1985; how many of these were aged 16 years or under; and what steps he has taken to ensure prevention of a similar outbreak in 1986.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Investment

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the investment per head of population in Welsh industry in real terms in May 1979 and December 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, at the latest available date, how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in Wales have been unemployed for three years or longer.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At October 1985, 25,807 men and 5,244 women had been unemployed for three years or more in Wales.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to seek to privatise the Welsh Development Agency; if any review of the Welsh Development Agency is currently underway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to privatise the Welsh Development Agency. As foreseen in my answer of 4 December 1985 at column *232*, a review of the WDA is currently under way as part of the programme of reviews of all of the executive non-departmental public bodies under my control.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to privatise the Welsh water authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction on 9 December 1985 at column *467*.

Wales Advisory Body on Higher Education

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the report of the working group set up by the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The working group has not yet produced its report. It will be for the Wales Advisory Body to decide at what stage the report should be published.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations the working group set up by the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education has had with the institutions being considered for rationalisation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The working group has obtained statistical information from every institution in Wales engaged in initial teacher training. The working group is now considering the information it has collected. It has not entered into consultations with any of the institutions.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members of the working group set up by the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education to consider what scope there is for rationalisation of initial teacher training places in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The members of the working group are:

Mr. C. Roberts — Deputy director, Polytechnic of Wales (chairman)
Mr. S. J. Adams—HMI, Wales
Mr. Colin Alves—Secretary of the National Society
Mr. J. B. Davies — Principal, Welsh Office Education Department
Mr. D. Dale Jones—Regional officer, NATFHE
Dr. B. L. Powell—Secretary, Wales Advisory Body
Dr. Gareth Owen—Vice-Chancellor, University of Wales
Mrs. Tydfil Thomas—Member, University Grants Committee.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members and where appropriate their local authorities of the committee of local government members of the advisory body on higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I chair the committee of the Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, and the members are as follows

Councillor E. Currie-Jones, South Glamorgan
Councillor J. W. Griffiths, Powys
Councillor J. A. H. Harries, Dyfed
Councillor G. Jenkins, Gwent
Councillor W. A. Jones, Clwyd
Councillor F. J. Kingdom, West Glamorgan
Councillor J. G. Roberts, Gwynedd
Councillor P. Squire, Mid Glamorgan

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members and, where appropriate, their academic institutions of the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The board of the Wales Advisory Body (WAB) is being reconstituted following the conclusion of the review of WAB conducted last year. The bodies represented on the board have been invited to submit nominations. Most of these have now been received and we shall be appointing new members before the next meeting of the board at the end of February.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what changes to the student grant system were investigated during his Department's review.

Sir Keith Joseph: A wide variety of changes were considered including the extension of student support to all full-time advanced courses, the abolition or reduction of the parental contribution and lowering the age of independence. However, without the introduction of loans, or without some severe cutback to the present system, or of increased funding which would have been contrary to the Government's policies to constrain public expenditure, it would not have been possible to finance such changes, however desirable.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors he took into account when deciding that means tested grants to undergraduates and full grants for postgraduates should be increased by £36 a year.

Mr. Walden: The recently announced 1986-87 grant increase of about 2 per cent. (around £36 a year) represents a balance between students' needs and the total expenditure which taxpayers and ratepayers can reasonably be asked to meet, given other claims on scarce resources. Any increase to student awards agreed following consultations currently being conducted by the Social Security Advisory Committee on the disentitlement of students to certain benefits will be paid in addition to this. The announcement is recorded in *Hansard*, 16 December 1985, at column *39*.

Universities and Polytechnics (Science Faculties)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many scientific faculties of universities or polytechnics have been closed during the last six academic years.

Mr. Walden: No science faculties have been closed in either universities or polytechnics in the last six years. Several small individual science subject departments have been closed or merged.

Burton Manor College, Merseyside

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of Burton Manor college, Merseyside.

Mr. Walden: I understand that a resolution of the college governors, providing for the termination of the present agreement for the government and maintenance of the college, will shortly be submitted by the Liverpool local education authority to my right hon. Friend, whose confirmation of the resolution and approval to the sale of the premises is required under the terms of the agreement. In reaching his decision my right hon. Friend will take account of the representations which he has already received about it from various quarters, including hon. Members.

GCSE Examination

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that preparation for the new GCSE examination is now proceeding satisfactorily and that courses are likely to be able to commence in September.

Mr. Chris Patten: The preparations for the introduction of GCSE examinations have so far proceeded according to the timetable set by my right hon. Friend. Teachers have been able to consider draft GCSE syllabuses for some time, and approved syllabuses are now becoming available. The Secondary Examinations Council has completed its preparation and distribution of the materials necessary for the special programme of in-service training seminars, and the examining groups have completed their plans for the delivery of the first round of these training seminars.

In accord with the timetable set, the first seminars are being held this month. It is too soon to assess whether this next phase of training programme is proceeding satisfactorily.

Deaf Children

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 14 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *270*, if he intends to provide a full response to the British Deaf Association's report entitled "Raise the Standard: The Case for Improving Deaf Children's Education"; if he intends to discuss the issues raised in the report with the British Deaf Association; when he expects to conclude his review of the provision of special schools for hearing-impaired children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Officials of the Department will be meeting members of the British Deaf Association to discuss their report "Raise the Standard: the Case for Improving Deaf Children's Education". The review of provision of special schools for hearing-impaired children is nearly complete. There are some matters outstanding which initially require action from the providers of the special schools before the review can be completed.

University and Polytechnic Teachers and Researchers

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he is not prepared to institute any review of the salaries and terms of conditions of university and polytechnic teachers and researchers.

Mr. Chris Patten: As I explained to my hon. Friend in the reply I gave him on 21 January at column *82*, pay negotiations are still in progress between the university staff side and the employers. My right hon. Friend has

received no joint request for a review. Nor has he received any such request from the two sides responsible for negotiating salaries and terms of conditions of FE lecturers (which includes polytechnic lecturers) to undertake a review.

School Discipline (Review)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide further information concerning the nature of the review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of good practice in regard to discipline in schools; when he expects this to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The review is now underway. It will identify good practice as regards relationships, behaviour, attitudes to work and discipline observed by Her Majesty's Inspectors during their routine and specialist visits to schools so that the generality of schools can learn from the most successful. I hope that the report will be published before the end of 1986.

Maintained Schools (Redundancies)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many compulsory redundancies there have been in maintained schools in England and Wales in each of the past three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department does not collect data of this kind. Such information as is available would suggest that compulsory redundancies among teachers aged under 50 were rare over this period. Between 1,500 and 2,000 primary and secondary teachers aged 50 and over were prematurely retired on redundancy grounds in each of the last three years but these would in the main have been willing volunteers.

Children in Care

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department in respect of children who are educated out of school and subsequently taken into care by the local authority under a compulsory care order; how many such cases are known to him; and what representations he has received.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department collects no information about such cases and only one has come to the attention of my right hon. Friend recently. Representations have been made by the parents that the authority concerned have acted unreasonably and the matter is currently being considered within the Department.

Clinical Academic Staff

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to make a statement about the pay of clinical academic staff.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend will reply as soon as possible to the request for additional funding from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *467*, what are the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision regarding the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals' request for extra funding to cover the 1985 pay award for clinical academic staff.

Mr. Walden: The report from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals raises questions of general principle in relation to the Government's public expenditure policies that have to be considered carefully.

Deaf-Blind Education

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what promise his Department made to the National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association with regard to consultations on the production of a national plan for deaf-blind education; and what action has been taken on this matter subsequently.

Mr. Dunn: The Department is preparing a consultation paper on the education of deaf-blind children and will consult the National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association (now called SENSE) together with other interested parties. A meeting is being arranged with SENSE, after which it is hoped that the consultation paper will be ready for circulation fairly shortly.

Epstein-Barr Virus

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research he has sponsored into the behaviour of the Epstein-Barr virus, the incidence of infectious mononucleosis, commonly called glandular fever, and into the development of a suitable viral vaccine.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. I understand that the council is supporting some such research and I will write to my hon. Friend with details.

Student Grant

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement explaining the factors which he takes into account in establishing the level of student grant.

Mr. Walden: The level of student grant represents a balance between covering students' needs and the total expenditure which taxpayers and ratepayers can reasonably be asked to meet, given other claims on scarce resources.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether Her Majesty's Goverment intend the £36 compensation sum, to be paid to students under his White Paper scheme, to be means-tested.

Mr. Walden: Any increase in the student grant arising from the present proposals to change student's entitlement to social security benefits would be means-tested in the usual way. The vast majority of students would, however, receive the additional sum in full.

Staff Training

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of his Department's annual budget is spent on staff training; and if he will detail this for each of the last five years.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is as follows

Expenditure on staff training as a percentage of administration costs

	per cent
1980-81	0·12
1981-82	0·16
1982-83	0·21
1983-84	0·23
1984-85	0·27

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, for redundancy and for early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant, changes in the level of local authority rates additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1984-85, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *150*]: The title of the table in cols *150-151* contained a typographical error and should read "Percentage change in UGC funding (Academic Year) 1980-81 to 1984-85."

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South African Military Attachés

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the continued presence of South African military attachés in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: In accordance with the measures agreed with our European partners, we have withdrawn our military attachés from Pretoria and have undertaken not to grant accreditation to military attachés from South Africa.

The question of the continued presence of existing South African attachés is under review with our European partners.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for each of the 51 judgments against signatory nations delivered by the European Court of Human Rights, whether the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has passed a resolution under article 54 of the European Convention on Human Rights satisfying itself that the Government involved have executed the judgment of the court and, where such a resolution has been passed, the date on which it was done.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested by my hon. Friend is being assembled and I shall arrange for it to be published in the *Official Report*.

Westland plc

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which other European Governments, in addition to the Italian Government, his Department contacted over the future of Westland plc; what instructions were given to ambassadors in each country; and what response was received from each of the individual Governments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: At various times over the last two months, my Department has been in contact with the Governments of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, over the future of Westland plc. In these contacts it was emphasised to the Governments that in the view of Her Majesty's Government the future of Westland plc was a matter for the board of Westland and the company's shareholders to decide. The Governments concerned took note of this position.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response was made by the Italian Government to Lord Bridges' representations regarding public statements by the Italian Government relating to Westland plc.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Italian Government took note of the representation made by Lord Bridges.

Torture

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of torture being carried out abroad with the aid of British-made equipment.

Mrs. Chalker: We are not aware of any specific reports of the use of British instruments for the purpose of torture in other countries.

I am ready to look into any cases that are drawn to my attention.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what time scale Her Majesty's Government have in mind with regard to the United Kingdom's ultimate ratification of the United Nations Convention on Torture and the European Convention on Torture; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We intend to ratify this convention, which we signed on 15 March 1985, when the necessary procedures ahve been completed. We need to examine first whether our current legislation and other arrangements accord with its provisions or whether new legislation will be required. This examination and further consultation with the dependent territories, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man will necessarily take time.

The draft European Convention against Torture is still under negotiation by an expert committee of the Council of Europe. We are participating constructively in those negotiations. Our objective is a convention that can be signed and ratified by all members of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Valeri Barinov

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received and what overtures he has made to the Soviet Government about the case of Valeri Barinov.

Mrs. Chalker: During 1985, representations were received from 20 hon. Members in the form of letters on the case of Valeri Barinov. Mr. Barinov's case was among those raised by our delegation to the CSCE experts' meeting on human rights in Ottawa last year in bilateral discussions with the Soviet delegation. We continue to take every suitable opportunity to register with the Soviet authorities our concern for better implementation of the humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki final act. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs most recently did so with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Ryzhov on 21 January.

Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha has been accorded diplomatic status; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha had diplomatic status at the time of the seige of the Libyan People's Bureau.

Mrs. Chalker: Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha was employed by the former Libyan people's bureau as a film technician until he left the United Kingdom on 27 April. At no time was he notified to us as a diplomatic agent nor a member of the administrative and technical staff; he had no diplomatic status. He is not now notified to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in any capacity.

Any question about his presence in the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation Limited

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the majority shareholding of South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation Limited.

Mrs. Chalker: We understand that Field Nominees Limited, a subsidiary nominee company of the Bank of Butterfield and Son Ltd., Bermuda, holds 75 per cent. of the corporation's issued shares to the order of financial institutions. Of these shares, a British-Swiss financial institution, SG Warburg Bank AG, holds 7,000 of the corporation's shares (equivalent to 70 per cent. of the issued capital) on behalf of two European legal entities, whose directors are all of European nationality and domicile.

Israel

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will maintain the embargo on arms sales to Israel until that country has withdrawn its forces from neighbouring countries.

Mrs. Chalker: We imposed restrictions on arms sales to Israel in direct response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. We welcomed Israel's decision to withdraw, but are disappointed by the residual Israeli presence on Lebanese territory. Our policy is kept under review.

SCOTLAND

List D Schools

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any progress has been made to clarify the position of list D schools at Balncraig, Balrossie, Kerelaw, Kibble, Oakbank, Rossie and St. Mary's, Kenmure, respectively;

(2) if he will list the facilities available to those children displaced by the closure of list D schools, in each region.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that these schools intend to continue after 31 March 1986. The redundancy notices issued to the staff of St. Mary's, Kenmure, on 27 December 1985 were withdrawn by the managers on 10 January 1986 following discussion between the churches and Strathclyde region.

The case of each child affected by closure of a list D school will be reviewed by a children's hearing. Local authorities are responsible for providing or securing the provision of facilities including residential and other accommodation, and full information on this is not held centrally.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the alternative provisions available to cater for the needs of children displaced by the closure of List D schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Regional authorities are at present negotiating the terms on which financial support will be offered to the list D schools whose services they require. The total capacity of the list D system currently exceeds demand by some 240. Two schools have so far intimated that they intend to close. Authorities are responsible for providing or securing the provision of facilities, including residential and other accommodation. It is not for me to intervene in these matters, but my Department will continue to respond sympathetically to any requests for advice from the parties to the negotiations. Full information about local facilities is not held centrally.

The case of each child affected by closure will be reviewed by a children's hearing. The review will not necessarily lead to transfer of the child to another residential establishment. It is open to the hearing to vary the terms of the supervision requirement.

Rickets

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of rickets were notified in Scotland in each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Rifkind: Rickets is not a notifiable disease and the information requested is not available centrally.

Land Reclamation

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was spent by the Government, local authorities and the National Coal Board on land reclamation in Scotland in 1975 and every year until 1985; and what acreage of land was reclaimed by each body.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Crofting Townships (Roads Programme)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for grants under the crofting townships roads programme have been refused in the current financial year.

Mr. Ancram: 35 applications had been received by the Scottish Development Department, and remained unapproved when revised arrangements for winding up the programme were announced on 23 October 1985.

Rural Aid

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to make a formal response to the representations concerning the establishment of a rural aid fund which were made by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities at a meeting with the Minister of State on 12 July 1985.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope to respond shortly.

Farmers' Lung

Mr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will use his best endeavours to bring to the attention of the farming community in Scotland the high risk of farmers' lung this winter following 1985's wet hay harvest.

Mr. John MacKay: Advice to farmers in Scotland is a function of the three Scottish agricultural colleges which produce leaflets drawing farmers' attention to this particular hazard.

Because of the increased risk due to the exceptionally wet weather in 1985 the problem has been further drawn to the attention of farmers in a number of ways. There have been new releases to the media and the subject has been covered in radio broadcasts, in articles in farming journals and in newsletters which are circulated to farmers.

Scottish Grand Committee

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what security consideration determined boot and bonnet searches of the cars of hon. Members attending the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on 20 January.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Scottish Grand Committee

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Lord Privy Seal what was the cost of holding the Scottish Grand Committee meeting in Edinburgh on 20 January.

Mr. Biffen: The details on the basis of which a figure could be given are not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Departmental Select Committees

Mr. George asked the Lord Privy Seal how many visits have been made by each of the departmental Select Committees, including visits by Sub-Committees, since their appointment, abroad and within the United Kingdom; and what is the total cost for each Committee, together with the global cost for each Committee and for all departmental Committees since their inception.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1986, c. *289-92*]: Whilst all the visits referred to in the table involved official Select Committee business, they were not necessarily all quorate visits.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Manpower (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police constabulary as to the numbers of uniformed and civilian manpower in his force, as to the levels of pay which have been allocated to each rank of officer, as to the number of officers in his force who have been employed on drug detection duties each year since 1979 and as to what proportion of the expenditure of the West Midlands police constabulary will qualify within the framework of the 8 per cent. increment which he intends to allocate to police in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 November 1985 there were 6,539 police officers and 1,354 full-time and 289 part-time civilian staff in the West Midlands police.

The rates of pay or salary scales of each rank of police officer in the West Midlands police are as follows:

	£ per annum
Chief Constable	40,500
Deputy Chief Constable	32,400
Assistant Chief Constables	26,730
Chief Superintendents	
On promotion	22,671
After 1 year	22,995
After 2 years	23,511
After 3 years	24,072
Superintendents	
On promotion	20,394
After 1 year	20,913
After 2 years	21,432
After 3 years	22,143
Chief Inspectors	
On promotion	14,991
After 1 year	15,411
After 2 years	15,828
After 3 years	16,254
After 4 years	16,677
Inspectors	
On promotion	13,203
After 1 year	13,617
After 2 years	14,151
After 3 years	14,568
After 4 years	14,991
Sergeants	
On promotion	11,508
After 1 year	12,033
After 2 years	12,456
After 3 years	12,870
After 4 years	13,203
Constables	
Less than 1 year's service (under 22)	7,212

	£ per annum
Less than 1 year's service (over 22)	*9,075
After 1 year (under 22)	7,710
After 1 year (over 22)	*9,075
After 2 years	9,705
After 3 years	9,291
After 4 years	9,597
After 5 years	9,927
After 6 years	10,245
After 7 years	10,563
After 8 years	10,875
After 12 years	11,508
After 15 years	12,033

* These rates are only payable to persons who join the service for the first time aged 22 or over.

The strength of the drug squad in the West Midlands police was 39 during the period 1979 to December 1985 when it was increased to 55.

The planned increases in cash provision for total police expenditure in England and Wales are not allocated to individual forces. The West Midlands police budget is determined by the police authority. In setting the police budget for 1986-87 the authority will need to take account of my right hon. Friend's determination of its maximum precept, under section 68 of the Local Government Act 1985. Authorised police expenditure qualifies for 50 per cent. specific grant from the Home Office.

Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland in the latest available calendar year, *(b)* from Northern Ireland to England and Wales in the latest available calendar year, *(c)* from Scotland to Northern Ireland in each year since 1979 and *(d)* from Northern Ireland to Scotland in each year since 1979; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. Mellor: Five prisoners were transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland in 1985, two of them on more than one occasion. Four of these transfers were under section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 (permanent transfer) one under section 27 (temporary transfer) and two under section 29 (transfer for judicial purposes). No prisoner was transferred from Northern Ireland to England and Wales. Transfers between Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Patrick Hackett

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times Patrick Hackett (342603 Parkhurst) has been held in single cellular confinement; what was the average time spent by the prisoner in single cell confinement; and what was the shortest and longest time so spent.

Mr. Mellor: On one occasion Mr. Hackett has been awarded two terms of 28 days cellular confinement, to run concurrently.

Foreign Diplomats (Parking Offences)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of parking tickets evaded by diplomats in the Metropolitan police area in each of the last three years for which figures are available; if he will break down the figures by country in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend was given the figures for 1983 and 1984 in reply to his earlier questions on illegal parking by diplomats on 13 February 1985 at columns *193-95*; and 10 July 1985 at columns *457-61*. The available figures for 1985 were given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in his reply of 15 November 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) at columns *301-3*. The figures for the final quarter of 1985 are not yet available, but the preliminary indications are that the improvement which followed the introduction of the new and stricter policy on 1 May continued in the last quarter of the year.

School Teachers (Assaults on Pupils)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many instances there have been of public prosecutions of school teachers for assaults on pupils in each police force area in the past three years; and how many resulted in a conviction.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not collected centrally on the circumstances of offences of assault which are the subject of court proceedings.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for the reform of the prison system in the light of the Howard League for Penal Reform's report, Women in the Penal System, copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is considering this interesting report, which he received on 23 January.

Metropolitan Police (Strategy)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report made to him by the Metropolitan police on the Commissioner's annual strategy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend did so on 14 January.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has set up to monitor the burdens of business arising from provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The Data Protection Registrar has been asked to report to the Home Office on the impact of the Act on businesses after it has come fully into force.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will designate Leeds-Bradford airport as a port of entry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Airports (Libyan Student Engineers)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require the repatriation of all Libyan student engineers currently under training at airports in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Applications for leave to enter or remain have to be considered individually in accordance with the immigration rules. There are no grounds to justify a general policy of curtailing the stay or deporting all Libyan student engineers currently under training at airports here. But Libyan nationals remain subject to the strict immigration controls announced by my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary, on 1 May 1984, and all applications from them are closely scrutinised.

Remembrance Ceremony (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be replying to the letter of 12 November sent to him by the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding the Remembrance ceremony in Whitehall; and what was the reason for the delay in replying.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible. I am sorry not to have replied before, but I am still considering carefully the points made in the letter.

Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about why Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha was in the Libyan People's Bureau and what he was doing there at the time of the siege in April 1984.

Mr. Hurd: At the time of the siege in April 1984, Mr. Ben Rabha was a locally engaged employee of the Libyan People's Bureau, working as a film technican. There is no evidence that he was personally implicated in the shooting of WPC Fletcher.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the estimates he has received from chief constables or police authorities of the additional costs arising from implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 for each police force area in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the long term the Act is intended to be broadly neutral as regards resources. My right hon. Friend has, however, agreed to adjustments in force establishments in a number of cases, for reasons associated in part with the requirements of the Act. The estimates and information which he has received from chief constables and police authorities have not been confined solely to additional costs arising specifically from implementation.

The substantial training requirement for all serving police officers has now been completed, and new recruits are being taught the procedures in the Act as part of their basic training, instead of the complex of separate statutory and informal provisions which their predecessors had to learn.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a statement of the estimates he has received of the additional costs arising in respect of magistrates' courts in England and Wales from implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Mr. Mellor: Minor additional costs will arise as the result of the occasional need to hold courts outside normal office hours. Any expenditure of this kind will be marginal, and no separate estimates are available.

Drug Offences (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in Wales in 1985 were convicted of drug-related offences.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information relates to 1984 when 1,297 persons were found guilty in Wales of offences under drugs legislation or of other offences involving controlled drugs. The corresponding figure for 1985 will not be available before the late summer.

ENERGY

Research and Development

19. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the energy research and development budget is devoted to non-nuclear subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My Department's expenditure on non-nuclear R & D in 1984-85 was £41 million or 17 per cent. of its total R & D budget. The principal items in this non-nuclear programme are renewables, energy efficiency and offshore oil and gas.

Renewable Energy Sources

20. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what support he plans to provide for research and development of renewable energy sources over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The renewable sources of energy have a key role in the Government's energy strategy and strong support for their research and development will continue.

Voluntary Insulation Groups

21. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about voluntary insulation groups.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's Energy Efficiency Office provides grant aid for voluntary sector insulation projects and for the national co-ordinating charity, Neighbourhood Energy Action. The number of projects

now operating represents a six fold increase since my right hon. Friend launched his energy efficiency initiative in 1983 and the number will more than double by the end of Energy Efficiency Year 1986.

Energy Efficiency Year

22. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall of course keep the House regularly informed about the progress with the year. I am delighted to say that, since December, the number of events planned for the year has risen from 500 to over 700 and is still rising. 1,100 top executives attended the first of my new series of breakfast briefings in London last week.

Electricity Charges

23. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council to discuss electricity charges.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the Electricity Council frequently. Prices are for the industry to decide.

Electricity Exports (Channel Link)

24. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much electricity was imported and exported via the Channel link in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: Power flowed for the first time through the first of four pairs of cables which will make up the link on 16 January.

Coal Industry Dispute

25. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the reinstatement of miners sacked by the National Coal Board in Scotland.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Magnox Power Stations

26. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on progress on the 20-year long-term safety reviews on Magnox power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB is making good progress with its long-term safety reviews of Magnox stations, and expects to complete the programme next year. The NII will continue to monitor the progress of the reviews, and to assess the results.

Energy Efficiency Campaign

27. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the progress of the energy efficiency campaign.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest progress of his plans for Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since December the number of events planned for the year has risen from 500 to over 700 and is still rising. A series of 20 Monergy breakfast briefings are planned during 1986 and 1987. A major programme of school plays, special displays at exhibitions and technical seminars has been organised. The Monergy road show will visit around 200 town centres and shopping precincts. Many major local authorities have been approached and are supporting Energy Efficiency Year. Over 200 voluntary groups are now operating and have so far insulated lofts and provided draughtproofing in approximately 140,000 homes.

Exploration and Appraisal Wells

28. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the number of exploration and appraisal wells drilled in 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The numbers of exploration and appraisal wells drilled in 1985 are 129 and 71 respectively. These numbers include wells drilled both on land and offshore.

Productivity

29. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about current levels of productivity being achieved in the coal mining industry.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

Onshore Oil and Gas

30. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many onshore oil and gas developments were approved in 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In 1985, three onshore oil fields and one onshore gas field were approved for development.

NCB (Chairman)

31. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made any arrangements to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss how and when his successor will take over the appointment.

Mr. Peter Walker: In October 1985, I appointed Sir Robert Haslam to be the next chairman of the National Coal Board. He joined the board as non-executive deputy chairman on 1 November 1985 and will take up full-time duties, after a period of leave, from the beginning of May this year. The present chairman's appointment expires on 31 August 1986 and Sir Robert Haslam will take up his three-year appointment on 1 September 1986.

Annexe B Oilfield Development Approvals

32. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the number of annexe B oilfield development approvals issued in 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In 1985, I approved 12 oil field development projects.

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has asked the chairman of the Sizewell public inquiry to submit to him his main recommendations in advance of the full text of his report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The preparation of the report is a matter for the inspector.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he expects to receive the full text of the Sizewell report before the summer recess; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend's reply to the written question of the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 19 November, at column *101*.

Bracken Processing

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy to what extent bracken processing for use as fuel is carried out in the United Kingdom; and what similar information he has on its use in other countries.

Mr. David Hunt: Although the technology exists to cut, bale and burn bracken, there are no known instances of bracken being processed for use as fuel either in the United Kingdom or within the European Community. We have no information on this possible use of bracken outside the Community.

District Heating

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Energy what guidelines he has sent to local authorities, development corporations and new town commissions for the operation of district heating systems.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply.

Although no guidelines have been issued in recent years, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) has published three papers on the performance and operation of district heating schemes and on heat metering. Additionally, BRE provides advice on request to individual local authorities.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crown Agents

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made with plans to reorganise the Crown Agents pension division in East Kilbride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I hope to announce our plans shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was paid each year from 1978 to 1984 to firms in the Grimsby travel-to-work area under regional development grants.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Payments of £25,000 or less under the old regional development grant scheme cannot be attributed to any unit smaller than a planning region. Grimsby travel-to-work area is not eligible for the new regional development grant scheme which was introduced on 29 November 1984. The totals of payments of regional development grant of over £25,000 in respect of assets on premises in the Grimsby travel-to-work area in the periods specified is given in the following table.

Regional Development Grant
(Part II of the Industrial Development Act 1982)

Year	*Grant paid (£'000)*
1978	2,817
1979	1,036
1980	1,888
1981	3,426
1982	2,087
1983	2,435
1984	4,533

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the present chairman and members of the Hearing Aid Council, designating the categories in which they serve together with the dates when appointments expire.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

Membership of the Hearing Aid Council

	Appointment expires
Chairman	
Mr. N. K. Grant	December 1987
Persons capable of representing the interests of registered dispensers	
Mr. A. J. Douglas	December 1986
Mr. A. A. Campbell	December 1986
Mr. D. W. Greener	December 1987
Mr. I. E. Munro	December 1987
Mr. A. B. Day	December 1988
Mrs. I. Gilbert	December 1988
Persons having specialised medical knowledge of deafness or audiological technical knowledge	
Dr. D. N. Brooks	December 1986
Dr. Susan Bellman	December 1987
Persons capable of representing the interests of the hearing-impaired	
Mr. C. A. Powell	December 1986
Mr. R. S. Eldridge	December 1988
Mrs. M. B. La Touche	December 1988

British Standards Institute

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what reasons the British Standards Institute has stopped undertaking unannounced surveillance visits to firms supplying goods under BS 5750.

Mr. Pattie: Assessment of companies to BS 5750 is a fully commercial service undertaken by the quality assurance services division, British Standards Institution. Questions about the operation of the service should therefore be addressed to the director, quality assurance services division, British Standards Institution, Linford Wood, Milton Keynes, MK14 6LE.

Export Credit Guarantees

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for which countries there are at present restrictions on export credit guarantees.

Mr. Channon: The economic problems being experienced in a considerable number of the United Kingdom's export markets limit the level of commitments that the Export Credits Guarantee Department can, prudentially, assume on them given its remit to operate at no net cost to the Exchequer. The Department regularly reviews its policy towards markets and aims to relax such restrictions as soon as justifiable. (The Department's assessments are made in consultation with the Export Guarantees Advisory Council in respect of its "commercial account" operations under section 1 of the Export Guarantees and Overseas Investment Act and with the inter-departmental export guarantees committee for its "national interest" operations under section 2 of the Act.)

It has been the policy of successive Governments not to publish the terms on which export credit guarantees are made available for particular markets.

Airbus

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secetary of State for Trade and Industry what sums have been provided to date from public funds for the development and production of the Airbus; and if any further allocations are under consideration.

Mr. Pattie: To date, £105·1 million has been paid as launch aid to British Aerospace in respect of its share of the design and development costs relating to participation in the Airbus A320 programme. No public funds have been, or will be, provided towards Airbus production costs. No further applications for launch aid in respect of Airbus programmes have been received.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secetary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement setting out the procedures for the repayment of public funds provided towards the development and production of the Airbus.

Mr. Pattie: The launch aid provided towards British Aerospace's share of the Airbus A320 development costs is repayable on terms designed to yield a return in real terms on the Government's investment. £50 million is repayable on a fixed schedule over the period 1990-92; the remaining £200 million will be repayable by a levy on A320 sales designed to yield a positive rate of return to the Government in real terms. No public funding is provided towards Airbus production costs.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to which of his hon. and learned Friends he was referring in his written answer of 22 January to the hon. Member for Christchurch relating to the European Airbus.

Mr. Pattie: The first line of the second paragraph of the answer of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) of 22 January at columns *184-85*, should read, "I have already informed".

Torture Equipment (Exports)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received concerning the export of equipment that can be used for torture.

Mr. Channon: I have received five representations over the past six months.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the salary at each increase date since 1974 of each of the chairmen of the industries for which he is responsible and the names of the incumbents.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Metrication

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the further extension of metrication in *(a)* industry and *(b)* commerce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government do not believe that the pace of metrication should be dictated by legally enforced timetables. These decisions are best left to the judgment of the enterprises involved which are in the best position to assess the costs and benefits.

Many manufacturers in the United Kingdom are now producing in metric sizes. It has always been recognised that some difficulties may arise in the retail sector, where metrication has a direct impact on the general public. However, the Government remain convinced that the policy of allowing trade and industry to dictate the pace of change to metric units is the right one.

House of Fraser

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *634*, what were the reasons given by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its request for an extension on the mergers reference of Lonrho and the House of Fraser.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

English Estates

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on English Estates' funding requirements in the northern region.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will make a statement on English Estates' financial position shortly.

Wine (Measures)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has received since 1 January 1985 from consumers' organisations concerning the practice by some licensed establishments of selling wine in unlined or unmarked glasses in contravention of the voluntary code of practice agreed between the Government and the licensed trade;

(2) what further representations he has received since 1 January 1985 from the local authorities co-ordinating body on trading standards concerning the operation of the voluntary code of practice agreed between the Government and the licensed trade on the sale of wine by the glass;

(3) if he will now introduce legislation to give statutory effect to the provisions of the voluntary code of practice on the sale of wine which will require public house licensees and others to display the price and precise volume by which wine is sold by the glass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Since 1 January 1985 the Department has not received any representations from consumer organisations concerning sales of wine in unmarked glasses.

Last October the Department received from LACOTS a copy of a second survey undertaken by local authorities between May and August 1985 to ascertain levels of compliance with the voluntary code of practice. Whilst this showed an improvement in adherence to the code's provisions it has still not been adopted as widely as had been hoped. The Department is considering whether further action is called for.

Weights and Measures (Examiners)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many examiners are in post at the National Weights and Measures Laboratory; what are their grades; what is the average annual salary in such grade; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total salary bill of the laboratory in each year since 1979, together with his best estimate for the years 1985 to 1986-87.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Staff Training

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of his Department's annual budget is spent on staff training; and if he will detail this for each of the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: Departmental expenditure on training over the past three years has been:

	£ million
1983-84	5·2
1984-85	5·8
1985-86	6·6*

* Estimated.

Expressed as a proportion of pay costs, the respective percentages are:

	£ million
1983-84	4·2
1984-85	4·5
1985-86	4·7*

* Estimated.

It is standard practice to use this basis of comparison in which superannuation is included in both training costs and pay costs.

Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Westland plc

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the decision to issue his press statement, Ref 12, of 6 January had been cleared with the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr. Pattie: Yes.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he first had a sight of the letter which the then Sectetary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), proposed to send to Mr. David Horne, banking adviser to the European Consortium in the Westland affair and which was subsequently sent on 3 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. and learned Friend did not see the letter until after it had been sent.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what time his press release of 6 January headed, "Leon Britan, Statement on Westland", was published.

Mr. Pattie: The statement on Westland of 6 January by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State was distributed by a member of my Department's press office at the press conference held by Westland plc on 6 January and was subsequently distributed by the Central Office of Information at 16.30, on its regular distribution run.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he had time, following receipt of his copy of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence, to amend his press statement No. 12 of 6 January before a member of his staff departed to distribute it at the Westlands board meeting.

Mr. Pattie: The statement of 6 January by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State was drafted and finalised before his receipt of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence and the contents of that letter had no effect on the statement. The purpose of that statement was to re-affirm the position of the Government on Westland, as set out by my right hon. Friend in his statement to the House on 16 December and by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 17 and 19 December, that it is for Westland as a private sector company to decide the best route to follow in order to secure its future and that of its employees.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what time the member of his Department left his office on 6 January to attend the Westland board meeting to distribute at the meeting copies of his press release, "Statement on Westland."

Mr. Pattie: A press officer left my Department to attend the Westland press conference at 15.40 on 6 January.

Bankruptcies and Liquidations

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* bankruptcies and *(b)* liquidations there have been in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Howard: The provisional figure for bankruptcies in Wales in the period 1 April 1979 to 31 December 1985 is 2,519.

The bankruptcy figures cover all individuals and partnerships. Receiving orders and administration orders are included: the total is the net number of cases administered after consolidations and rescissions. The 1979 figures are only available quarterly.

Figures for company liquidations are only available for England and Wales together.

Press Statements

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how many occasions members of his Department have attended company meetings to distribute press statements giving the Government's policy with regard to the internal affairs of the company.

Mr. Pattie: It is not unusual for press officers from my Department to attend press conferences held by companies sponsored by my Department. On this occasion, as at other events, their attendance was agreed by the company, which assisted with the distribution of my Department's press release.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people have been employed by his Department's press and public relations office in each of the past five years; and what has been the annual budget for that office over the same period.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1986, c. *280*.]: My Department's press and public relations activities span the whole of information division and the BOTB's publicity unit. The following figures therefore relate to all specialist and support staff in those areas of work as at 1 April each year. The staff costs are at historic prices.

	Staff	£
1981	*138	*1,384
1982	*130	*1,261
1983	*115	*1,065
1984	96	1,385
1985	†127	1,438

* Figures for 1981, 1982 and 1983 are totals of the figures for the separate Department of Trade and Department of Industry, which were combined into the Department of Trade and Industry in June 1983.

† Increase reflects an organisational change between Divisional responsibilities.

Regional Development and Selective Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each year until 1989 his estimate in real terms at 1985 prices, of expenditure on *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance; if he will list expenditure on both in 1979-80 and 1984-85 at 1985 prices; and if he will provide an estimate of expenditure on regional development grant and selective assistance for each regional area for 1979-80, 1984-85, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 January 1986, c. *281*]: I regret that the information the hon. Gentleman seeks is not readily available. However, I shall be writing to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Funerals

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward proposals for price control of funerals.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *322*]: No.

TRANSPORT

Airport Security

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make make a statement on security at Gatwick airport;

(2) what guidance he has given to the British Airports Authority on the issue of temporary passes at British Airports Authority establishments;

(3) what guidance he has given to the British Airports Authority on the hiring of cleaning staff at British Airports Authority establishments.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has asked the BAA to investigate the recent attempts by a newspaper reporter to breach security procedures at Gatwick. We shall then consider with the BAA and the airlines concerned what remedial action is necessary. Large numbers of staff need to go airside at airports. We have given airport authorities general advice on the issuing of airside passes and on the need to give the staff concerned security briefings. Currently we are considering ways in which the issuing of airside passes can be strictly controlled by airports. Airlines have long been advised by the Department to control access to their aircraft and to ensure that aircraft are brought into service free from hazard.

Leeds Road System

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his proposed study of the Leeds road system will begin; who will be on the study team; and if he will impose a time limit on the deliberations of this study.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am still considering these questions, and I will write to my hon. Friend when I have reached conclusions.

Roads (Speed Limit)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider legislation to seek to reduce the maximum speed limit on British roads to 55 m.p.h.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Salisbury Railway Station

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the total revenue value of ticket sales at Salisbury railway station in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms in each of the past 10 years;

(2) if he will list the number of staff employed at Salisbury railway station and the total real wage bill in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. David Mitchell: These are management matters for British Rail.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the value of *(a)* capital expenditure and *(b)* repairs and maintenance at Salisbury railway station in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not collect this detailed information, which is entirely a matter for British Rail.

London-Exeter Railway (Investment)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total investment in the London to Exeter railway system via Salisbury in each of the past 10 years; and whether he has plans for future investment.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not collect this detailed information, which is a matter for British Rail. It is for the board to come forward with future investment plans.

Central London (Travel Statistics)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the number of people travelling to work in the central area of London by car, motor cycle and bicycle in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Estimates of passenger traffic entering central London daily between 7 am and 10 am for each of the years 1980 to 1984 are given in table 1.4 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1974-1984", which is available in the Library.

Airports (Libyan Student Engineers)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Libyan student engineers are in training at *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* any other airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer this question shortly.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the plans for the privatisation of British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have given the chairman of the British Railways Board a remit to review options for the future of BREL, including the possibility of privatisation. The board has recently announced some organisational changes which it considers to be necessary irrespective of the future ownership of the company.

British Rail

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy not to consent to any British Rail investment which would involve the acquisition of any locomotives built outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the British Railways Board to decide where it places its orders. The chairman has made it clear that the board would prefer to buy British goods, provided the designs and prices offer the best value to BR.

THE ARTS

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will reduce from £16,000 to £8,000 the value at which works of art and scientific objects require export licences.

Mr. Luce: No. The value at which works of art, including scientific objects, require specific export licences was increased from £8,000 to £16,000 in May 1985 following a recommendation from the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art which advises me in such cases. There are no reasons to revise these valuations at present.

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has received any representations from heritage bodies or individuals with regard to the sale and subsequent export of works of art originating from semi-public bodies and the Church authorities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Yes. I have received representations from a number of museum bodies and individuals with regard to the sale and proposed export of the George Brown ethnograpical collection by Newcastle university. I am aware of no representations in respect of works of art originating from the Church authorities.

European Museum of the Year Scheme

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of the European Museum of the Year scheme.

Mr. Luce: The European Museum of the Year scheme is a private venture which has hitherto been financed mainly by sponsorship, and its future is a matter for its organisers. It has not received any Government funds from my arts budget, and I am not in a position to offer such funds now.

George Brown Ethnographic Collection

Mr. Beith asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the future of the George Brown ethnographic collection owned by the university of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Luce: I have received representations from a number of museum bodies and individuals with regard to the sale and proposed export of the George Brown ethnographical collection by the Newcastle upon Tyne university.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of *(a)* direct maternal deaths, *(b)* indirect maternal deaths and *(c)* associated maternal deaths in England and Wales following caesarian section in each year since 1979 for which figures are available; what is his estimate of the total number of women delivered by caesarian section in each year; and what is the estimated fatality rate per 1,000 caesarian sections.

Mr. Whitney: Information in the form requested is not at present available. The table shows the estimated number of caesarean sections for England and Wales for 1979-83.

The figures for 1982 and 1983 are not comparable with the earlier years because they have been estimated on a different basis. Part of the apparent increase in the numbers of caesarean sections in 1982 and 1983 is probably due to an underestimation of the numbers of caesarean sections in the earlier years.

	England and Wales
*1979	49,830
*1980	54,600
*1981	53,420
†1982	61,270
†1983	61,780

* Estimated numbers derived from Maternity hospital inpatient inquiry
† Estimated numbers derived from Maternity HIPE, and adjusted using birth registration data

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of sets of *(a)* triplets, *(b)* quadruplets, *(c)* quintuplets and *(d)* sextuplets born each year in England and Wales since 1970 for which figures are available; and if he will specify, in each case, how many of the pregnancies followed (i) in vitro fertilisation and (ii) the use of drugs for treatment for infertility.

Mr. Whitney: The table gives the available statistics about multiple births. The other information is not collected centrally.

Multiple births to women usually resident in England and Wales

Year	*Triplets*	*Quadruplets*	*Quintuplets*	*Sextuplets*
1970	100	1	0	0
1971	69	3	2	0
1972	81	3	2	0
1973	71	2	0	0
1974	60	4	0	0
1975	72	7	0	0
1976	76	4	2	1
1977	68	2	0	0
1978	62	8	1	0
1979	76	6	0	0
1980	91	4	1	0
1981	*	*	*	*
1982	70	6	0	0
1983	89	4	0	1
1984	80	5	0	0

* Not available
Notes:—
(1) The figures include confinements with multiple births at which one or more stillbirths were delivered.
(2) 1981 figures were affected by industrial action taken by registrars and do not identify multiple births.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reported cases of Reye's syndrome there have been in each of the years 1981 to 1985.

Mr. Whitney: The following figures of reported cases of Reye's syndrome have been obtained from the communicable disease surveillance centre, which since August 1981 has run a surveillance scheme jointly with the British Paediatric Association. The cases are those which meet either the clinical and biochemical or the histological criteria as used in their case definition for Reye's syndrome.

The figures may not agree with those quoted in the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 5 June 1985 at column *186* as there can be a considerable interval between the onset and the reporting of the disease. In particular, figures for the most recent year will be incomplete because cases continue to be reported.

Number of cases reported to BPA—CDSC Reye's Syndrome Surveillance Scheme 1981-1985
England and Wales

Year	*Number*
*1981	11
1982	34
1983	40
1984	48
1985	26

* August-December

Bexley Health Authority

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations about the funding of Bexley health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Representations have been received from three hon. and right hon. Members. The funding of Bexley health authority is a matter for the South-East Thames regional health authority. The region is fully aware of the financial situation in Bexley and further discussions on this will be held shortly between the two authorities.

Traffic Accidents (Emergency Treatment Fee)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will take steps to abolish the road traffic accident emergency treatment fee.

Mr. Hayhoe: In announcing the Government's decision to abolish the fee which health authorities may charge for providing emergency treatment following a road traffic accident, my predecessor said, and I reiterate, that legislation will be introduced at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Social Index of Deprivation

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of health authorities cover districts which score more favourably than Camberwell on the Department of Environment social index of deprivation.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to give a precise answer as the index to which the hon. Member refers relates to local authority districts, which in many cases are no conterminous with health authority areas. Of the 366 local authority districts covered by the social deprivation indicators, 98 per cent. score more favourably than the London borough of Southwark, which includes the Camberwell health authority area.

NHS (Computer Posts)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many computer posts within the National Health Service offering salaries of between £10,000 and £20,000 are currently vacant; and what steps he intends to take to match levels of pay for such posts to those awarded for similar posts in the private sector.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the form requested.

In a report specially commissioned by regional health authority chairmen and published earlier this month, it was stated that there was a 15 per cent. overall vacancy level in National Health Service systems development staff and that there were indications that this was rising. As a result, the administrative and clerical staffs Whitley Council has been asked to review its agreements as they relate to computer staff with a view to alleviating the present problems of recruitment and retention. As an interim measure, last year's pay settlement in the Whitley Council increased existing allowances paid to computer staff and created additional entitlements.

War Disablement Pensions

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applicants there have been for war disablement pensions arising from exposure to mustard gas in world war 2 since 1975, giving in each case *(a)* the date of application and *(b)* when the information concerning exposure to mustard gas became available.

Mr. Major: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hammersmith Hospital

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average cost per inpatient week and inpatient case treated in the Hammersmith hospital for the last five years; and what was *(a)* the annual revenue cost of this hospital and *(b)* the extent of the revenue protection provided outwith the resource allocation working party formula allocation for those years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The costs for Hammersmith hospital are as shown in the table:

Year	*Average cost per inpatient week* £	*Average cost per inpatient case* £	*Annual Revenue cost* £
1980-81	658·42	938·09	20,573,208
1981-82	755·98	1,057·83	24,194,465
1982-83	807·41	1,083·61	24,946,206
1983-84	859·64	1,111·64	26,820,532
1984-85	920·37	1,132·53	28,695,812

The resource allocation working party formula does not apply to the special health authorities of the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Social Security Advisory Committee

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what criteria he makes appointments to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Mr. Newton: Members are appointed to the Social Security Advisory Committee for the expertise and experience which they can bring to the fulfilment of the committee's role of tendering advice and assistance on social security and housing benefit matters to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Northern Ireland. In accordance with the requirements of schedule 3 to the Social Security Act 1980 one member is appointed after consultation with organisations representative of employers, one after consultation with organisations representative of workers, and one after consultation with the head of the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland. In addition, at least one member must have experience of work among and the needs of the chronically sick and disabled and this member should if possible be a chronically sick or disabled person.

Income Disregard

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current figure for income disregard in respect of old people admitted to local authority homes; when this figure was last changed; how it compares with the income disregard for supplementary benefit; what representations he has received in respect of the case for adjusting it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Invalid Care Allowance

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the statistical assumptions which have led him to estimate that if the invalid care allowance were extended to married women it would cost an extra £85 million a year.

Mr. Newton: The origin of the estimate is a sample survey of attendance allowance beneficiaries carried out in 1982, with relative proportions applied in line with the growth in the estimated number of attendance allowance beneficiaries since 1982. A take-up of 90 per cent. was assumed, and 95 per cent. confidence levels applied. £85 million was the mid-point of the resulting range of estimates.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of local authorities in which more than 50 per cent. of ratepayers are receiving housing benefit which meets 100 per cent. of their rates liability; and if he will name these authorities.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why it has been decided that the whole of the annuity in home income plans is to be treated as income for the purposes of housing benefit entitlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The current guidance to local authorities, consolidated in a manual issued last summer, reflects the legal advice we have received on how life annuities and home income plans should be treated when assessing entitlement to housing benefit.

McColl Report

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to state when the McColl committee report on artificial limbs and appliances will be published.

Mr. Newton: Yes. It is being published today.

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is now in a position to publish the report of the working party on the services of artificial limb and appliance centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy when the McColl committee report has been published to hold discussions with the relevant trade unions about its recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The report of the working party chaired by Professor Ian McColl is being published today, and I am placing copies in the Library of the House. I am grateful to Professor McColl and his colleagues for the effort they have devoted to its preparation, and to my hon. Friend for the part he played in initiating this review.

We set up the working party because of our concern that there were shortcomings in the services we provide for disabled people. As there had been no comprehensive review of the subject since it was transferred to the Ministry of Health in 1953, we thought it right to have an independent group carry out a detailed appraisal of these services and make recommendations for future development.

The working party, while acknowledging the good work done over the years by artificial limb and appliance centres, has confirmed that the services are falling below standard in several respects. It has identified a number of matters which must be tackled vigorously if the quality of care we want for patients is to be secured and delivered efficiently and economically.

A number of deficiencies identified by the working party are already being tackled. For example, wheelchair styling has been improved, and a new basic wheelchair for occasional use is to be introduced shortly; new lightweight artificial limbs which compare very favourably with overseas products are now being supplied; steps have been taken to improve management co-ordination and the information available to managers; and progress has been made in improving financial control and reducing costs.

Further improvements should follow from the consultancy study, which we expect to commission shortly, on the wider use of computers in the services. In the light of the report we shall also give special attention to improving appointments and transport for patients, on which an operational research study is now being planned.

Many of the working party's recommendations will require consultation with professional, staff and other interests, and we shall open these consultations at once.

The working party's recommendations on organisational structure require particularly careful consideration. I have asked the NHS Management Board, which contains much experience of business and management, to advise me on this and to oversee the whole programme of action for developing these services.

I am pleased that the working party pays tribute to the dedication of the staff who man the services of artificial limb and appliance centres. I am glad to endorse this, and to express my confidence in the full support of the staff in improving these vital services for many disabled people.

Artificial Limbs

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what initiatives he has taken to resolve the contractual dispute between his Department and the companies that supply and fit artificial limbs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Interim prices for the supply and fitting of artificial limbs from 1 January 1986 have been negotiated with the major companies. Negotiations on final prices and contractual terms will be continued shortly, and the Department will be seeking to discuss contracting arrangements beyond 1986 with the firms in the light of the McColl report.

NHS (Administrative Structure)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services following the Griffiths report, what steps he is taking to ensure that the expertise of the nursing profession can be exercised in the administrative structure of National Health Service hospitals and that health authorities are made aware of the views of the Royal College of Nursing.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities are already very well aware that the Government recognise and value the contribution that nurses can and do make to the management of the National Health Service and to health care directly. Every health authority is required to identify a chief nursing adviser whose main responsibility will be to provide advice to the authority itself and to its managers on professional nursing matters, and on the nursing aspects of other issues. The views of the Royal College of Nursing have been made known through its own publicity campaign.

Death Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 65 years who have died (i) in the winter months and (ii) in the summer months in each year since 1979 to the latest available year (A) nationally and (B) in each standard economic planning region.

Mr. Whitney: The readily available information is shown in the table. "Winter months" have been taken as the March quarter (January, February and March), and "summer months" as the September quarter (July, August and September).

Number of deaths from all causes, males and females, aged 65 years and over, for 'winter' and 'summer' months, England and Wales, standard regions, 1979-1985

Standard Region	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985	
	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter	March quarter	Sept. quarter
England and Wales														
Males	62,989	44,884	58,373	45,553	57,890	45,800	60,250	45,363	60,932	46,552	57,377	43,789	63,756	46,846
Females	73,722	51,697	67,412	52,127	67,792	52,965	71,829	51,540	72,034	53,524	67,062	50,480	75,562	53,742
England														
Males	58,892	41,956	54,712	42,678	54,339	42,902	56,499	42,455	56,996	43,470	53,768	41,051	59,931	43,925
Females	69,436	48,435	63,497	48,885	63,686	49,647	67,594	48,259	67,589	50,181	63,189	47,487	71,177	50,399
North														
Males	3,964	2,896	3,794	2,943	3,817	2,994	3,894	2,923	3,820	2,998	3,840	2,831	4,121	3,012
Females	4,574	3,224	4,133	3,367	4,207	3,332	4,462	3,298	4,349	3,269	4,354	3,274	4,943	3,424
Yorkshire and Humberside														
Males	6,449	4,886	5,937	4,666	5,842	4,585	6,226	4,640	6,054	4,807	5,833	4,503	6,468	4,700
Females	7,447	5,227	6,784	5,200	6,766	5,355	7,561	5,222	7,188	5,483	7,101	5,216	7,386	5,409
East Midlands														
Males	4,664	3,310	4,444	3,401	4,401	3,489	4,603	3,350	4,623	3,537	4,334	3,318	4,759	3,569
Females	5,171	3,752	4,884	3,622	4,699	3,942	5,379	3,670	5,188	3,846	4,827	3,689	5,401	3,777
East Anglia														
Males	2,365	1,728	2,262	1,776	2,311	1,834	2,495	1,805	2,345	1,843	2,266	1,738	2,624	1,929
Females	2,578	1,815	2,461	1,894	2,552	1,911	2,674	1,911	2,659	1,936	2,564	1,939	2,928	2,047
South East														
Males	20,751	14,766	18,892	15,098	19,024	15,029	19,258	14,783	19,974	15,136	18,679	14,365	21,095	15,407
Females	24,939	17,189	22,427	17,722	22,898	17,506	23,670	17,153	24,307	17,876	22,086	16,689	25,485	17,951
South West														
Males	6,193	4,349	5,765	4,499	5,830	4,394	5,816	4,548	6,138	4,453	5,507	4,409	6,093	4,618
Females	7,216	5,146	6,491	5,069	6,833	5,223	6,885	5,002	7,336	5,400	6,374	4,993	7,253	5,431
West Midlands														
Males	6,004	4,220	5,601	4,407	5,635	4,382	6,064	4,379	5,877	4,613	5,649	4,176	6,286	4,632
Females	6,966	4,840	6,415	4,687	6,360	4,881	6,742	4,743	6,355	4,998	6,449	4,646	7,076	5,059
North West														
Males	8,482	6,099	8,017	5,888	7,479	6,195	8,143	6,027	8,165	6,083	7,660	5,711	8,485	6,058
Females	10,545	7,242	9,902	7,324	9,371	7,497	10,221	7,260	10,207	7,373	9,434	7,041	10,705	7,301
Wales														
Males	4,021	2,741	3,567	2,722	3,475	2,767	3,680	2,788	3,857	2,928	3,518	2,574	3,743	2,749
Females	4,217	3,134	3,857	3,136	4,038	3,192	4,156	3,174	4,370	3,213	3,805	2,891	4,298	3,200

Electroconvulsive Therapy

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent electroconvulsive therapy is still used within the National Health Service for the treatment of depressive illness and manic-depressive psychosis; and what advice his Department is giving to health authorities as to the clinical circumstances under which electro-convulsive therapy should be given to patients in preference to anti-depressant drugs.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of courses of treatment given annually from 1979-84 are given in the table. National Health Service statistics do not show the diagnosis of the patients for whom it was prescribed. The Department does not give advice on the types of treatment to give to patients; National Health Service doctors will be aware of a number of recently published research studies. These bear on the question of for which patients electroconvulsive therapy is likely to be the treatment of choice.

Courses of electroconvulsive therapy—England

	Number
1980	25,441
1981	24,407
1982	22,578
1983	21,350
1984	19,850

Leeds (Rothwell Office)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he will take to prevent additional expense falling on claimants in the Rothwell area of Leeds arising from the need to travel to Leeds, following the closure of the Rothwell office of his Department.

Mr. Major: A caller office will be open for inquiries at Rothwell during normal office hours. For those needing to travel to Leeds, the Department's standard rules for refunding travelling expenses will apply. Where it would be difficult for a person to travel to Leeds, for instance because of sickness or disability, a home visit may be made.

Community Care Scheme

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the organisations and projects which have received funding to date under the helping the community to care scheme; and how much each has received;

(2) how many organisations have applied for funding to date under the helping the community to care scheme; and of these how many have been successful.

Mr. Whitney: The helping the community to care programme consists of 12 distinct elements and a variety of organisations have accepted the Department's invitation to participate in their management. Expenditure figures for 1985-86 are not yet available but we estimate that total expenditure will be about £1,364,000.

The information that follows gives a brief description of each element and indicates which organisations are involved in its management. The figures show expenditure in 1984-85.

HELPING THE COMMUNITY TO CARE

1. *Home from hospital schemes for elderly patients* (£13,500)

A three year project to set up demonstration projects to ensure basic care so that elderly patients discharged from hospital can settle in again at home. Age Concern, the British Red Cross Society and the Continuing Care Project will manage the schemes.

2. *Information and training for carers of elderly people suffering from incontinence* (£8,500)

A two year project to produce guidelines and materials for training programmes about the problems and management of incontinence in elderly people, both for professional staff, especially GPs, nurses (and social services staff) and also for informal carers and volunteers. The work is being managed by the King's Fund and Age Concern.

3. *Support for elderly members of ethnic minorities* (—)

A three year project to produce and run a training programme for volunteers working with ethnic minority elderly people and to set up demonstration projects to develop services for them. Age Concern and the Standing Conference of Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens will manage some of the activities; other applications are being considered.

4. *Development officers for self help/mutual aid groups* (£14,000)

To provide an opportunity to develop and gain experience from the support of informal self help/mutual aid groups. This will be achieved by providing funding for 18 well designed and managed projects. Careful monitoring will enable experience to be used constructively and fed into future developments on a wider basis. The scheme is being managed by a group of national voluntary organisations who are termed the Self Help Alliance.

5. *After-care for patients with chronic schizophrenia* (£23,000)

Three projects in Southampton, Salford and Hackney for the development of systems designed to improve the follow-up and co-ordination arrangements for chronic schizophrenic patients and information packages for sufferers and their families. The Health Authorities in these districts are managing the schemes.

6. *Industrial therapy advice unit* (£12,000)

To help the British Institute of Industrial Therapy to fund a small advice unit and associated services which will encourage and support the development of viable and potentially self-financing community industrial therapy units. The units will aim to provide long term employment and training opportunities for mentally disordered people living in the community.

7. *Open University course on community care for mentally handicapped people* (£50,000)

To assist MENCAP and the Open University to develop the first phase of a course on mental handicap for care staff and the families of mentally handicapped people.

8. *Community Resource Centre for Mentally Handicapped People* (—)

To fund Dr. Barnardo's for the conversion of a large residential unit in Woodford Bridge, London into a general community centre for mentally handicapped people and their families and for the initial running costs of the centre. The centre will support the recruitment and training of carers, as well as providing a centre for information and self-help activities.

9. *Information and Training for Informal Carers* (£12,000)

To increase understanding of the needs of informal carers and to identify the various means of support; to identify and develop educational resources which can contribute to meeting these needs; to identify how these resources might reach carers and to explore ways in which front-line professionals might increase their support for informal carers. The King's Fund is managing this scheme.

10. *Demonstration Districts for Informal Carers* (—)

Three demonstration districts are being established (in East Sussex, Stockport, and Sandwell), to explore and expand the range of services provided by the voluntary sector to assist informal carers. Voluntary sector consortia in each area will manage the schemes and work in partnership with statutory services.

11. *Family Self Help Centres* (£10,000)

Family centres which provide social recreational services for the community can also help to give support to families at risk or already under stress. This may reduce delinquency or diminish the need to take children into care. The Department is therefore encouraging the setting up and development of self help family centres as a preventive social services measure. The Department also wishes to sponsor demonstration projects for community services providing information and help for families seeking day-care for pre-school children.

The Department has sponsored the National Children's Bureau to carry out a preliminary study to collect information about the various models of family centres and current practice in the field and a further short term study by NCB is underway. Other work is being considered.

12. *Asian Mother and Baby Campaign* (£123,000)

This is a partnership between DHSS, Save the Children Fund and health authorities. The aim is to improve the accessibility, acceptability and uptake of antenatal care for Asian mothers. The means are a health education campaign and the employment of "link-workers", women with a good knowledge of English and at least one Asian language whose role is to improve communication and mutual understanding between Asian mothers and health professionals.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consult the British Refugee Council concerning the social security needs of refugees and asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The British Refugee Council submitted extensive evidence for the review of social security. We will continue to take its views into account as we consider the detail of the new income support scheme.

Regional Health Authorities

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library copies of all letters sent to regional health authority chairmen following the review processes, and the documents submitted by regional health authorities in accordance with the action plans attached to those letters.

Mr. Hayhoe: Copies of ministerial review follow-up letters and action plans are routinely placed in the Library. These contain a summary of the action taken by regions on the preceding year's action plan. If the hon. Member wishes to pursue any particular points arising out of the reviews might I suggest she approaches the regional health authorities direct.

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received recent proposals for training social workers from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received the council's resolution on qualifying training which includes an instruction to its officers to initiate discussions on the resources required to implement its recommendations. Officials of the Department and the other Departments concerned are at present working with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to identify the implications for the various parties who would be involved.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide detailed information about the numbers of people, in each of the last three years, living in Bradford, in receipt of family income supplement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. Family income supplement claims are dealt with by one centre at Blackpool and no information is maintained about claims from particular local areas.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number and percentage of teachers in receipt of family income supplement.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. Teachers are included for family income supplement statistical purposes in a general group which covers administrative, social, professional and technical workers and a breakdown by individual occupation is not possible.

Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Mr. Salah Abdessalem Ben Rabha, a Libyan national resident in Wiltshire, is in receipt of any social security benefits.

Mr. Major: It is the Department's policy not to give information about any individual without their permission.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many fraud investigators his Department employs; and what is his estimate of the amount of public money they saved in 1985.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Beds (Occupancy Rate)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the occupancy rate for hospital beds at The Stone House, Bishop's Castle, for the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how this figure compares with each of the other National Health Service hospitals in Shropshire.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of exemptions in each board and lodging regulations exemption category for claimants, under 26 years, who have claimed since 25 November 1985 in Tyne and Wear; and how many of these exemptions are under the exceptional hardship category;

(2) what is the present live case load of board and lodging claims by those under 26 years who have claimed after 25 November 1985 in Tyne and Wear;

(3) what is the number of claimants under 26 years since 25 November 1985 who have been granted an exemption from his Department's board and lodging time restrictions in Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Newton: The Department's local offices do not keep separate statistics on the number of board and lodging claims made by persons aged under 26 years. The information is not therefore readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. No requests for exemption under the exceptional hardship category have been received from claimants in this area.

Social Security (Reform)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many working households with children currently receive *(a)* both family income supplement and housing benefit; *(b)* just family income supplement; and *(c)* just housing benefit, and how many, under the structural proposals in Cmnd. 9691 will receive (i) both family credit and housing benefit; (ii) just family credit; and (iii) just housing benefit.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *596*]: Reliable estimates of the numbers of working households with children currently receiving housing benefit are not available, and the actual position following the introduction of family credit would depend on the rates of benefit set. The estimates shown in the table are therefore necessarily approximate and should only be taken as indicating the orders of magnitude involved on the basis of the illustrative figures in the technical annex to the White Paper. They have been calculated on the same basis as the estimates of numbers within various bands of marginal tax rates given in my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 13 January at column *594*.

Estimated number of working families with children receiving the benefits quoted

	Number
Under current scheme	
Family Income Supplement (FIS) and Housing Benefit*†	200,000
FIS only*†	20,000
Housing Benefit only	280,000
Under Cmnd. 9691 proposals	
Family Credit (FC) and Housing Benefit‡	100,000
FC only	320,000
Housing Benefit only‡	150,000

* Allowing for full effect of November 1985 FIS structures.

† At any one time some FIS recipients may be no longer in full-time work.

‡ With 20 per cent. of rates contribution.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Representatives

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names and length of tenure of all hon. Members representing the Church Commissioners during the past 30 years.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The information is as follows:

	Date of appointment
Sir John Crowder, MP	6 December 1951
Sir Hubert Ashton, KBE, MC, DL, MP	17 September 1957
Sir John Arbuthnot, Bt., MBE, TD, MP	1 June 1962
E. L. Mallalieu, QC, MP	8 December 1964
Sir Marcus Worsley, Bt., JP, DL	10 July 1970
E. S. Bishop, JP, MP (later Lord Bishopston, JP)	18 April 1974
T. W. Walker, MP	30 November 1974
Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP	10 May 1979

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Incomes

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the income of a small, medium and large farm in England and Wales as an average of all the sections listed in table 27 of the "Annual Review of Agriculture", Cmnd. 9708.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is given in the following table:

Net farm income for different sizes of farm 1984-85 (£ per farm)

	Size of business		
	Small	*Medium*	*Large*
England	3,074	10,535	36,867
Wales	2,834	9,933	22,488

Notes:

(a) Size groups are as defined in table 27 of the White Paper on the annual review of agriculture 1986 (Cmnd. 9708).

(b) Figures given in the table include incomes of farm types not included in table 27 of the annual review of agriculture 1986 White Paper because of insufficient sample size.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what causes he attributes the fact that incomes of dairy farmers in Northern Ireland, as indicated in table 27 of the "Annual Review of Agriculture", Cmnd. 9708, are approximately double those of other United Kingdom dairy farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Net farm income, the measure used in table 27 of the White Paper on the annual review of agriculture 1986 (Cmnd. 9708), comprises total farm output less total costs except for the labour of the farmer and his spouse. Because net farm income is the residual between relatively large aggregates of output and costs, small changes to either of these components can have a significant effect on the calculated level of income. Weather factors in a particular year can also exert a considerable influence on outputs and inputs and hence on the level of net farm income achieved.

Between 1983-84 and 1984-85, the first year of milk quotas, the value of milk output declined by less in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. This was largely because the drought conditions experienced in Great Britain during the summer of 1984 were less severe in Northern Ireland. Output from enterprises other than dairying is more important on dairy farms in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. In 1984-85 the value of this output increased in Northern Ireland but fell in the other countries.

Total input costs on dairy farms were also lower in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. Given the more favourable weather conditions experienced in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1984, dairy farmers there were able to make large quantities of good quality fodder. This was not the case in Great Britain and feed costs on small dairy farms in Northern Ireland were well below those on equivalent farms elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Labour costs also tend to be lower in Northern Ireland where the farmer's own labour (which is not treated as a cost in the derivation of net farm income) accounts for a higher proportion of total farm labour input.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with regard to table 27 of the "Annual Review of Agriculture", Cmnd. 9708, what are the numbers of holdings which comprise small, medium and large businesses; and what these are in percentages of the total number of holdings.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is given in the following table:

Numbers of holdings by size of farm, United Kingdom June 1984

	Size of business		
	Small	*Medium*	*Large*
Number of full-time holdings ('000)	70·0	51·6	31·9
Percentage of full-time holdings	45·6	33·6	20·8

Notes:

(a) Size groups are as defined in table 27 of the White Paper on the annual review of agriculture 1986 (Cmnd. 9708).

(b) Figures given in the table exclude agricultural holdings classed as part-time. These part-time holdings are estimated to account for less than 5 per cent. of agricultural production.

(c) Expressed as a proportion of all holdings, including part-time holdings, percentages would be approximately as follows:

	Percentage
Small	27
Medium	20
Large	12

Agricultural Improvement Scheme Grants

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the take-up rate of the new agricultural improvement scheme grants in the United Kingdom and in Cumbria.

Mrs. Fenner: The agriculture improvement scheme came into operation on 1 October 1985. Up to 31 December 1985, 1,109 applications were received in the United Kingdom for the approval of plans under the scheme. Twenty seven of these came from Cumbria.

These figures are unlikely to reflect the real level of interest in the scheme, because applicants must complete outstanding work on other capital grant schemes before new plans can be approved. This will delay some applications.

The scheme also provides grants for certain investments for which prior approval of plans is not required. My Department does not have information on the take-up rate for these investments.

Flood Protection

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress with the Barnstaple flood protection scheme and coastal protection measures along the north Devon coastline.

Mrs. Fenner: I understand that the South-West water authority is making good progress on the work needed to defend Barnstaple and other work on the river Taw and its estuary.

Rabies and Foot and Mouth Disease

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans his Department has to protect the United Kingdom from rabies when the Channel tunnel is built;

(2) what plans his Department has to protect United Kingdom farmers and their stock from foot and mouth disease when the Channel tunnel is built.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government's policy will continue to be to provide for enforcement of controls designed to minimise the risk of importing these diseases. They will insist on practical arrangements being made by operators of the Channel fixed link to apply the necessary precautions.

Import Levies

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the current import levies on the various foodstuffs provided with protection under the common agricultural policy; and if he will show the figures in terms of pence per pound weight.

Mr. Gummer: Details of import levies on foodstuffs under the common agricultural policy are published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, copies of which are deposited in the Library of the House. Import levies applicable to foodstuffs on 13 January 1986 were published in the following official journals:

Commodity	*Official journal reference and page*
Pigmeat	
Basic amounts	L 286 of 28 October 1985 p. 5
Additional amounts	L 339 of 18 December 1985 p. 38
Non-Annex II products	L 9 of 13 January 1986 p. 1
Sheepmeat	L 348 of 24 December 1985 p. 10 and 13
Beef	L 344 of 21 December 1985 p. 61 and 63
Milk and milk products	L 351 of 28 December 1985 p. 20
Olive oil	L 7 of 10 January 1986 p. 9
Eggs and poultrymeat	
Basic amounts	L 285 of 25 October 1985 p. 16 and 18
Additional amounts	L 335 of 13 December 1985 p. 35, 37 and 39
Ovalbumin and Lactalbumin	L 285 of 28 October 1985 p. 23
Sugar	L 7 of 10 January 1986 p. 10
Processed fruit and vegetables containing added sugar	
Basic amounts	L 73 of 21 March 1977 p. 1
Additional amounts	L 341 of 31 December 1979 p. 1 L 351 of 28 December 1985 p. 68
Cereals	L 8 of 11 January 1986 p. 1
Rice	L 6 of 9 January 1986 p. 5
Compound feedingstuffs	L 351 of 28 December 1985 p. 33
Products processed from cereals and rice	L 351 of 28 December 1985 p. 29 L 356 of 30 December 1985 p. 72 L 2 of 4 January 1986 p. 16 L 6 of 9 January 1986 p. 12

The import levies are set in ECU per unit weight. One ECU-tonne converted at the United Kingdom agricultural conversion rate is equal to 0·028062 pence-pound.

Export Rebates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the current export rebates on the various foodstuffs provided with disposal assistance under the common agricultural policy; and if he will show the figures in terms of pence per pound weight.

Mr. Gummer: Details of export refunds for foodstuffs under the common agricultural policy are published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, copies of which are deposited in the Library of the House. Export refunds applicable on 13 January 1986 were published in the following official journals.

Commodity	*Official journal reference and page*
Pigmeat	L 269 of 11 October 1985, page 39
Tobacco (1984 harvest)	L 65 of 6 March 1985, page 16
Spirits	L 232 of 30 August 1985, page 15
Non Annex II products	
—Eggs	L 290 of 1 November 1985, page 48
—Sugar/Molasses	L 356 of 31 December 1985, page 35
—Cereals/Rice	L 351 of 28 December 1985, page 66
—Milk products	L 356 of 31 December 1985, page 29
Wine	L 22 of 27 January 1984, page 23
Beef	L 287 of 29 October 1985, page 13
Milk and Milk products	L 335 of 13 December 1985, page 16
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables	L 259 of 1 October 1985, page 59
Olive Oil	L 356 of 30 December 1985, page 25
Rapeseed	L 356 of 30 December 1985, page 26
Eggs and Poultrymeat	L 285 of 25 October 1985, pages 25 and 27
Sugar	L 6 of 9 January 1986, page 18
Processed Fruit and Vegetables	L 73 of 21 March 1977, page 24
Processed Fruit and Vegetables	L 341 of 19 December 1985, page 13
Processed Fruit and Vegetables containing added sugar	L 73 of 21 March 1977, page 1
Cereals	L 47 of 10 January 1986, page 1
Rice	L 344 of 21 December 1985, page 49
Malt	L 343 of 20 December 1985, page 43
Compound Feedingstuffs	L 356 of 31 December 1985, page 16
Products processed from Cereals and Rice	L 321 of 30 November 1985, page 9 L 356 of 31 December 1985, page 11

The export refunds are set in ECU per unit weight. One ECU/tonne converted at the United Kingdom agricultural conversion rate is equal to 0·028062 pence/pound.

Farmer's Lung

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will use his best endeavours to bring to the attention of the farming community in England the high risk of farmer's lung this winter following 1985's wet hay harvest.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. A number of Agricultural Development and Advisory Service published articles, local radio broadcasts and promotional events have already drawn attention to these risks and advisers are continuing to provide appropriate warnings in the course of their general advisory activities.

Seed Peas (Cultivar Belinda)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the effect of the current restrictions on the sale of the seed pea variety Belinda on the United Kingdom seed industry in relation to the same industry in other European Economic Community member states.

Mrs. Fenner: We have received representations to the effect that our action in imposing restrictions on the sale of stocks of pea seed infected with pea bacterial blight is not paralleled in other member states. This is, however, a serious disease, prohibited in intra-Community trade, and a means must be found of protecting our crops from it.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will lift immediately the current holding orders on second generation seed peas of the cultivar Belinda;

(2) what evidence has been found of the existence of the disease pseudomonas syringae in stocks of the Belinda pea seed; and what recommendations he is making to those in the pea seed industry who are in possession of such stocks;

(3) when his officials first investigated the instance of the disease pseudomonas syringae in Belinda pea seed; what action has been taken by officials of his Department; and when he expects to make a statement indicating whether such stocks should be withdrawn.

Mrs. Fenner: We hope to announce shortly how the stocks of protein pea seed which are infected with pea bacterial blight may be used. This serious disease was found last September in a sample taken from a crop. My

officials traced the related stocks. Since then these stocks have been held under statutory notices. Sowing or sale for sowing is prohibited but controlled movement for compounding into animal feed or for other approved uses is allowed. A statistically based sampling programme was instituted and laboratory tests found infection in 10 out of 15 samples from the suspect stocks. We shall need to continue to control the infected stocks so long as this is necessary to avoid risk of spreading the disease.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Government intend pursuing a bracken eradication programme in the near future.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *342*]: We have no plans to introduce a bracken eradication programme. My Ministry already makes grants available for bracken control.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the favoured means of dealing with the encroachment of bracken on to agricultural land; and if he will make a statement as to the extent of bracken coverage in the United Kingdom and the problems this poses.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *342*]: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service provides information to farmers on various methods for controlling or eradicating bracken including ploughing, cutting or crushing fronds, use of heavy stocking rates and treatment with appropriate herbicides particularly from the air. The main problem is the encroachment on good grazing land and general access in many upland areas. The decision on the particular method to be used is left to the farmer in the light of local circumstances. Bracken contains poisonous substances which can cause unthriftiness or death in animals which consume the fern in sufficient quantity.

Official statistics are not collected on the area of bracken in the United Kingdom but estimates put forward by research organisations suggest that between 160,000 and 200,000 hectares of land in England and Wales are infested with bracken.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities in the last financial year; and what figures in respect of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are available to indicate *(a)* the dwelling stock, *(b)* the collectable rent which should have been received from tenants, *(c)* expenditure on repairs and maintenance of stock, *(d)* expenditure on new buildings, *(e)* expenditure on rehabilitation of stock, *(f)* expenditure on salaries and administration, *(g)* expenditure on grants to the private sector, *(h)* expenditure incurred on interest charges and *(i)* grant received from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Needham: The total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities in 1984-85 was £482·8 million and in the current financial year is estimated at £501·8 million. The following figures are available for 1985-86 in respect of the executive's expenditure blocks which are most closely related to the information sought:

(a) Effective dwelling stock—174810 (at December 1985)

(b) Gross collectable rent (dwellings and garages)—£131·6 million (estimated)

(c) Expenditure on housing and grounds maintenance — £52·9 million (estimated)

(d) Expenditure on new housebuilding — £82·3 million (estimated)

(e) Expenditure on improvement of the existing stock — £77·4 million (estimated)

(f) Expenditure on supervision and management — £36·3 million (estimated)

(g) Expenditure on House Renovation Grants — £60·2 million (estimated)

(h) Expenditure on Loan Charges — £168·3 million (estimated)

(i) Grant from the Department of the Environment — £194·9 million (estimated)

Maryfield (Security)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken to increase security at Maryfield and to protect civil servants working for the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: Appropriate security measures have been taken by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. For obvious reasons, I will not describe the measures in detail.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the current year; in what circumstances; in what locations the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many formal complaints have been made about incidents of police use of plastic baton rounds in 1985 and the year to date; in how many cases the complaint has been upheld; and in how many cases disciplinary action has been taken against the officers involved.

Mr. Scott: During 1985 six formal complaints were made concerning the use of plastic baton rounds by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Three were later withdrawn and the others are still under investigation. To date in 1986 (19 January) no formal complaints have been made concerning the use of baton rounds by the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Firearms

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many firearms, by type, namely, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in the latest calendar year and to date; and for each type, how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from: (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the regular Army.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Teachers

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many teachers are in post in Northern Ireland in the current school year; and how many he plans will be in post in Northern Ireland in the school year commencing 1 September 1986;

(2) how many compulsory redundancies of teachers there have been in controlled schools in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has to introduce a teachers' redeployment scheme in the controlled and voluntary schools in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Farmer's Lung

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will use his best endeavours to bring to the attention of the farming community in Northern Ireland the high risk of farmer's lung this winter following 1985's wet hay harvest.

Dr. Boyson: Yes; steps have already been taken to make sure the danger is fully understood by the farming community. The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland's advisory staff and the farm safety officers will continue to publicise the dangers.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service

Mr. Alexander asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of Civil Service posts abolished since 1979; and what are the consequent savings to the Exchequer.

Mr. Brooke: Between 1 April 1979 and 1 October 1985, the number of civil servants fell by 136,511 (an overall reduction of 18·6 per cent.) This represents an estimated net reduction in the pay bill of over £¾ billion.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Murphy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding capital allowances and their maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about various aspects of recent changes to the capital allowance system. Capital allowances will continue in force and, from April 1986, their basis will more closely reflect commercial depreciation.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the electoral register is used in conjunction with information held by the Inland Revenue; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine readable form.

Mr. Moore: Tax offices buy a copy of the local electoral register and use it to check the identity and address of a sample of claimants to tax repayments for internal security purposes. There are at present no plans for any other routine use by the Inland Revenue when the register becomes available in machine readable form.

North Sea Oil Revenues

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has revised the forecast of North Sea oil revenues set out in the Autumn Statement in consequence of the recent changes in the price of oil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Recent changes in the oil price will have little effect on the Autumn Statement forecast of Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production in 1985-86 since these revenues are dependent mainly on the price of oil delivered in the period up to the end of 1985. Provisional estimates of Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production in 1985-86 will be published in the 1986-87 financial statement and Budget report.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the £117,917,000 being paid to the European Economic Community under article 10(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77 represents an actual increase in European Economic Community contributions by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he has agreed to pay to the European Economic Community an additional £18,000,000 in consequence of a decision by the European Parliament to recommend increases in the Community Budget for 1986.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 22 January at columns *197-98*.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the effect on the number of traders making value added tax returns if the value added tax threshold was raised to £100,000;

(2) if he will estimate the effect on value added tax revenues if traders whose throughput is less than £100,000 per annum were excluded from value added tax returns.

Mr. Brooke: It is difficult to predict with confidence the effects of a large rise in the threshold on the number of traders registered and the tax yield; experience suggests that a substantial number of traders who would be eligible to opt out of the value added tax system would, for sound commercial reasons, choose not to do so. I refer my hon. Friend to the estimates for the effects of a rise in the threshold to £50,000 which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 4 December 1985 at column *253*. I regret that corresponding

figures for an increase to £100,000 would be subject to a proportionately greater degree of uncertainty and could not be regarded as statistically sound.

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of collecting value added tax.

Mr. Brooke: The cost is £191·3 million in 1984-85 —about one penny for every pound of net revenue.

PRIME MINISTER

Leak Investigations (Immunity from Prosecution)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister what is her policy as Minister for the Civil Service on the use of offers of immunity from prosecution in the course of leak investigations involving civil servants.

The Prime Minister: All matters concerning prosecution or immunity from prosecution are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Pay Comparisons

Mr. Pawsey asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a table to show, for each year since 1968 *(a)* the percentage by which the average pay of (i) teachers in England and Wales, (ii) civil servants, (iii) nurses, (iv) local government officers and (v) police officers has varied from the mean of all five groups' pay and *(b)* the mean of those five groups' pay in cash and real terms.

The Prime Minister: The available information which is based on new earnings survey results from 1970 for five national agreements affecting these groups is shown in the table.

*Average weekly earnings**

Great Britain—April of each year

National Agreement	Men/Women	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
(a) Percentage variations† from the means for employees covered by five specified pay agreements																	
1. Teaching, England and Wales: Burnham Committee, primary, secondary and special schools	Men	−8·5	0·0	−0·7	−2·7	−1·0	−5·5	+6·6	+6·6	+7·0	−0·2	−9·7	+6·0	+1·1	0·0	−1·3	−0·9
	Women	−15·0	−8·1	−6·7	−13·0	−13·3	−15·8	−16·9	−18·6	+20·2	+11·9	+2·2	+18·2	+11·5	+8·4	+7·7	+7·4
2. Civil Service National Whitley Council, Administration Group: middle and higher grades	Men	+29·0	+25·7	+26·5	+16·9	+31·9	+9·9	+16·1	+15·4	+18·8	+16·3	+22·1	+12·8	+10·0	+8·9	+9·6	+8·2
	Women	+36·4	+26·6	+32·4	+19·9	+34·4	+7·7	+12·3	+15·0	+17·9	+17·3	+26·6	+10·9	+12·0	+9·3	+9·8	+7·4
3. National Health Service nurses and midwifery staff	Men	−29·0	−27·9	−31·3	−33·9	−36·7	−15·6	−21·9	−20·9	−25·2	−23·3	−18·0	−21·0	−23·4	−23·4	−26·7	−24·7
	Women	−27·1	−23·6	−25·2	−27·1	−31·5	−11·8	−16·2	−15·7	−21·0	−20·0	−18·0	−20·0	−21·5	−20·3	−23·6	−21·9
4. Local authorities (England and Wales), administrative, professional, technical and clerical	Men	−2·7	−4·1	−0·5	−3·1	+1·9	−3·5	−4·2	−1·5	−3·9	−4·6	−8·1	−4·2	−2·8	−5·6	−6·5	−7·3
	Women	−26·5	−19·9	−19·7	−16·9	−21·1	−20·1	−22·9	−16·9	−18·2	−18·9	−19·4	−18·9	−18·1	−20·1	−20·0	−19·8
5. Police service ranks below superintendent only	Men	−6·3	−1·4	−4·1	−10·0	−2·3	−3·6	−3·5	−0·2	+3·2	+11·6	+11·7	−8·4	−15·1	−20·1	−24·9	−24·7
	Women	−2·0	−9·2	−4·5	−11·7	−5·5	−8·3	−8·4	−1·5	+1·2	+9·6	−8·8	−9·9	−16·2	−22·8	−26·0	−27·0
(b) Unweighted mean of average earnings for the agreements specified above (£/week)																	
Average weekly earnings—current prices	Men	33·1	36·2	41·5	44·9	51·8	68·7	84·0	88·2	95·7	106·5	138·5	161·3	171·4	187·0	198·4	210·3
	Women	25·3	27·1	30·9	33·2	38·4	51·8	64·3	68·2	73·7	82·6	106·6	126·7	134·2	146·4	157·9	167·5
Average weekly earnings—April 1970 prices•	Men	33·1	33·1	35·6	35·3	35·4	38·6	39·7	38·5	35·7	36·0	39·5	40·0	38·9	40·8	41·1	40·8
	Women	25·3	24·7	26·5	26·1	26·2	29·1	30·4	27·4	27·5	28·0	29·6	30·9	30·4	32·6	32·7	32·5

Source: New Earnings Surveys 1970 to 1985 inclusive. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

* For employees whose earnings were not affected by absence.

† A positive number implies average earnings greater than the mean of the five agreements.

‡ The unweighted mean of average earnings for the five agreements specified above.

Full-time non-manual men aged 21 and over, full-time non-manual women aged 18 and over.

* April 1985 settlements are not reflected in the 1985 figures for the first three agreements.

• Converted to April 1970 prices by using the retail prices index (all items).

Note:

The figures above for individual years and agreements can be affected by the timing of pay settlements. Changes in average earnings can reflect several factors including changes in the amount of overtime worked and changes in the structure and composition of employment.

Press Office

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column 88, which producers of radio and television programmes have been contacted by her press office in the last month for which figures are available; what record is kept of the content of the contacts; and what amplification of the information contained in the *Radio Times* and the *TV Times* has resulted.

The Prime Minister: My press office keeps regularly in touch with about seven radio and television current affairs programmes to establish the subjects the producers intend to pursue and the members of the Government they wish, or have arranged, to take part. The current list is LWT's "Weekend World"; BBC TV's "This Week, Next Week" and "Panorama"; BBC Radio 4's "The World this Weekend" and "File on 4"; Granada TV's "World in Action"; and Thames' "TV Eye'. The objective is to amplify the information contained in the *Radio Times* and *TV Times*.

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what are the functions of her press office; how many staff are currently employed there; and what its budget is for the current year.

The Prime Minister: The functions of my press office are to give advice on my own and the Government's relations with the media; to provide a service to press, radio and television; and to co-ordinate the presentation of Government policy.

The office has a staff of eight, including secretarial and other support staff.

The budget for 1986-87 is £280,000, which covers salaries, superannuation, accommodation, travel and subsistence, and general publicity and equipment charges.

Engagements

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister whether she will list her official engagements for Monday 6 January and Tuesday 7 January.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Monday 6 January.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether she will list her official engagements for 6 and 7 January.

The Prime Minister: On Monday 6 January and Tuesday 7 January I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others at 10 Downing Street.

Mr. Bernard Ingham

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister on what date Mr. Bernard Ingham made a report to her about his actions on Monday 6 January; and at what time.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement I made on 23 January at columns 449-460 and my speech in the debate today.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will give a list of the duties performed by her press secretary; and to whom he is directly responsible in day to day matters.

The Prime Minister: My chief press secretary, Mr. Bernard Ingham, deals with all media and public relations matters relating to my office. He is answerable directly to me, and as I told the House on 23 January at column 459 I have great confidence in him.

Westland plc

Dr. Gilbert asked the Prime Minister if the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence was leaked by a member of the private office of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister (1) on what date she was personally informed that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had authorised the disclosure of extracts from the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); and if she will make a statement;

(2) why it was decided not to acknowledge publicly responsibility when the decision was taken to disclose extracts of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); and if she will make a statement;

(3) if her press secretary consulted any members of the Cabinet before approving on her behalf the disclosure by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry of extracts from the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement I made in 23 January at columns 449-460 and my speech in the debate today.

Mr. Bell asked the Prime Minister when she first had a sight of the letter which the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) proposed to send to Mr. David Horne, banking adviser to the European Consortium in the Westland affair and which was subsequently sent on 3 January; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 4 January 1986.

Mr. Bell asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to public funds of the inquiry into the disclosure of official information in relation to the Westland affair; how many officials were involved; on what dates the inquiry started and finished; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will list the officials and their position who carried out the inquiry under the Secretary to the Cabinet into the disclosure of official information relating to the Westland affair; and if she will also list the persons who were interviewed in the course of the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: As I told the House on 23 January at column 452, the inquiry started on 14 January and reported on 22 January. The inquiry was conducted by the Head of the Home Civil Service, assisted by one other official. There was no extra cost to public funds.

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister whether her office was aware that a member of the Department of Trade and Industry would be attending the Westland's meeting of 6 January to distribute the press release about the company's future.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Bell asked the Prime Minister what grounds the Head of the Civil Service had for his belief that the testimony of a particular person to be questioned during his inquiry into the disclosure of official information relating to the Westland affair was sufficiently vital to the inquiry as to justify an approach to the Attorney-General for his consent to a conditional offer of immunity from prosecution; and if she will make a statement.

The Attorney General: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I have just given to his question on this matter. The decision was mine. I was satisfied that the person concerned was uniquely able to give a first-hand account of how the disclosure was made.

European Museum of the Year Scheme

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of reductions in the United Kingdom's spending on international cultural affairs arising from the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to use some of the savings from withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to provide funds to the European museum of the year scheme; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The money saved from our contribution to UNESCO will be used to further educational, scientific and other activities designed to benefit developing countries, particularly in the Commonwealth.

Lotus Cars

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Northern Ireland Office in relation to Government policy on action in respect of Lotus Cars and its involvement with de Lorean; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: De Lorean Motor Cars Limited is in receivership and liquidation. Matters arising from the company's affairs are the concern of the joint liquidators, the joint receivers and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I am satisfied that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has consulted, where necessary, with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Downing Street (Hospitality)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister pursuant to her reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, column 628, what is the basis for deciding who is a prominent national of a country represented by a foreign visitor for the purposes of invitations to Downing street dinners; and where the information to provide the basis for such decisions is kept.

The Prime Minister: It is a matter of judgment and common sense.

Nuclear Forces

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she is made aware when United States nuclear forces at bases in Britain are put on to a state of alert; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government would expect to be informed.

Mr. Leon Brittan

Dr. Gilbert asked the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about his continued membership of the Government.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member will have seen my exchange of letters with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) on 24 January.

Defence Procurement

Dr. Godman asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the co-ordination of responsibilities in relation to the placing of major defence equipment orders between the Ministry of Defence and other relevant Departments, so far as the defence procurement policy implications on the one hand and the social and employment consequences, on the other, are concerned.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence consults, as necessary, with other Government Departments on the industrial and social implications of major defence equipment orders. As I confirmed in the House on 19 December 1985, major procurement decisions are a matter for collective decision.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Sector Housing Stock

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the net and gross amounts spent on repairing the public sector housing stock from *(a)* the capital account and *(b)* the current account for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Expenditure on renovation and repair by local authorities in England has been as follows:

	Capital £ *million*	*Current* £ *million*
1979-80	723	691
1980-81	670	863
1981-82	619	939
1982-83	951	1,052
1983-84	1,151	1,199
1984-85	*1,240	*1,254

* Estimated.

These figures relate to expenditure by local authorities on their own stock: they do not include expenditure by housing associations or new towns. It is not possible to provide figures for net capital expenditure on renovation and repairs because it is not known what proportion of such expenditure is funded from capital receipts. Nor is there an appropriate definition of 'net' current expenditure for this purpose.

Housing Construction

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to ensure that the increased allocation for housing announced in the autumn statement is actually spent on physical construction work.

Sir George Young: The whole of the £200 million increase in gross capital provision for housing for 1986-87 announced in the Autumn Statement has been added to the planned level of local authority capital spending, from which the housing investment programme allocations for individual authorities have been derived. A high proportion of local authority capital spending is directly reflected in physical construction work, and it is on those types of capital expenditure that local authorities have been encouraged to concentrate.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a breakdown of gross capital expenditure local authority provision for housing in 1985-86 and 1986-87 by *(a)* housing investment programme allocation, *(b)* the prescribed proportion of capital receipts, *(c)* expenditure out of accrued receipts and *(d)* non-prescribed expenditure.

Sir George Young: For 1985-86, the gross provision for local authority capital spending on housing was £2,324 million, and the housing investment programme allocation total was £1,600 million. For 1986-87 the corresponding figures are £2,532 million and £1,465 million. The calculations used to arrive at the allocation total are based on assumptions about capital receipts and non-prescribed expenditure across all services, rather than specifically for housing.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* any available breakdown and *(b)* the source, of the repair and maintenance figures given in Cmnd. 9702-II, Part 2, "Additional Analyses," paragraph 24.

Sir George Young: These figures are based on table 1.6 of Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-84, HMSO, published by the Department of the Environment, recording output by the construction industry.

Table 1.6*(a)* shows that in 1984 the industry recorded output of £3,746 million (at current prices) of repair and maintenance work for the public sector excluding Housing. Housing repair and maintenance for the public and private sector totalled £6,251 million, at current prices, of which it is estimated that the public sector accounted for half, approximately £3,100 million. The figure of £6 billion reflects a cautious adjustment to allow for capitalised repair and maintenance subsumed within table 2.18.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce further legislation to stimulate the supply of homes to rent in the private sector during the current Parliament.

Sir George Young: The Government hope to introduce measures to encourage the supply of homes for renting in the private sector, though no proposals for any major reform of the existing legislation are likely to be brought forward during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Urban Programme

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources he is proposing to make available under the urban programme in 1986-87 for partnership and programme authorities.

Mr. John Patten: I am today announcing initial resource allocations to individual partnership and programme authorities totalling £220 million for 1986-87. I am also providing £5 million through the urban programme to support community refurbishment schemes set up in co-operation with the urban housing renewal unit (UHRU). Therefore about £225 million should be available to partnership and programme authorities compared to £224 million initially allocated for 1985-86. Local authorities will receive additional allocations where they support urban regeneration projects through the urban development grant scheme. Additional resources sometimes become available for redistribution within the urban block in the course of the year so initial allocations frequently differ from outturn.

Separately, the £50 million available through the urban housing renewal unit is not yet allocated so individual authorities will be able to supplement their resources by bidding for this.

1986-87 will be the first year of operation of the urban programme management initiative (UPM). The UPM has been discussed in detail with local authority associations, whose ideas resulted in valuable improvements to the system. I welcome their acceptance of the UPM in the revised form. Under the UPM, individual projects will have clear objectives related to the strategy set by the authority in its inner area programme (IAP). Expected outputs of projects will be quantified wherever possible, and overall outputs expected from the IAP will also be expressed in a form that can be aggregated at national level.

The allocations made today are provisional; formal allocations are made after IAPs have been approved. We accept that certain aspects of the UPM cannot operate in full in the first year. However, authorities cannot expect to have their allocations confirmed in full unless the main requirements of the UPM are met and Ministerial Guidelines for the urban programme are followed.

The allocations to the programme authorities are the same in cash terms as those made last year, as is that for the Birmingham partnership, which has an exceptionally large scale of problems and a good record in the effective use of resources. The allocations to individual authorities are:

Authority	*Allocation (£ million)*
Birmingham	24·5
Hackney	11·6
Islington	10·0
Lambeth	13·1
Liverpool	22·8
Manchester/Salford	23·8
Newcastle/Gateshead	17·2
Blackburn	3·60
Bolton	3·59
Bradford	4·58
Brent	4·50
Coventry	4·30
Hammersmith and Fulham	5·63
Hull	4·47
Knowsley	3·70
Leeds	4·13
Leicester	5·43
Middlesbrough	4·62
Nottingham	4·85
Oldham	3·66
Rochdale	3·60
Sandwell	4·50
Sheffield	4·01
Sunderland	3·17
Tower Hamlets	4·50
North Tyneside	3·12
South Tyneside	3·93
Wandsworth	4·50
Wirral	3·67
Wolverhampton	4·84

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will broaden the criteria for urban programme expenditure to enable direct investment by local authorities in local commercial and community enterprises; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *341*]: The categories of financial assistance by local authorities to commercial undertakings, including community businesses, which are eligible for Exchequer support under the urban programme are set out in annex A to the Department's letter of 26 March 1984 to designated district authorities in England. There are no plans to amend these categories.

Urban Aid (Merseyside)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what schemes operating in the Knowsley

borough area of Merseyside are funded by urban aid money; and what schemes have operated in the Knowsley borough area of Merseyside in the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 which have been funded by urban aid moneys.

Sir George Young: The information requested for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86 is as follows:

Schemes in receipt of Urban Programme Grant in Knowsley 1981-82 to 1985-86

1981-82
Units for disruptive pupils
Nursery places at St. Agnes, Huyton
Nursery places at St. Mark's, Huyton
Nursery places at Sacred Heart, Kirkby
Liverpool and District Family Service Unit
Nursery Class, Prescot
Playgroup Schemes (under 5's)
Hillside Play Centre
Nursery Class, Westvale CP School
Nursery Class, Mosscroft CP School
Nursery Class, Willis CP School
Treatment of demolished flats sites, Kirkby
Cantril Farm Day Nursery
Princess Drive Day Nursery
St. Domingo RC School
Park Brow CP School
St. Columbas RC School
St. Maries RC School
Park View CP School
Page Moss CP School
Home School Liaison Project
Halewood CAB
Huyton-Whiston CAB
Mardale Family Centre
Community Development Officer, Halewood
St. Aloysius RC School
Cherryfield CP School
Parkbrow CP School
Environmental Improvements

1982-83
Employment of additional trainees
Remedial teachers, Halewood, Cantril and Parkway Comprehensive Schools
Parkview Adventure Playgrounds, Huyton
Additional support for nursery education
"Whiston House" Voluntary Services Centre
Hilton Grace Youth Club
Tower Hill Playleader Scheme
Adventure playground Line Square
Provision of additional nursery classes at New Hutte and Longview Primary Schools
NACRO Knowsley Neighbourhood Project
Bridgefield School conversion to recreation and sports centre
Stockbridge Village Trust

1983-84
NACRO Knowsley Neighbourhood Project Huyton
Prescot Leisure Centre
Additional nursery support
Former Bridgefield School phase I—Conversion to recreation and sports centre
Full time organiser for CAB
Changing room facilities, Cronton
Fencing of Lathom Road health centre
Landscaping of Tower Hill health centre, Kirkby
Financial Assistance package
Refurbishment of Administration Buildings
Co-op development officer
Signing of Knowsley Industrial Park (Ph 1), Kirkby
Fencing of Depot Road Phase I Knowsley KIP, Kirkby
Provision of small units refurbishment/conversion
Children with language disorders
Adult Education/Community use of schools
14-16 Curriculum development project
Refurbishment of specialist areas in schools
Two borough nursery units
Two voluntary nursery units
Torrington Drive: Environmental Improvements, Halewood
Torrington Drive: Shops—Halewood
Housing areas reclamation
Finch House, Huyton
Huyton Leisure Centre, Weight training room
Kirkby Sports Centre running track
Kirby Sports Centre cycle track
Grant aid to companies for improvement scheme
Voluntary sector liaison
Programme co-ordination
Extension of Lathom Road kitchen
Minibus transport
Kirkby Unemployed Centre—claimants right
Kirkby Unemployed Centre—securing exterior
Cantril Association for employment
Kirkby Community Initiative Agency
Ruffwood P.T.A.—Purchase of Railway Station, Kirkby
Halewood Boys Club—replacement of boiler
Cantril Farm Research and Unemployed Centre
CAFE: refurbishment of surplus school premises
Finch House intensive management
Stockbridge Village Trust
Northwood Community refurbishment scheme
Knowsley ITEC
Norcross House Resource Centre
Dirty trades area, Draw Well Road
Workshop units, Knowsley Industrial Park
Security Fencing, Knowsley Industrial Park
Construction of loop road, Knowsley Industrial Park
Knowsley Enterprise Agency
Prescot Leisure Centre, synthetic pitch

1984-85
Provision of Patients/relatives waiting area, Whiston
Community Physiotherapist
Twig Lane Clinic—major improvement, Page Moss
Area health clinics—minor improvement
Advanced fees for feasibility studies
LA shopping areas—major refurbishment
Enhancement of environmental improvement schemes
Environmental improvements
Financial assistance to the private sector
Security—environmental improvement—Merseyside County Council chase support
Acquisition of land and buildings, Kirkby
Landscaping in association with Highland works, Kirkby
Assistance private sector security/improvements/tourism
Radshaw Court Tower Hill Kirkby
Leather's Lane Halewood, Refurbishment
Dixon Road, Knowsley Industrial Park, Kirkby
Gores Road extension, Knowsley Industrial Park, Kirkby
Depot Road refurbishment, Knowsley Industrial Park, Kirkby
Otis Elevators—Access Road, Kirkby
Refurbishment of Industrial premises with private sector, Kirkby
Business Resource Centre Enterprise Agency, Kirkby
Signposting Knowsley Industrial Park Phase II, Kirkby
Upgrading offices and shops Phase II Knowsley Industrial Park, Kirkby
Adult education, college, youth services
Non-attendance at school project
Disruptive pupils unit
Provision for further adjustment units
Two voluntary nursery units
Environmental improvements in residential areas
Support for NACRO project, Huyton
Mother and baby units (Cherryfield), Kirkby
Knowsley Handicapped Adventure Play Association, Page Moss
Summer holiday play projects
Arts in Knowsley
Expansion of Childrens library services, Stockbridge, Halewood
Refurbishment of football changing rooms, Pagemoss, Swanside
Book bus
Pre-school playgroups—renewal
Auto Services Workers Co-operative, Kirkby
Dayspace training schemes
Parsons house farm improvements
Huyton Council for Voluntary Service
Soft play extension
Knowsley Citizens Advice Bureaux—Mobile, Stockbridge,

Huyton
NSPCC—services for under fives, Kirkby
Liverpool and Knowsley Family Services Unit, Huyton, Stockbridge
St. Mary's Church Hall, care project, Halewood
Community Transport in Knowsley—various
Halewood Community Council—renewal
Community Chest Fund
CDS Training Limited—support
Services for unemployed
Stockbridge Village Trust
Northwood Community refurbishment scheme
Finch House intensive management

1985-86
Aid to Industry—Merseyside CC funded
Workers Co-operative Start Up Grants
Support for Unemployed Resource Centres
Twig Lane Clinic—Phase II, Page Moss
Speech therapist, Language Disorders Unit
Additional speech therapist, elderly-mentally ill
Physiotherapist for children
Health visitors
Radshaw Court, Tower Hill, Kirkby
Signposting—Knowsley Industrial Park Phase II, Kirkby
Kirkby Town Centre—enhancement
River Alt pollution survey, Huyton
Lickers Lane, completion of driveway, Whiston
Aid to Industry—block allocation
Support for M57 Strategy, Huyton
Britonwood Improvement Phase II, Kirkby
Small unit support—Otis Elevators, Kirkby
Support for Knowsley Enterprise Agency
Additional support—Business Resource and ITEC, Kirkby
Provision of services—Caddick Road/School, Kirkby
Improvement of LA shopping parades
Town centre shopping envelope scheme, Prescot, Huyton, Halewood
Enhancement of Tower Hill environmental schemes, Kirkby
Derelict land enhancement schemes
Greenways
Provision for further adjustment units
Four nursery units
Developing reading skills 7-11 year old
EEC officer
Finch House environmental improvement Phase II, Huyton
Hillside Avenue environmental-security scheme, Huyton
Bridgefield Forum Phase II, Halewood
Hard play area—Lickers Lane, Whiston
Field Lane Community Centre, Kirkby
Kirkby Sports Centre—redesign foyer
Refurbishment football changing rooms
Voluntary sector liaison officer
Acorn Venture, Kirkby
Small landscaping community programme
Support for Kirkby Motors
Halewood Citizens Advice Bureau
Halewood Community Council
Kirkby Initiatives Agency—Computer train
Huyton District Society for Mental Child
Childrens Society—intermediate treatment
Huyton Council for Voluntary Service
Community Chest Fund
Housing area reclamation schemes
Stockbridge Village Trust
Finch House intensive management

Footnote:
Schemes are shown only in the financial year in which they were approved except for 1981-82 which includes revenue schemes approved in previous years but still in receipt of grant in 1981-82.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what urban aid funding has been provided by the Government to Merseyside, district by district, during 1981 and each subsequent year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The information requested for the year 1981-82 to 1985-86 is as follows:

Urban programme resources (Merseyside) 1981-82—1985-86
Allocation in £ million cash

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Liverpool	17·40	24·98	25·90	28·28	27·41
Knowsley	0·47	1·34	3·96	5·89	7·43
Wirral	2·79	4·95	7·78	7·83	6·27
Sefton	0·88	0·90	3·03	4·36	2·05
St. Helens	0·49	1·41	1·95	1·55	1·77

Notes:
1. Figures include urban programme expenditure by Merseyside county council and in some cases health authorities.
2. From 1982-83, figures include resources made available for special initiatives on Merseyside.
3. Figures are for complete financial not calendar years.
4. Figures for 1985-86 are provisional.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what central Government funding has been made to the Stockbridge village trust in the current financial year; and how these figures compare with those for each year since 1978-79.

Sir George Young: Stockbridge village trust was established in April 1983 when it embarked upon a major capital development programme for the estate supported in part by the urban programme through Knowsley borough council. Some works undertaken by the trust have also been eligible for derelict land grant. In the current financial year £1·935 million of UP resources have been approved. Urban programme approvals in earlier years are as follows: £1·719 million in 1984-85 and £1·401 million in 1983-84. DLG resources of £0·144 million were also approved in 1984-85.

St. Mary's House, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet received a request from Portsmouth city council for listed building consent to demolish St. Mary's house, Portsmouth.

Mr. Tracey: I have not received a request from Portsmouth city council for listed building consent to demolish St. Mary's house, Portsmouth.

Derelict Land

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the total acreage of derelict land in England was in (i) 1975 and (ii) 1985, or the last year for

which figures are available; and what total acreage of derelict land within those figures is attributable to coal mining activities.

Sir George Young: Surveys of derelict land in England were carried out in 1974 and 1982 and the information requested is available only for those two years as follows:

	Acres	
	1974	*1982*
Total amount of derelict land in England	106,900	112,800
Of which spoil heaps account for	32,400	32,900
Of which colliery spoil heaps account for	*	12,500

* Not available.

Land Reclamation

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was spent by the Government, local authorities and the National Coal Board on land reclamation in England in (i) 1975 and (ii) 1985, or the last year for which figures are available; and what acreage of land was reclaimed by each body.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

	1974-75 *£ million*	*1984-85* *£ million*
Expenditure incurred by local authorities on approved reclamation schemes	8·2	66·4
Derelict Land Grant (DLG) paid in Central Government to las.	11·7	64·5

	Acres	*Acres*
Derelict land reclaimed by local authorities with the aid of DLG	2,235	3,073
Derelict land reclaimed by local authorities without the aid of DLG	259	*

* Not yet available.

Apart from the impact of inflation, a main reason why the number of acres being reclaimed has not risen proportionately with the resources devoted to reclamation is that urban sites, to which more emphasis is being given, are more expensive to reclaim.

No grant aided reclamation has been undertaken by the NCB who normally release their redundant sites to local authorities for reclamation.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to revise circular 32/81 on part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Revision of this circular will be incorporated in the revision of circular 108/77, which is expected to be published in the spring.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will publish an updated review of the code of guidance for sites of special scientific interest, following the revisions brought about by the Wildlife and Countryside Amendment Act 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department aims to publish an updated review of the code towards the end of 1986.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the name of the company to which he referred at column 1490 of the *Official Report* of 26 July; if he will withdraw the allegation he made concerning the company and its relations with the Greater London Enterprise Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The name of the company concerned must remain a matter of confidence until its consent to reveal it has been obtained. We have been unable to obtain its consent.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give consent to the transfer of the remaining £8 million of the Greater London Enterprise Board's annual funding from the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *341*]: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 9 December at c. *477*. The full results of the independent assessment of GLEB are awaited.

Block Grant

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to the extra block grant entitlements in the document headed "Grant Recycling 1986-87", what was the assumed total expenditure for each local authority giving rise to the £400 million underclaim on the national grant pool.

Mr. Waldegrave: No assumption was made. Many levels of total expenditure would give rise to a £400 million underclaim.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to the extra block grant entitlements in the document headed "Grant Recycling 1986-87", what percentage expenditure increase the assumed total expenditure represents for each local authority, for each authority from its adjusted 1985-86 budget, as defined in annex G RSG report.

Mr. Waldegrave: No assumption as to each authority's expenditure was made.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to the extra block grant entitlements in the document headed "Grant Recycling 1986-87", what was the grant entitlement for each authority before close-ending.

Mr. Waldegrave: No assumption as to each authority's entitlement before close-ending was made.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, with reference to the extra block grant entitlements in the document headed "Grant Recycling 1986-87", what were the total grant entitlements for each class of authority before, and after, close-ending.

Mr. Waldegrave: No assumption as to each class of authority's total grant entitlement before and after close-ending was made.

Inner-city Investment

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when an announcement will be forthcoming

on the selection of an inner-city area for a pilot scheme allowing the injection of public resources to attract private sector investment; and if Bradford is still on the short-list.

Sir George Young: Part III of the Housing and Planning Bill empowers the Secretary of State to provide financial assistance to persons who incur expenditure in the course of activities which will contribute to urban regeneration. It is my right hon. Friend's intention, subject to the approval of the Bill by Parliament, initially to use part III in a limited number of localities to support regeneration programmes carried out by the private sector. No decisions have yet been taken on where the power will be used. But we would expect to give priority to localities where there are substantial areas containing derelict or disused land and buildings and where there is a willingness on the part of private sector interests to undertake the task of regeneration.

South Africa (Sporting Links)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had discussions with members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement regarding sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his policy that visits to South Africa by members of sporting organisations in receipt of funds from the Sports Council will prejudice the grant of such moneys.

Mr. Tracey: This is essentially a matter for the Sports Council. It is well established that Government and Sports Council policy is to support the Gleneagles agreement and that public funds cannot be used to assist contacts with South Africa.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had discussions with members of the Campaign for Fair Play regarding sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Tracey: Yes.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has offered the Sports Council with regard to the allocation of funds to organisations whose members have played sport in South Africa without authorisation from the body concerned.

Mr. Tracey: None.

Tobacco Industry (Sport Sponsorship)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Luton, North on Wednesday 22 January, *Official Report*, column *225*, whether he will publish details of his intention to alter the current voluntary code exercised by the tobacco industry over the sponsorship of sport.

Mr. Tracey: No. My negotiations with the industry must be confidential. I have sought advice from interested bodies.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 39,000 square feet of light industrial units in Bridge road, for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 26,100 square feet of light industrial units in Malham road for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: No applications have been received from the Greater London council for consent to the disposal of these light industrial units. Consent has however been given to contracts for development works at Bridge road and Malham road.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 33,145 square feet of light industrial units, Yarnton Way II, for which the Greater London council applied on 19 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: No application has been received from the Greater London council for consent to the disposal of these light industrial units. An application for consent to a contract for development works at Yarnton Way II is, however, receiving consideration.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of shop unit 8, Brixton recreation centre, Lambeth, for which the Greater London council applied on 23 September 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent was given to this application on 26 September 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of the site of 368-374 Norwood road, London SE27, for which the Greater London council applied on 23 September 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 5 Westminster Bridge road, London SE1, for which the Greater London council applied on 30 August 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of unit 1, Parkhouse trading estate, Park House street, Camberwell, London SE5, for which the Greater London council applied on 25 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 21 January 1986 at column *141*.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from local authorities or individuals about the interim budget issued by the London Residuary Body, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *141*]: I have received some representations.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 28 January 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Arable Farms

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the aggregate profit in 1985 for arable farms employing labour.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that this information is not available.

Central Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade

Mr. Fletcher asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) of 29 October, *Official Report*, columns *416-7*, if he will now state what essential services are to be retained in Scotland, following closure of the department of the central veterinary laboratory at Lasswade.

Mr. Jopling: It is intended that mammalian histopathological services, avian diagnostic and consultancy services and various animal health blood tests and import-export tests will be undertaken by a unit of 17 ADAS officers based at the East of Scotland college of agriculture, Edinburgh following the closure of the department at Lasswade.

Female Workers

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if female workers in part-time employment in agriculture are paid at the same hourly rate as their full-time counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The current statutory minimum rate for all workers, male or female, regularly working 30 hours per week or less set by the independent Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales is £2.19 per hour. That for full-time workers and other workers regularly working more than 30 hours per week is £2.24 per hour.

Dairy Crest

Mr. Jackson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Touche Ross has completed its study of Dairy Crest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I commissioned the management consultants Touche Ross to report to us on Dairy Crest, the Milk Marketing Board's commercial arm. We have received the consultants' report and copies are being placed in the Library of the House. We shall be discussing the consultants' findings with interested parties.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Trade Documents (Departmental Authentication)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following his talks with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, he will end the Foreign Office authentication of signatures on trade documents.

Mr. Renton: On 29 January the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will cease authentication of signatures on documents related to the Arab boycott of Israel.

Anglo-Israeli Relations

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been any improvement in Anglo-Israeli relations following the visit of Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, to London.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Peres' useful visit demonstrated the importance we attach to maintaining close and friendly relations with Israel.

State-sponsored Terrorism

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he has for seeking to eliminate state-sponsored terrorism following the attacks at Rome and Vienna airports in December.

Mrs. Chalker: We have taken, and will continue to take, whatever steps we can to deter and if possible eliminate state-sponsored terrorism. European Community Foreign Ministers and their representatives issued a statement yesterday of their determination to strengthen co-operation to deal with all forms of terrorism. They established a new group, within political co-operation, to ensure effective follow-up in the areas covered by the statement.

Gulf War (British Shipping)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government's reaction to the illegal action taken against British shipping in the Gulf war in recent weeks.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom upholds the general principle of freedom of navigation on the high seas. However, under article 51 of the United Nations charter a state such as Iran, actively engaged in an armed conflict, is entitled in exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, to stop and search a foreign merchant ship on the high seas if there is reasonable ground for suspecting that the ship is taking arms to the other side for use in the conflict. This is an exceptional right: if the suspicions prove to be unfounded and if the ship has not committed acts calculated to give rise to suspicion, then the ship's owners have a good claim for compensation for loss caused by the delay.

Our representatives in Tehran are in touch with the Iranian authorities as to why the British registered vessel Barber Perseus was stopped for a check of the ship's manifest on 12 January.

United Nations Sanctions

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's attitude to United Nations mandatory economic sanctions.

Mrs. Chalker: Our views are well known. We do not believe that mandatory economic sanctions are an effective means of encouraging peaceful change.

Gulf War

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he has and what action he has taken to help towards the ending of the Iran-Iraq war.

Mr. Renton: We shall continue to support all realistic efforts aimed at bringing an end to the tragic and wasteful conflict between Iran and Iraq, especially through the good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General and his special representative Mr. Olof Palme. We are keeping in close touch with all interested parties.

Arab-Israeli Relations

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what developments towards a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict he foresees following his recent discussions with King Hussein in London.

Mr. Renton: We expeect King Hussein to continue his efforts, which have our full support, to make progress towards a negotiated settlement.

Iraq (Officer Training)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any members of Iraq's armed forces are currently training in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

Yes.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Duties)

65. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the extra duties that teachers are now required to undertake compared with five years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: There is no agreed list of duties that teachers are required to undertake as part of their contractual obligation. Nor did such a list exist five years ago. The Government's willingness to see an additional £1,250 million over four years spent on teachers' pay is conditional on the negotiation of just such a list.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from parents regarding the teachers' current pay dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Very many parents have conveyed their views to me in the form of letters and petitions. I have also met and addressed organisations which represent parent interests.

I welcome the measure of agreement reflected in the outcome of the discussions held between the two sides under the auspices of ACAS. I regret that the NUT was not party to this agreement and intends to continue with some forms of disruptive action. This is bound to cause further damage to childrens' education.

Education Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, at the latest available date, how many people in Great Britain aged 16 years or over, were in *(a)* schools, *(b)* sixth-form colleges, *(c)* further education colleges, *(d)* polytechnics, *(e)* universities and *(f)* other educational establishments, separating them by age into single years from 16 to 20 years and in bands aged 21 to 24 years, 25 to 29 years and 30 years and over.

Mr. Walden: The readily available information for home students in Great Britain in 1983-84 including all modes of attendance is as follows:

Great Britain (000s)

	Age at 31 August 1983						
	16	*17*	*18*	*19 to 20*	*21 to 24*	*25 and over*	*Total*
Schools*	282·6	174·5	22·4	3·0	—	—	482·5
Further education establishments							
Non-advanced†	361·0	312·7	233·7	255·5	450·4	1,752·6	3,366·0
Advanced‡	0·8	4·8	48·6	146·0	121·4	136·2	457·8
Universities‖	0·4	4·6	44·0	118·5	78·1	123·3	368·8
All students	644·9	496·6	348·6	522·9	649·9	2,012·2	4,675·1

* Includes sixth-form colleges.

† Includes 1,680 thousand students aged 16 and over in adult education centres, for which some of the age detail has been estimated. Excludes 467 thousand students on other courses run by responsible bodies.

‡ Includes polytechnics and central institutions.

‖ Includes 76 thousand students in the United Kingdom enrolled with the Open University.

Deaf-blind Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research he is aware of into *(a)* the effects of deaf-blindness on a child's ability to learn and develop and *(b)* the personal and behavioural problems arising from the dual sensory handicap.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any specific research which has been undertaken into these matters. Any research would have to take into account the fact that children described as "deaf-blind" suffer varying degrees of visual and hearing impairment and often also have mental and physical handicaps.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been carried out by his Department or other institutions into the forms of communication used by deaf-blind children; and what proportion of deaf-blind children of all ages are without any form of communication.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has carried out no research into the forms of communication used by deaf-blind children and is not aware of any which has been carried out by other institutions. The Department does not collect information on the proportion of deaf-blind children of all ages who are without any form of communication.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the teachers of deaf-blind children in *(a)* deaf-blind units, *(b)* ESN(S) schools and *(c)* hospital schools have received special training in teaching children with the dual handicap; and what form the training took.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information. Teachers of deaf-blind children are subject to regulation 18 of the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 which requires that a teacher of a class of deaf-blind children should have an additional specialist qualification to teach either the deaf or the blind. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the relevant extract from the regulations.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what courses there are for training teachers of deaf-blind children; and what progress is being made in extending the provision.

Mr. Dunn: There are currently no training courses specifically for teachers of deaf-blind children. The future training needs of these teachers are currently under consideration.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of deaf-blind children have access to a specialist in teaching those with the dual handicap; and if he will detail the nature of the access.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of deaf-blind children are being taught by a full-time teacher who has had special training in teaching a child with the dual handicap.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of deaf-blind children are in schools where the child is *(a)* the only deaf-blind pupil, *(b)* one of two, *(c)* one of three and *(d)* one of more than three.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many deaf-blind children are being educated in *(a)* deaf-blind units, *(b)* ESN(S) schools, *(c)* hospital schools and *(d)* other schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what specific educational provision is made for deaf-blind children.

Mr. Dunn: There are no special schools solely for deaf-blind children but a number of special schools principally for the visually handicapped and hearing impaired make specific educational provision for the needs of these children. Some who additionally have other handicaps such as severe learning difficulties are educated in special classes and units appropriate to those handicaps.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children of school age and below are known to be deaf-blind; and on what criteria they are identified.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect information on the numbers of deaf-blind children of school age and below. The criteria on which such children are identified are set out in the Education Act 1981; the responsibility for identifying, assessing and meeting special educational needs rests with individual local education authorities.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will institute a national programme to *(a)* survey the numbers and educational needs of deaf-blind children, *(b)* provide additional staff and buildings and *(c)* make appropriate arrangements for their future further education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is concerned about a wide range of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, including those who have additional hearing and visual handicaps. There is, however, no intention to institute a national programme to survey the numbers and educational needs of deaf-blind children, provide additional staff and buildings or make appropriate arrangements for their future further education. These are all matters for individual local education authorities to determine in the first instance.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average staff-child ratio for the teaching of deaf-blind children.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to assess the proportion of peripatetic services required in the education of deaf-blind children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: This is a matter for individual local education authorities to consider through their procedures for assessing the special educational needs of pupils and determining whether or not to maintain statements of needs under section 7 of the Education Act 1981. They also have a duty under section 2(4) of the Act to keep their arrangements for special educational provision under review. The level of such services required is likely to vary considerably both from year to year and from area to area.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to identify and assess the educational needs of deaf-blind children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Under the Education Act 1981 it is the responsibility of individual local education authorities to assess the requirements of children in their area who appear to have special educational needs and to decide what provision would be appropriate for them. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the Department's circular 1/83, which gives detailed guidance to LEAs on how this should be done.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to make suitable educational provision for pre-school, primary and secondary aged deaf children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Act 1981 requires local education authorities to secure provision in ordinary schools for children for whom they maintain a statement of special educational needs, provided that account has been taken of the views of the child's parents, and that the placement is compatible with the special educational provision required by the individual child; the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated; and the efficient use of resources.

The Department is currently reviewing the provision of special schools for hearing-impaired children, in order to match the provision of places to the likely demand, in the light of falling rolls and the increasing move towards integrated education. Some schools for hearing-impaired children will have to close as a result of the effect of declining numbers; my right hon. Friend recognises that there will be a continuing need for special schools for some children, and it is his intention that those schools should be capable of providing a suitable and efficient education. Discussions are continuing with the local education authorities and schools involved.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he has taken any steps to advise teachers of the deaf on how to make full use of any residual vision of deaf-blind children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has taken any steps to advise teachers of the visually impaired on how to make full use of any residual hearing of deaf-blind children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has given no specific advice on these subjects.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate discussions with his counterparts in those European countries which provide for the teaching of deaf-blind children on a national basis on the record of this form of educational provision for children who are small in number but are very severely handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: EC Education Ministers agreed at their meeting in June 1984 to set up a working group of experts to consider the educational needs of handicapped children. The group will shortly submit proposals for a programme of future work which, if agreed, will include a study of children with sensory handicaps. It would be inappropriate to consider other discussions at this time.

Universities (Building Projects)

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the universities which have major building projects in progress or starting soon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The universities with major building projects in progress or starting soon are as follows:

Aston
Bath
East Anglia
Liverpool
London
Manchester
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology
Newcastle
Reading
Salford
Sheffield
Southampton
Aberdeen
Dundee
Glasgow
Heriot-Watt

Provision for grant to universities to cover major capital building work (that is, mainly those projects expected to cost £1 million or more) was £25·8 million in the financial year 1985-86, including a small amount carried forward from the 1984-85 financial year. Subject to parliamentary approval, provision in the financial year 1986-87 will be £26·4 million.

Civil and Military Research

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why, pursuant to the answer of 20 January, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) did not give the figures requested by the hon. Member for Cambridge in his answer of 20 January relating to sums allocated in 1984-85 for civil and military research and development; whether he will now give this information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The established policy of the Department in dealing with requests for statistical information is to refer Members to sources where the data can readily be obtained. In addition, my hon. Friend's Question called for information in areas which are not the responsibility of my right hon. Friend.

Science (Policy Review)

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his annual review of policies for the support of science will be made available to the House.

Mr. Walden: Details of the Government's expenditure plans for education and science in 1986-87 were announced in the House on 12 November 1985. In reaching its decisions on the science budget, the Government took into account advice received during the year from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. Copies of the Board's advice have been placed in the library of the House. It is likely that a similar pattern will be followed in the current year.

Teachers

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has evidence of a growth in the use by local education authorities of fixed term non-permanent contracts for the employment of teachers.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department does not collect information about the incidence of fixed-term contracts among those who return to teaching employment after a period of absence, and it has only recently begun to collect such data for newly qualified teachers. We estimate that about 12 per cent. of the newly qualified teachers taking up positions in schools in England and Wales in 1984 were appointed on a temporary basis, but we are not yet in a position to identify any trend in such appointments.

Teachers (Child Abuse)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that both initial and in-service training enables teachers both to recognise cases of child abuse among their pupils and to take the action necessary to protect children at risk.

Mr. Chris Patten: The criteria which now govern all courses of initial teacher training require, inter alia, that the courses should prepare students for their pastoral responsibilities as teachers. Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that their schools have adequate arrangements to identify children at risk and that their teachers are aware of these arrangements. A range of training acitivities to promote awareness of how to identify and deal with child abuse is promoted by local authorities and is available to school staff. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is currently reviewing his procedural guidance on child abuse and will be issuing a consultation paper shortly which will include recommendations on training.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the additional finance, manpower and other resources required for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education.

Mr. Chris Patten: The general criteria for the GCSE provide that syllabuses and methods of assessment should not make unreasonable demands on human or financial resources. The Government's expenditure plans should allow authorities to make appropriate provision for the GCSE provided that they take advantage of the scope for efficiency saving and contain their costs.

In initiating the special programme of in-service training for the introduction of the GCSE, the Government has recognised the resource implications for examining groups, LEAs and schools and has arranged to make a substantial contribution towards these costs: it is supporting £8 million expenditure on supplying cover for teachers attending training seminars; and is giving £1·5 million to the Secondary Examinations Council and the examining groups towards the cost of providing that training.

Leeds University

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last paid an official visit to Leeds university.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend's last official visit to Leeds university was on 6 November 1984.

Science Budget

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what proportion in real terms the science budget has changed between 1981-82 and 1985-86.

Mr. Walden: There has been a 6 per cent. increase. This figure has been derived by adjusting the cash outturn for 1981-82, and the cash provision for 1985-86, to a base of average 1984-85 prices using the deflator for gross domestic product at market prices.

Lunches

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has for the number of *(a)* free lunches and *(b)* lunches paid for by pupils served by each local education authority to children; and what were the figures in each of the past five years.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is shown in the Department's annual school meals census; copies of which are available in the Library. The latest available information is for autumn 1984.

Fire Precautions Act 1971

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to bring schools, colleges and other educational establishments within the provisions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to designate educational establishments as requiring a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. My right hon. Friend and I are at present satisfied that existing legislative provisions, including the parts of the 1971 Act which already apply, are adequate.

PRIME MINISTER

Channel Tunnel

Q15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has had with President Mitterrand about the Channel fixed link; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 20 January, President Mitterrand and I met in Lille and announced the joint decision of the two Governments to facilitate the construction of a Channel fixed link. I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on that day, at columns 19-20.

Under-fives (Education)

Q44. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Government policy towards the provision of education for the under-fives.

The Prime Minister: It is for local education authorities to determine the scale and nature of the provision in their area for those below compulsory school age, in the light of local needs and priorities and the availability of resources. Chapter 4 of "Better Schools" sets out the Government's policy on the education of the under-fives, including resources. Current participation rates and actual numbers of under fives in school are the highest ever. Overall, some 80 per cent. of children are in school before they are five; excluding "rising fives", 22 per cent. of 3 and 4-year-olds now attend maintained nursery classes or nursery schools and 21 per cent. attend primary reception classes; and a significant contribution to pre-school experience is also made by playgroups, which are attended by some 40 per cent. of 3 and 4-year-olds.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the effect on the economies of Third world countries of the Communities' policy of providing export rebates for the disposal of surplus agricultural products.

The Prime Minister: I will bear my hon. Friend's suggestion in mind in deciding, nearer the time, what it might be appropriate to raise at the next meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what action Her Majesty's Government have taken specifically to implement each of the conclusions in chapter IV of the special report of the Court of Auditors on the system for the payment of refunds on agricultural exports (85/C215/01); and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The report is not addressed to individual Governments and it is for the European Commission in the first instance to decide what further action needs to be taken in the light of the court's findings.

However, the Government would consider positively any proposals for cost-effective measures which would improve financial control over the use of Community funds.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Shops Bill

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister how many representations she has received *(a)* before and *(b)* after the publication of the Shops Bill *[Lords]*; if she will break them down (i) for and (ii) against giving the names of the major retail stores concerned and the nature of their representations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.

Since the report of the Auld committee was debated in this House the Government have received 29,029 representations; 10,002 were received prior to, and 19,027 subsequent to, the publication of the Shops Bill *[Lords]*. Seventy-one have been in favour of, and 28,958 opposed to, the Government's proposals.

During this period, meetings have been held with or letters received from the following major stores:

For
Briggs Boot Stores
Notcutts Garden Centres Limited
William Strike Limited
Cramphorn plc
Asda
B & Q Retail Limited
Woolworth holdings
Habitat/Mothercare plc
W H Smith
Harris Queensway
Texas Homecare Ltd
RMC Homecare Ltd
Sharpe and Fisher plc
Paul Madeley Ltd
Homebase Ltd
Stylo Barratt Shoes Ltd
Tesco plc

Against
Marments Ltd
Milwards and Sons Ltd
Safeway Food Stores Limited
Co-operative Union Ltd
Sears plc
James Beattie plc
Benson Shoe Ltd
West Midlands Co-operative Society Ltd
William McIlroy Ltd

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Courts

66. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Attorney-General if, when the interdepartmental committee reviewing family courts completes its work, a final report will be published; and if he will make a statement.

67. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Attorney-General when the interdepartmental review on family courts is expected to report.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to my hon. and learned Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 13 January, at column *446*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Salaries

Mr. Deakins asked the Lord Privy Seal what arrangements have been made for determining the pay of hon. Members after 1987.

Mr. Biffen: The Resolution of the House of 26 July 1983 provides that, for service on and after 1 January 1988 the salary of hon. Members shall be at a yearly rate equal to 89 per cent. of the maximum point of the senior principal (grade 6) pay scale in the non-industrial Civil Service.

SCOTLAND

Glengarry Forest (Low Frequency Installation)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of medical evidence from the United States of America, he has any intention of postponing the installation of the proposed extremely low frequency test facility in Glengarry forest; whether he has commissioned any research into the links between extremely low frequency transmissions and the levels of cancer and leukaemia in local populations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The proposed extremely low frequency test facility in Glengarry is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. I understand that the Ministry will be consulting the planning authority for the Glengarry forest in accordance with the guidelines for Government Departments laid down in the Scottish Development Department's circular No 21/1984. Only if the Ministry of Defence and the planning authority fail to agree would the Secretary of State for Scotland become involved, and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment at this stage on the merits of the proposed development. I have not commissioned any research into the links between extremely low frequency transmissions and the levels of cancer and leukaemia in local populations, but I understand that studies undertaken in the United States of America have established no such links.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans Her Majesty's Government have to stimulate the growth of Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The development of Glasgow airport is a matter for its owners, the British Airports Authority.

Housing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what allocation has been made by his Department to Inverclyde district council for housing expenditure each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the following table. The substantial increases in the provisional capital allocations for 1986-87 over the allocations issued last March for 1985-86 reflect Government recognition of the continuing housing needs in Inverclyde.

Year	*Housing Revenue Account £ million*	*Non-housing Revenue Account £ million*
1979-80	3·790	1·730
1980-81	3·870	1·987
1981-82	3·639	2·292
1982-83	4·658	2·639
1983-84	4·928	1·705
1984-85	2·960	2·445
*†1985-86	4·250	1·800
†1986-87	5·050	2·300

* Gross allocations issued on 29 March 1985.
† Provisional gross allocations issued on 18 December 1985.

Scottish Grand Committees

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what security consideration determined boot and bonnet searches of the cars of hon. Members attending the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on 20 January.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *371*]: No special security considerations applied that day. When the Scottish Grand Committee meets in Edinburgh, cars using the car park are normally searched as they are also at Westminster.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Asset Sales

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, on a basis consistent with table 5.1 of Cmnd. 9702, the actual or planned proceeds for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 from asset sales retained in nationalised businesses in a form consistent with the then Chief Secretary's reply on 26 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns 861-2.

Mr. MacGregor: Actual and forecast receipts from asset sales for the years 1980-81 to 1985-86 included in the total internal resources figures shown in table 5.1 of Cmnd. 9702 are as follows.

In accordance with usual practice, it is not appropriate to publish future figures for individual industries because of commercial confidentiality and other factors.

*£ million**	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86†*
National Coal Board	21	24	22	24	22	25
Electricity (England and Wales)	10	17	21	23	27	37
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board	—	1	1	1	5	1
South of Scotland Electricity Board	1	1	1	1	2	2
British Gas Corporation	7	7	7	13	95	‡

£ million*	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86†
British National Oil Corporation	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Steel Corporation	61	66	68	19	108	10
British Telecom	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Office	9	7	3	6	7	28
National Girobank	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Airways Board	15	15	77	11	31	‡
British Airports Authority	—	—	—	1	—	‡
British Railways Board	48	34	99	99	160	86
British Transport Docks Board	1	1	—	—	—	—
British Waterways Board	—	—	—	—	2	2
National Freight Company Ltd.	17	18	—	—	—	—
National Bus Company	11	6	6	7	8	‡
Scottish Transport Company	1	—	—	1	1	1
British Aerospace	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Shipbuilders	2	2	2	13	5	‡
Civil Aviation Authority	—	1	—	—	—	—
Water (England and Wales)	13	16	11	13	21	19
Enterprise Oil	—	—	—	—	—	—
London Regional Transport	—	—	—	—	—	17

* Rounded to nearest £ million. Where industries have been privatised the figures given relate to the period up to privatisation.
† 1985-86—provisional outturn.
‡ No figures currently available.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, on a basis consistent with table 2.2 of Cmnd. 9702-II, a table showing, by programme for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88, the proceeds of asset sales which are outside central privatisation proceeds and which are netted off against programme totals.

Mr. MacGregor: The table below shows sales of land and buildings by department for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88. The figures include sales by local authorities and new towns as well as central Government and are consistent with the figures published in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702. To be consistent with table 2.2, the figures are provided by Department, rather than programme, and in real terms. The real terms figures are the cash outturn or plans adjusted to 1984-85 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Sales of Land and Existing Buildings in Real Terms by Department, 1979-80 to 1987-88

£ million (base year 1984-85)

Department	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	*1987-88
Defence	69	85	63	44	34	28	41	33	30
Foreign and Commonwealth Office†	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
European Community	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food‡	13	27	15	13	11	9	15	13	10
Trade and Industry‖	5	4	2	7	11	16	12	—	—
Energy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Employment	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
Transport	19	57	57	41	42	48	35	28	30
DOE—Housing	832	1,019	1,627	2,146	1,594	1,332	1,309	1,116	980
DOE—Other Environmental Services	184	247	251	314	328	423	425	457	430
Home Office¶	34	33	31	43	56	51	35	28	20
Education and Science	31	32	55	50	48	86	63	56	60
Arts and Libraries	—	11	3	4	3	2	—	—	—
DHSS—Health and Personal Social Services	23	28	30	29	47	64	79	67	60
DHSS—Social Security	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	65	104	156	209	241	246	188	172	160
Wales	29	35	120	150	94	85	87	86	80
Northern Ireland	1	—	58	48	47	45	43	32	30
Chancellor's Department	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Departments●	8	11	8	18	9	8	15	20	20
Total	1,312	1,694	2,480	3,116	2,566	2,443	2,345	2,108	1,910

* Rounded to the nearest £10 million following the convention in the PEWP.
† Including Overseas Development Administration.
‡ Including Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and Forestry Commission.
‖ Including Export Credits Guarantee Department.
¶ Including Lord Chancellor's Department.
● Including Property Services Agency and Civil Superannuation.

It is not possible to identify fully the sales of assets, other than those from central privatisation proceeds and sales of land and buildings, within the public expenditure figures. However, the amounts of these other sales are likely to be relatively small.

Gas Levy

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the actual or forecast proceeds of the gas levy, for each of the years 1980-81 to 1988-89.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 12 November, at column 128.

Privatisation

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* references in support of the statement that proceeds from privatisation are, in line with international conventions, netted off against the public spending figures, Cmnd. 9702-1, paragraph 57, and place the relevant documentation in the Library.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom treatment of privatisation proceeds is in accordance with the advice in "A Manual on Government Finance Statistics" drafted in 1974 by the IMF, and in general use since. Section IV C of the manual makes it clear that transactions in company securities should be treated, like net lending, as part of net Government expenditure rather than as a financing item. The net treatment is also supported, for example, by the "European System of Integrated Economic Accounts" published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities. I am placing copies of relevant extracts of the documents referred to above in the Library.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 for each organisation treated as a nationalised industry in at least one year the actual or planned figures, as appropriate, for capital requirements and financing in a form identical to table 5.1 of Cmnd. 9428-ii.

Mr. MacGregor: I have placed tables covering the years 1980-81 to 1986-87 in the Library. In accordance with normal practice, figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are excluded.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* (i) the public expenditure gross domestic product ratio for the years 1970-71 to 1989-90 on the definitions used in the 1985 public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428 and (ii) the ratio for the same years using the definitions used in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702 and place a detailed reconciliation in the Library.

Mr. MacGregor: Public expenditure figures expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product using the definitions used in the 1985 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) and the 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702) were illustrated in chart 2.20 of Cmnd. 9702. The underlying figures are as follows:

Public expenditure expressed as a percentage of GDP

	1978-79 outturn	*1979-80 outturn*	*1980-81 outturn*	*1981-82 outturn*	*1982-83 outturn*
Cmnd 9428 definition	40½	40	42½	43½	43
Cmnd 9702 definition	43	43½	46	46½	46½

	1983-84 outturn	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 estimated outturn*	*1986-87 plans*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*
Cmnd 9428 definition	42½	43	41	40	39	38½
Cmnd 9702 definition	46	45½	44½	43	41½	41

An explanation of the above two definitions was given in an article entitled "Measuring Public Expenditure" published in the August 1985 edition of *Economic Trends*, table D of which provides a reconciliation between the two measures. This article includes figures going back to 1973-74. It should be noted that these figures are not directly comparable to those given above because they were based on the definition of the planning total used in the 1985 White Paper. However, the differences between the two White Papers are relatively small.

Freeports

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the turnover of business in the freeports which are already operational.

Mr. Brooke: The freeport operators have made public some information on their operations. They have provided information to Her Majesty's Treasury and Her Majesty's customs and excise on the basis that it will remain confidential.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the actual and forecast proceeds of North sea oil and gas revenues for the years 1973-74 to 1988-89.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to table 1.3 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1985" for the figures for Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production from 1973-74 to 1984-85. The 1985 autumn statement contained a forecast of £11·5 billion for

revenues in 1985-86. A forecast for subsequent years will be provided in the 1986-87 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Building Societies

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many building societies there were in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following table shows the number of registered building societies at 31 December 1982, 1983 and 1984, and of these, the numbers which were authorised to accept shares and deposits under the Building Societies (Authorisation) Regulations 1981.

	End 1982	*End 1983*	*End 1984*
Number of building societies:			
Registered	227	206	190
Authorised to accept shares and deposits	211	192	170

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what share of the building societies deposits were represented by the largest three, largest six and largest 10 societies in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following table shows for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 the total shares, deposits and loans of building societies held by the largest three, largest six and largest 10 societies.

	1982 *per cent.*	*1983* *per cent.*	*1984* *per cent.*
Largest three societies	45	45	45
Largest six societies	61	61	61
Largest 10 societies	73	74	74

Clearing Banks

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what share of clearing banking was represented by the top four clearing banks in 1965, 1975 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that this information is not readily available in the form requested and cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

EC Budget

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 22 January, *Official Report*, columns 197-8, if he will list the items of non-obligatory expenditure in the 1986 European Community budget which are disputed by the United Kingdom, detailing the total value in each case; when he expects the European Court to hear the actions brought by the Council and individual member states; if he will seek authority from Parliament for supplementary payments on a monthly basis in the absence of an agreement over the budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The 1986 budget as adopted by the European Parliament contains some 230 disputed items of non-obligatory expenditure totalling 563 million ecu (£361 million), as follows:

Million

	Payment appropriations *ECU*	*£*
The European Regional Development Fund	160	103
The European Social Fund	260	167
Food Aid	40	26
Co-operation with Latin American and Asian developing countries	20	13
Other	83	52
TOTAL	563	361

The European Court's timetable is uncertain, but my advice is that the substantive cases brought by the Council and individual member states are unlikely to be decided much before the end of 1986. The United Kingdom's application for an interim order suspending implementation of the disputed elements of the budget pending substantive judgment should be heard much more quickly.

The Special Supplementary Estimate presented to Parliament on 22 January is intended to enable the Government to contribute to the disputed elements in the budget during February and March. The Government hope that the European Court will grant an interim order making further contributions to the disputed elements unnecessary. Failing such an order, the Government will seek any necessary parliamentary authority for further contributions in a 1986-87 Estimate.

Incomes

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the ratios of the highest to the lowest deciles of gross and of net incomes *(a)* for people of working age, *(b)* for the retired population and *(c)* for the population as a whole.

Mr. MacGregor: Information based on the 1984 family expenditure survey is shown below:

	Ratio of highest to lowest decile points	
	**Gross household income*	*†Net household income*
(a) Non-retired households	4·8	4·0
(b) Retired households	3·5	3·1
(c) All households	6·8	5·3

* Income from employment, self employment, investment, occupational pensions and State benefits.

† Gross income after income tax and employees National Insurance contributions.

DEFENCE

9 Signals Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army personnel have been discharged or are being discharged as a result of the inquiry into breaches of security at 9 Signals Regiment.

Mr. Lee: Four have been discharged.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force personnel have been discharged or are being discharged as a result of the inquiry into breaches of security at 9 Signals Regiment.

Mr. Lee: No final decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the service personnel who have been interviewed by Lt. Col Dobson in connection with breaches of security at 9 Signals Regiment have subsequently been discharged or await discharge and under which form of discharge.

Mr. Lee: Two service personnel have been discharged on completion of their engagements and two were discharged in accordance with Queen's regulations for the Army, paragraph 9.414. One is shortly to leave the service on completion of his engagement.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 83 service men prematurely discharged from 9 Signals Regiment have been subjected to interrogation since 3 January 1984.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his answer*, 13 January 1986, c. *525*]: Nine of those prematurely discharged from 9 Signals Regiment provided statements of evidence as part of the investigation into the alleged breaches of security at 9 Signals Regiment. Others may have been interviewed but not required to provide such statements, and it would not now be possible to establish this figure precisely without disproportionate cost and effort.

501st Security Police Group (USAF)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the numbers of *(a)* Ministry of Defence police, *(b)* Royal Air Force Regiment, *(c)* Royal Air Force Police and *(d)* other British subjects who work in operational liaison with 501st Security Police Group (USAF).

Mr. Stanley: The only Ministry of Defence personnel that are integrated operationally with the USAF's 501st Security Police Group are certain RAF Regiment and RAF police personnel at RAF Greenham Common. As my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence said in reply to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 7 November 1983 we ae not prepared to discuss the numbers of personnel involved with security.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek from the United States Air Force authorities guarding Greenham common, in order to place it in the Library, a copy of the year-end report of the United States Air Force 501st Security Police Group dated 5 December.

Mr. Stanley: No. I understand the report is an internal document of the US Air Force.

El Salvador

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans in the next 12 months for officers from El Salvador to train in the United Kingdom with British armed forces.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 13 January 1986, at column *525*.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, as between full-time, part-time, male and female, operatives on 1 January.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 24 January 1986.

Air-sea Rescue Helicopter Service

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is planning any change in the air-sea rescue helicopter service which is operated from HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent.

Mr. Stanley: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Approved Stockists

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied that the British Standards Institute register of approved stockists for his Department's purposes can ensure that products supplied against Ministry of Defence requirements have direct traceability to, and have been supplied by, his Department's approved sources of manufacture.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

Nimrod

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence what sums have been provided to date from public funds for the Nimrod project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

Mustard Gas Leak (SS John Harvey)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will institute inquiries in order to procure an estimate of the number of naval ratings on the decks of ships near the SS John Harvey on 2 December 1943 exposed to the mustard gas leak.

Mr. Lee: I will write to the hon. Lady.

Multi-launch Rocket Systems

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place orders for further multi-launch rocket systems.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

SP-70 Shell

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the tripartite agreement to develop and manufacture the SP-70 shell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

Scott Lithgow

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *642*, he will make a statement on his Department's operational requirements to Scott Lithgow.

Mr. Lee: The answer given in the *Official Report* of 16 January contains a typographical error and has been subsequently amended. The relevant passage should have read

". . . This timing reflects our operational requirements. Scott Lithgow will continue to be invited to tender for all MOD

new construction and refit work which it is capable of undertaking, but it must be competitive if it is to win future orders."

I can advise the hon. Member that, as far as we are able, the MOD's requirements are made known to industry generally on a regular basis, eg for the Navy, at the Controller of the Navy's annual SEAFACTS presentation.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *642*, he will specify the wider and more relevant factors which persuaded the Government to place an order for a range mooring vessel with Scott Lithgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the answer given on 16 January 1986 at column *642*.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *642*, he will indicate the nature of the terms and conditions which he expects Scott Lithgow to fulfil in connection with the orders for a range mooring vessel and two lighters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The main factors to be addressed will be price, delivery and compliance with the tender documentation, particularly the technical specifications.

Upholder Class Submarines (Orders)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe, without reference to details of individual tenders, the rules governing the competition for the recent orders for three Upholder class patrol submarines, including the deadlines for tenders and any opportunities for the submission of revised tenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Four rounds of tendering were involved. Initial tenders were sought on 30 November 1984 (closing date for responses 19 March 1985), revised tenders were sought on 24 May 1985 (due back by 17 June 1985) and "best and final" bids were sought on 13 August 1985 (due back by 17 September 1985). Finally, on 25 November 1985, all tenderers were invited to revise or confirm their bids. The rules of this competition were those normally followed by my Department for follow-on vessels. The VSEL/CL bid offered substantially the best value for money to the defence budget.

Procurement Policy

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent, in reaching defence procurement decisions, he takes account of the implications of the phasing and distribution of orders for the ability of individual yards to maintain the integrity of their design and production teams at a level conducive to the making of competitive bids for future orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is not our policy to place orders in advance of the requirement or to advance orders to match shipyard capacity. Our policy is to place orders wherever practicable by competitive tendering, although we might need to take account of wider and relevant factors. In the specific case of conventional submarines we believe that there will be satisfactory competitions in the future.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the non-commercial factors which are used to decide between rival tenders for procurement orders which are otherwise broadly competitive with each other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Government's prime consideration is seeking the best value for money for the defence budget. Other considerations are described in defence open government document 83/01.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the participation of foreign-based or substantially foreign-owned companies in competition for *(a)* defence procurement contracts generally, and *(b)* contracts for naval ships or submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Our general policy on procuring the equipment which the armed forces need for their tasks was set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 13 January at column *517*.

Within this overall policy, each requirement is examined on a case-by-case basis. In general, a foreign-owned firm with a comprehensive and established capability in this country is regarded as part of British Industry. As I said on 13 January, at column *525*, it is not the Government's policy to place orders for warships overseas.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancy notices have been issued at each of the royal ordnance factories since July 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West can expect a substantive answer to his question to which a holding answer was given on 6 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *386*.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to the reply*, 6 December 1985, c. *386*]: Expenditure on advertising by the Ministry of Defence, and by the Central Office of Information on our behalf in 1984-85 is given in the following table. The figures include advertising for civilian and Armed Forces recruitment; range firing notices and defence sales advertisements:

Financial year 1984-85

	£ million
Press/Journals	6.863
TV/Films	0·488
TOTAL	7·351

The advertising budget for 1985-86 is £8·876 million, of which some £6 million has been spent to date.

7H 70 (155mm Shells)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current delay on the delivery of the 155 mm shell ordered for British forces' use on the 7H 70 and placed with RheinMetal, Dusseldorf, West Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many qualified environmental health officers are employed by his Department; and how many of those are serving members of the Armed Forces.

Mr. Lee: There are 58 qualified environmental health officers in the Department. Only one of these is not a serving member of Her Majesty's forces.

US Nuclear Force Bases

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is made aware when United States nuclear forces at bases in Britain are put on to a state of alert; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

RAF Phantom (Harrogate)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the recent Royal Air Force Phantom jet crash in Harrogate.

Mr. Lee: On 7 January 1986, an RAF Phantom engaged in a low-level interception training exercise crashed at Waldon Moor, Yorks. The two-man crew safely ejected although both sustained major injuries. A board of inquiry has been convened to investigate the accident and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further in advance of its findings.

Porton Down (Animal Research)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of animals subjected to deliberately inflicted wounds at the Chemical Defence Establishment laboratories at Porton Down since 1980 have been allowed to recover from the anaesthetic.

Mr. Lee: In the five years 1980 to 1984 inclusive, as part of its research into improved methods of treatment for wounds, the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down, used 190 anaesthetised animals in studies of penetrating injuries. Of these, 77 were allowed to recover from the anaesthetic.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support proposals for a loan by the Inter-American Development bank to the agricultural sector in Nicaragua.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall examine any such proposals put to the board of directors by the bank's management on their merits. So far none has been submitted.

Spain

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent Her Majesty's Government propose to help Gibraltar to meet its contributions to Spanish pensioners arising from Spain's accession to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government have offered, and the Gibraltar Government have accepted, a contribution of £16·5 million over three years. This is without prejudice to the position thereafter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tyre Foot Pumps

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it a condition of the import of tyre foot pumps that they comply with current British standards.

Mr. Howard: No. British standards are not mandatory for United Kingdom produced tyre foot pumps. It would therefore be contrary to our international trading obligations to require compliance from imports. However, those supplying tyre foot pumps with inaccurate gauges, whether home produced or imported, may be subject to prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to permit firms of accountants, which also provide auditing services under the Companies Acts, to incorporate.

Mr. Howard: The implications of allowing firms of accountants which also provide auditing services under the Companies Act to incorporate are far-reaching. The profession is currently examining various issues which this possibility raises, and I look forward to hearing the outcome. If any proposal for change were to be put forward, I am ready to consider it.

Manufacturing

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the share of the top 100 private sector companies in *(a)* manufacturing employment, *(b)* net manufacturing output and *(c)* net capital expenditure in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The figures in the following table relate to the manufacturing activities of the largest 100 enterprises in the private sector, defined in terms of their employment in manufacturing. Estimates for 1984 are not yet available.

Share of total manufacturing activity in 1983 accounted for by the top 100 private sector enterprises

	Per cent.
Employment	34
Net output	38
Net capital expenditure	37

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Retail Sales

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms represented the upper half of retail sales in the United Kingdom in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The largest 121 individual companies accounted for one half of retail sales in Great Britain in 1983. It is provisionally estimated that the corresponding figure for 1984 was 113.

Company Finance

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the contribution of *(a)* self-financing and *(b)* stock market equity finance, to the investment requirements of British private industry since 1978;

(2) what was the share of the source of funds the British industrial and commercial companies accounted for by (i) total internal funds and (ii) issues of ordinary shares for cash in 1984 and from January to September 1985.

Mr. Butcher: It is not possible to relate individual sources of companies' funds to particular uses. Statistics of the sources and uses of United Kingdom industrial and commercial companies' funds are published regularly in "Financial Statistics", table 8.2. On the definitions used in that table, percentage contributions have been as follows:

	Percentage of total sources of funds	
	Total internal funds	*Issues of ordinary shares for cash*
1978	78	3
1979	76	3
1980	64	3
1981	62	5
1982	60	4
1983	76	6
1984	75	3
January/September 1984	89	3
1985	66	8

Expenditure on fixed assets and on the increase in the book value of stocks in the United Kingdom has accounted for between 54 per cent. and 71 per cent. of total uses of funds in these years. It must be emphasised that different answers could be obtained by classifying certain items differently (for example, by treating payment of taxes and dividends as uses of funds instead of deducting them from income as in the table in "Financial Statistics").

Mass Spectrometers

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many licences were issued for mass spectrometers, and mass spectrometer sources designed for measuring the isotopic composition of uranium hexafluoride (UF_6) gas, uranium and uranyl compounds; how many were refused; and if he will break these totals down by planned country of destination.

Mr. Howard: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to make public information of this kind.

Car Exports (Spain)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that British car exporters have discrimination against them removed by the Spanish Government.

Mr. Howard: The fastest possible removal of Spanish barriers to imports of British cars was one of our major priorities in the negotiations over Spain's entry to the Community. Under the treaty of accession, high Spanish duties on imports of cars from the rest of the Community will be phased out over seven years, with over half the reduction occurring in the three years 1986 to 1989. In addition, Spain has opened a tariff quota for imports of cars from the United Kingdom and from other member states at a substantially reduced rate of duty; and the introduction of VAT from 1 January 1986 will remove the discrimination against imports inherent in Spain's previous indirect tax regime.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cars Britain can export to Spain in 1986 at preferential duty rates; and how many can be similarly imported from Spain.

Mr. Howard: Under the treaty arrangements governing Spain's accession to the Community, British and other Community car exports to Spain are subject to a preferential rate of import duty which is substantially below the rates applying to Spanish imports of cars from non-Community countries. There is no limit on the quantities involved. In addition, Spain has opened a tariff quota from 1 January for imports of Community cars at a further reduced rate of duty. The United Kingdom share of this quota will be 5,000 cars in 1986.

The rate of import duty applied to British imports of cars from Spain is also substantially lower than the rate applied to non-Community countries. There is no limit on the volume of such imports.

Consumer Credit

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he has made to monitor the burden on business of the Consumer Credit Act.

Mr. Howard: The Consumer Credit Act only came fully into force on 19 May 1985 and, as the "Lifting the Burdens" White Paper made clear, the first need now is for a period of stability in the interests of lenders and consumers. However, it is important that the working of the Act should be kept under review, and my Department has set up monitoring arrangements with the represenatives of the main commercial lenders. We will be attempting to assess the effectiveness of the Act and, inter alia, to identify any burdens imposed by the Act which appear excessive or unnecessary. But I am prepared, where appropriate, to take immediate action to alleviate specific business difficulties. This has already been done for mail order traders and the life insurance industry. The banking supervison White Paper has also announced our intention to amend the Act in the forthcoming Banking Bill to facilitate the development of electronic funds transfer at the point of sale (EFT-POS).

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 is to be implemented.

Mr. Howard: The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (Commencement) Order 1985 (SI 1985/1924) as read with SI 1986/78, brings into force the main provisions of the Act on 1 April 1986, with the exception of the provisions

relating to preferred debts. Certain other provisions come into force on 1 February 1986 in order to enable qualified insolvency practitioners to apply to the Accountant in Bankruptcy for inclusion on the list of interim trustees.

Following consultation with professional bodies and others, the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985/1925) have also been made prescribing matters for the purposes of the Act.

House of Fraser

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *634*, what were the reasons given by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its request for an extension on the merger reference of Lonrho and the House of Fraser.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *382*]: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's request for an extension of three months to the reporting period for this merger reference was necessitated by the number of exceptionally lengthy submissions which it had received from the parties.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the salary at each increase date since 1974 of each of the chairmen of the industries for which he is responsible and the names of the incumbents.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *382*]: The information is as follows:

Chairman	*Salary*	*Effective From*
British Shipbuilders (1 July 1977)		
Admiral Sir Anthony Griffin	23,538	22 March 1977
	25,890	1 April 1978
	32,945	1 April 1979
Sir Robert Atkinson	44,000	1 May 1980
	48,000	1 July 1980
	51,360	1 April 1981
	55,000	1 April 1982
Graham Day	80,000	1 September 1983
	86,000	1 July 1984
	94,600	1 July 1985
British Steel Corporation (28 July 1967)		
Montague Finniston	28,100	1 January 1974
	28,330	1 January 1975
Sir Charles Villiers	28,538	1 January 1977
	31,390	1 January 1978
	41,695	1 April 1979
Ian MacGregor	48,500	1 April 1980
Sir Robert Haslam (part-time)	55,000	1 September 1983
	60,000	1 January 1985
Post Office (1 October 1969)		
Sir William Ryland	*23,100	1 January 1974
	*23,538	1 January 1977
Sir William Barlow	25,890	1 January 1978
	38,945	1 April 1980
	53,000	1 April 1980
Sir Henry Chilver (part-time)	10,600	15 September 1980
	11,530	1 July 1981
Sir Ronald Dearing	53,650	1 October 1981
	57,137	1 April 1982
	60,000	1 April 1983
	63,000	1 April 1984
	69,000	1 April 1985

* From 1 September 1974 to his retirement on 31 October 1977 Sir William Ryland's salary was abated by a sum equal to the pension paid to him.

NORTHERN IRELAND

De Lorean

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his current proposals for the future use of the former De Lorean factory premises in Belfast.

Dr. Boyson: There are five buildings within the De Lorean complex comprising three units of 50,000 sq ft and two large buildings of 191,000 sq ft and 263,000 sq ft. One 50,000 sq ft unit has been acquired by Short Bros plc and it is intended to retain the other two as part of the Industrial Development Board's factory stock. Private sector proposals will be sought in the near future for the acquisition and subdivision of the two larger buildings for commercial and industrial use.

Government Subvention

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total annual level of the Government subvention to Northern Ireland for each year since 1979 and list the subvention as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of these years.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	Subvention £ million	*Percentage of gross domestic product*	
		Northern Ireland	*United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland)*
1979-80	944	25·80	0·55
1980-81	1,090	26·39	0·56
1981-82	1,064	23·37	0·51
1982-83	1,149	23·40	0·50
1983-84	1,305	24·50	0·53
1984-85	1,489	†	†
1985-86*	1,573	†	†

* Estimate.
† GDP figures are not yet available.

Supplementary Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set out a table for the years 1970 and 1984, showing numbers of recipients and dependants in receipt of supplementary benefit, and distinguishing between retirement pensioners, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, national insurance widows with and without dependent children and lone parents.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not yet available in respect of 1984. The table sets out the required information in respect of the years 1970 and 1983.

Numbers in receipt of supplementary benefit at November 1970 and at December 1983

Hundreds

Category	*1970*				*1983*			
	Claimant	*Dependants*			*Claimant*	*Dependants*		
		Wife	*Children*	*Other Dependants*		*Wife*	*Children*	*Other Dependants*
Retirement Pensioners* and National Insurance Widows aged 60 and over	620	114	12	4	536	74	4	3
Unemployed	154	90	247	6	822	343	793	37
Sick and disabled	168	51	92	3	128	23	29	3
National Insurance Widows Under age 60:								
With dependent children	10	—	17	3	5	—	6	2
Without dependent children	17	—	—	—	13	—	—	—
Other Lone Parents†	32	—	61	1	133	—	238	10
Others	21	1	2	—	109	48	38	7
Total recipients	1,022	256	431	17	1,746	488	1,108	62

* This figure includes an "others" figure of 13,400 for 1970 and 5,800 for 1980.
† One parent families not included in the other groups.

Teachers

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce a teachers' redeployment scheme in the controlled and voluntary schools in Northern Ireland, and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *409*]: A redeployment procedure is under consideration by the conditions of service negotiating committee (schools) which is a committee of the teachers negotiating machinery for Northern Ireland. My Department awaits the outcome of this consideration.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers are in post in Northern Ireland in the current school year; and how many he plans will be in post in Northern Ireland in the school year commencing September 1986.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *409*]: Information on the number of teachers in post on the current school year's statistical date (31 January 1986) is not yet available, but the number of full-time posts allocated was 18,590. Under present plans, about 18,450 full-time posts will be allocated in the next school year.

WALES

Hospital Beds (West Glamorgan)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many beds on average are empty each day in West Glamorgan health authority hospitals; how many of these are in each specialty; how many vacancies there are on the waiting list for each specialty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The table gives the average daily number of available and unoccupied beds in West Glamorgan health authority hospitals during the 1984-85 financial year, together with the number of patients on inpatient waiting lists for each specialty at 31 March 1985.

Specialty	*Average daily number of available beds 1984-85*	*Average daily number of unoccupied beds* 1984-85*	*Number of patients on inpatient waiting lists 31 March 1985*
General medicine	224·8	32·4	1
Paediatrics	72·4	37·9	—
Diseases of the Chest	49·9	26·3	—
Dermatology	33·0	12·1	—
Neurology	33·2	8·5	19
Physical medicine/rehabilitation	8·3	4·5	—
Sexually transmitted diseases	2·0	2·0	—
Rheumatology	4·7	—	63
Geriatrics	463·6	52·9	74
Younger disabled	16·3	8·9	—
General surgery	252·5	89·8	865
Ear, Nose and Throat	54·6	22·4	576
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	203·6	44·2	745

Specialty	Average daily number of available beds 1984-85	Average daily number of unoccupied beds* 1984-85	Number of patients on inpatient waiting lists 31 March 1985
Ophthalmology	40·0	20·5	382
Radiotherapy	46·5	11·4	7
Urology	23·2	—	313
Thoracic surgery	17·0	17·0	—
Dental surgery	10·9	5·0	241
Neurosurgery	21·8	5·9	72
Gynaecology	122·2	51·4	511
Obstetrics	157·2	77·3	—
Special Care Baby Unit	30·5	16·8	2
Mental handicap	142·6	19·3	—
Mental illness	376·3	34·6	—
Pre-convalescent	76·7	27·8	—
GP medical	5·1	—	—
Intensive care	9·0	3·8	—
Haematology	7·3	—	—
Continuing care (cancer unit)	27·0	13·2	—
Spina bifida unit	12·0	6·9	—
Coronary care	6·0	1·5	—
High dependency unit	3·0	0·8	—
Unclassified	0·7	0·7	—
All specialties†	2,547·7	655·6	3,869

* The average daily number of unoccupied beds has been obtained by subtracting the average daily number of occupied beds from the average daily number of available beds.

† Figures for each specialty have been rounded, and therefore the individual figures do not sum to the total for all specialties.

A5 (Bypasses)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make public the final report of consulting engineers who have undertaken technical appraisal studies of the need for and feasibility of providing bypasses for certain communities on the A5 on Anglesey.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The general content of such reports is disclosed when a scheme goes to public consultation, and the report itself subsequently becomes available for public inspection on request by objectors to draft statutory orders. Earlier disclosure could be detrimental to interests potentially affected by the report.

Public Paths

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, the applications received for the making by him of public path creation, diversion and extinguishment orders under the powers in sections 26(2) and 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980, stating in each case *(a)* the community concerned and the number of the footpath or bridleway, *(b)* whether the application was for a creation, diversion or extinguishment order, *(c)* whether he agreed to prepare a draft order and *(d)* where a draft order was prepared, whether or not it was subsequently made.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: To date there have been no applications.

Tourism

Sir Anthony Meyer asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of financial resources allocated to the Wales Tourist Board in 1985-86 for the purpose of *(a)* supporting capital expenditure of the tourist industry under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act and *(b)* all other purposes, including marketing; and what provisions he intends to make under these respective headings for 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For 1985-86, the Wales Tourist Board was originally allocated £2 million to grant-aid projects which will provide or improve tourist amenities and facilities in Wales. This was increased to £2·5 million last August. The board's grant-in-aid allocation, which includes marketing, general administration, and so on, is £5·19 million.

The board's total allocation for 1986-87 is £7·907 million. The split between section 4 grant aid and grant-in-aid will be published when the Supply Estimates are presented to Parliament for approval.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to meet the Wales Tourist Board; if he proposes to discuss with the Wales Tourist Board the report on tourism of the Trade and Industry Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I met the Wales Tourist Board on Friday 17 January. In the course of the meeting, the board conveyed to me its initial reactions to the Trade and Industry Committee's report on tourism. The board will be letting me have its considered comments in due course.

Housing

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings have been demolished in each local housing authority area in Wales, and in total, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985 (January-September)
Clwyd:							
Alyn and Deeside	4	6	4	2	—	—	—
Colwyn	7	1	1	—	1	2	—
Delyn	12	15	18	12	7	16	2
Glyndwr	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	—	14	—	1
Wrexham Maelor	49	59	60	23	38	9	—
Dyfed:							
Carmarthen	—	1	3	2	—	—	—
Ceredigion	1	—	—	—	2	—	—
Dinefwr	4	2	8	14	6	10	3
Llanelli	—	3	—	1	8	—	—
Preseli	3	2	6	1	—	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	22	—	—	—	—	1	1
Gwent:							
Blaenau Gwent	23	6	49	340	126	102	44
Islwyn	21	13	12	6	13	—	7
Monmouth	6	—	—	—	—	2	—
Newport	364	446	98	25	23	2	2
Torfean	14	53	44	85	11	16	1
Gwynedd:							
Aberconwy	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arfon	—	—	9	—	5	—	—
Dwyfor	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Meirionnydd	—	2	—	—	6	—	7
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	—	—	6	—
Mid Glamorgan:							
Cynon Valley	15	16	25	39	33	61	17
Merthyr Tydfil	78	134	168	282	22	4	11
Ogwr	2	12	4	—	3	8	—
Rhondda	25	24	34	13	6	5	2
Rhymney Valley	42	26	63	90	49	30	47
Taff-Ely	—	—	3	—	1	3	2
Powys:							
Brecknock	59	2	2	—	5	—	—
Montgomery	8	1	5	3	—	2	3
Radnor	3	—	—	8	—	1	—
South Glamorgan:							
Cardiff	124	96	27	26	22	28	62
Vale of Glamorgan	1	—	—	—	4	—	—
West Glamorgan:							
Afan	8	15	8	57	6	6	—
Lliw Valley	8	5	—	—	3	4	5
Neath	20	21	15	5	2	2	—
Swansea	12	2	5	8	22	16	11
Wales	935	964	671	1,042	439	337	228

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a list of all local authorities in Wales which have shown a surplus in their housing revenue accounts since 1981-82, giving the figures for each year in each case in outturn terms and at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made to the Welsh Office, the amounts transferred from local authorities' housing revenue accounts to their general rate funds since 1981-82 are estimated to have been as follows:

	1983-84 outturn prices £000	1984-85 prices £000	1984-85 outturn prices £000	1985-86 outturn prices £000	1984-85 prices £000
Ceredigion	—	—	200	—	—
Delyn	1,018	1,064	514	—	—
Montgomery	—	—	—	200	190

	1983-84 outturn prices £000	1984-85 prices £000	1984-85 outturn prices £000	1985-86 outturn prices £000	1984-85 prices £000
Radnor	—	—	—	53	50
Rhymney Valley	71	74	—	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	—	—	196	—	—
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	161	153

The sums shown at 1984-85 prices have been derived by the application of the GDP market price deflators.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the value of Exchequer housing subsidies and rate fund contributions per local authority dwelling in Wales for each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86 in outturn terms and at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the information is estimated to be as follows:

	Central Government subsidy entitlement		Rate fund contributions*	
	£ per annum per dwelling			
	Outturn prices	1984-85 prices	Outturn prices	1984-85 prices
1978-79	174	311	20	36
1979-80	206	315	36	55
1980-81	233	300	46	59
1981-82	118	138	39	46
1982-83	36	39	41	45
1983-84	27	28	28	29
1984-85	30	30	19	19
1985-86	34	32	14	13

* Excluding statutory contributions in respect of rent rebates.

The amounts shown at 1984-85 prices have been derived by the application of the GDP market price deflators.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the amounts of Exchequer housing subsidies and non-statutory rate fund contributions in each year since 1979-80, both in outturn terms and at 1984-85 prices, for each local housing authority in Wales and in total.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the information as estimated is given in the tables.

The figures in the tables showing rate fund contributions exclude statutory contributions made in respect of rent rebates.

The amounts shown at 1984-85 prices have been derived by the application of the GDP market price deflators.

Central government subsidy entitlement

£000

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	1985-86	
	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices
Aberconwy	357	546	494	636	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Afan	858	1,311	797	1,025	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	701	1,071	738	950	139	162	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arfon	773	1,181	909	1,169	205	239	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	3,432	5,245	4,053	5,215	2,881	3,367	1,660	1,812	1,476	1,543	1,466	1,834	1,747
Brecknock	1,351	2,065	1,387	1,785	786	918	159	174	167	174	81	19	18
Cardiff	4,202	6,422	5,498	7,074	2,226	2,601	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Carmarthen	1,005	1,536	1,164	1,498	804	939	514	561	521	544	659	699	666
Ceredigion	1,114	1,702	1,181	1,519	850	993	412	450	402	420	576	777	740
Colwyn	583	891	752	968	343	401	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cynon Valley	1,440	2,201	1,625	2,091	901	1,053	336	367	—	—	—	—	—
Delyn	1,112	1,699	1,211	1,558	430	502	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dinefwr	516	788	655	843	300	351	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dwyfor	155	237	217	279	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glyndwr	560	856	703	904	294	343	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islwyn	1,644	2,512	1,926	2,478	894	1,045	—	—	—	—	—	134	128
Llanelli	2,104	3,215	2,282	2,936	1,215	1,420	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llŵ Valley	2,007	3,067	2,009	2,585	1,283	1,499	415	453	436	456	402	443	422
Meirionydd	683	1,044	796	1,024	475	555	105	115	48	50	20	38	36
Merthyr Tydfil	2,410	3,683	2,633	3,388	1,544	1,804	653	713	327	342	152	—	—
Monmouth	1,126	1,721	1,209	1,555	473	553	—	—	—	—	122	302	288
Montgomery	793	1,212	921	1,185	270	316	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Neath	1,441	2,202	1,674	2,154	653	763	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newport	4,350	6,648	5,446	7,007	3,732	4,361	2,293	2,503	2,058	2,151	2,193	2,027	1,930
Ogwr	3,169	4,843	3,610	4,645	1,983	2,317	509	556	—	—	—	—	—
Preseli	1,714	2,619	1,476	1,899	615	719	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Radnor	373	570	511	657	302	353	109	119	135	141	189	195	186
Rhondda	1,415	2,162	1,558	2,004	1,189	1,389	645	704	541	565	544	523	498
Rhuddlan	230	351	308	396	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rhymney Valley	3,642	5,566	4,033	5,189	2,564	2,996	1,101	1,202	492	514	454	459	437
South Pembrokeshire	1,146	1,751	1,141	1,468	607	709	90	98	—	—	—	—	—
Swansea	2,993	4,574	3,225	4,149	866	1,012	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Taff Ely	1,835	2,804	2,029	2,611	937	1,095	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices
Torfaen	2,458	3,756	2,967	3,817	1,539	1,798	600	655	525	549	673	844	804	
Vale of Glamorgan	1,978	3,023	2,010	2,586	1,166	1,362	88	96	—	—	—	—	—	
Wrexham Maelor	1,736	2,653	2,064	2,656	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Ynys Mon	1,274	1,947	1,607	2,068	855	999	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Total	58,680	89,674	66,819	85,971	33,324	38,937	9,689	10,578	7,128	7,449	7,531	8,294	7,900	

Rate Fund Contributions

£000

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices	Outturn Prices	1984-85 Prices
Aberconwy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	*	*	*	
Afan	553	845	293	377	102	119	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Alyn and Deeside	19	29	80	103	19	22	28	31	12	13	20	101	96	
Arfon	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	27	25	26	11	29	28	
Blaenau Gwent	333	509	1,156	1,487	1,187	1,387	828	904	139	145	35	150	143	
Brecknock	120	183	360	463	372	435	212	231	124	130	77	159	151	
Cardiff	235	359	1,453	1,869	484	566	760	830	750	784	—	—	—	
Carmarthen	213	326	226	291	146	171	147	160	148	155	152	149	142	
Ceredigion	160	245	200	257	175	204	125	137	200	209	—	—	—	
Colwyn	11	17	35	45	44	51	100	109	—	—	—	—	—	
Cynon Valley	384	588	344	443	743	868	961	1,049	331	346	159	—	—	
Delyn	301	460	257	331	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Dinefwr	60	92	199	256	336	393	39	43	—	—	6	106	101	
Dwyfor	32	49	51	66	60	70	—	—	—	—	*	*	*	
Glyndwr	127	194	155	199	168	196	—	—	40	42	—	—	—	
Islwyn	11	17	88	113	300	351	291	318	275	287	—	165	157	
Llanelli	—	—	87	112	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Llŵ Valley	44	67	208	268	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Meirionydd	125	191	26	33	77	90	14	15	83	87	35	—	—	
Merthyr Tydfil	999	1,527	819	1,054	377	441	539	588	624	652	140	207	197	
Monmouth	264	403	169	217	202	236	57	62	61	64	301	—	—	
Montgomery	123	188	241	310	—	—	—	—	60	63	—	—	—	
Neath	284	435	284	365	335	391	126	138	60	63	60	10	10	
Newport	—	—	149	192	208	237	—	—	182	190	—	—	—	
Ogwr	54	83	429	552	532	622	431	471	—	—	—	—	—	
Preseli	422	645	401	516	147	172	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Radnor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Rhondda	499	763	486	625	908	1,061	1,207	1,318	1,286	1,344	1,243	1,291	1,230	
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Rhymney Valley	1,119	1,710	1,414	1,819	966	1,129	1,279	1,396	—	—	336	8	8	
South Pembrokeshire	97	148	107	138	169	197	254	277	—	—	—	—	—	
Swansea	747	1,142	531	683	933	1,090	262	286	780	815	550	73	70	
Taff Ely	1,001	1,530	1,034	1,330	839	980	779	851	302	316	300	223	212	
Torfaen	768	1,174	507	652	520	608	1,298	1,417	435	455	438	429	409	
Vale of Glamorgan	124	190	315	405	214	250	195	213	178	186	200	63	60	
Wrexham Maelor	558	853	567	730	393	459	778	849	914	955	576	270	257	
Ynys Mon	415	634	555	714	217	253	368	402	324	339	101	—	—	
Total	10,202	15,595	13,226	17,015	11,168	13,049	11,105	12,124	7,335	7,668	4,742	3,425	3,273	

* Not known.

Independent Education

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds he has made available to the independent education sector in Wales under the assisted places and other schemes for the current year, 1985 and 1987; and if he will list the independent schools and the cash they received and for each year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Details of reimbursements for remitted fees under the assisted places scheme and grants under the direct grant scheme are given in the following table:

Assisted Places Scheme Payments to Schools Financial Years 1984-85 to 1986-87

School	*Financial Year 1984-85* £ *Actual*	*Financial Year 1985-86* £ **Estimate*	*Financial Year 1986-87* £ **Estimate*
Christ College	48,289	62,116	86,905
Howell's School, Denbigh	96,156	132,972	169,567
Howell's School, Llandaff	144,940	209,858	239,879
Llandovery College	31,013	38,280	46,526
Monmouth School	134,170	198,174	222,661
Monmouth School for Girls	52,599	68,761	82,840
Penrhos College	62,844	80,990	98,594
Rydal School	56,865	70,624	80,355
TOTAL	626,876	861,775	1,027,327

Direct Grant Scheme: Payments to Schools Financial Years 1984-85 to 1986-87

	1984-85 £ Actual	1985-86 £ Actual	1986-87 £ *Estimate
T S Indefatigable	10,684	11,421	11,569

* At September 1985 prices

ENVIRONMENT

Ove Arup Report

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the Ove Arup report on the disposal of mine spoil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I expect to receive the consultant's report shortly.

Council Housing (Sale)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy concerning the disposal of local authority housing estates to developers where the consideration received by the local authority would be less than the outstanding debt charges from the construction costs of the estate.

Sir George Young: Private sector skills and resources have an important part to play in the revitalisation of rundown local authority housing estates. Sales of such estates to developers are made entirely on a voluntary basis, and normally at current market value. Whether or not the receipt from such a sale would cover any outstanding debt charges is a matter for the authority to take into account in deciding whether to proceed.

Ironbridge Bypass

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the result of his consideration of the public inquiry into the Ironbridge bypass.

Mr. Tracey: The Secretary of State for Transport expects to announce his decision within the next 14 days.

Disabled People (Sport)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the Sports Council applies its sport for all policy for the disabled.

Mr. Tracey: The Sports Council's policy of sport for all its intended to promote opportunities and active recreation for all sections of the community, including disabled people. The council encourages and grant-aids local authorities and others to assist in the provision of facilities which cater for the disabled. Additionally, the council supports the British Sports Association for the Disabled, the national development and co-ordinating body for sport for the disabled.

Mr. Watts asked the Secreprotary of State for the Environment how much was spent by the Sports Council in each of the last three financial years in support of sport for the disabled; and what proportion of total spending those amounts represent.

Mr. Tracey: The Sports Council's grant aid to organisations directly concerned with sport for disabled people was approximately £100,000 in each of the last three years, mainly to the British Sports Association for the Disabled. Also during this period the council spent £16,000 in connection with the "Sport for All — Disabled People" campaign, and over £8,000 to improve access for the disabled at the national sports centres. In addition, considerable regional grants for participation and facility provision, aimed at the wider community, have benefited the disabled.

Highways Act 1980

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 and for each regional office of his Department, the applications received for the making by him of public path creation, diversion and extinguishment orders under the powers in sections 26(2) and 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980, stating in each case *(a)* the parish concerned and the number of the footpath or bridleway, *(b)* whether the application was for a creation, diversion or extinguishment order, *(c)* whether he agreed to prepare a draft order and *(d)* where a draft order was prepared, whether or not it was subsequently made.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since this information is not readily available, it could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether persons who apply to him to exercise his powers under section 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980 to make a public path diversion or extinguishment order are required to enter into an agreement to defray the costs incurred by him in preparing and giving notice of the draft order, in arranging and holding any public inquiry or hearing into objections to the draft order, including the cost of employing an inspector, and in giving notice of his subsequent decision.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

British Lions (South African Tour)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to prevent the British Lions from touring South Africa after the Commonwealth Games this summer.

Mr. Tracey: The Government discourage sporting contacts with South Africa in accordance with the Gleneagles agreement. Should an invitation be issued to the British Lions to tour South Africa, we would seek to dissuade the rugby authorities from accepting it. The Government's views are well known to them.

Electricity Boards (Rating)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the proposed Green Paper on reform of the rating system will include proposals for a review of the formula for calculation of rates payable by electricity boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The present formula will necessarily be reviewed as a consequence of the revaluation of non-domestic property announced by my right hon. Friend today.

Gleneagles Agreement

Mr. Allan Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to uphold the Gleneagles agreement on sporting contact.

Mr. Tracey: All governing bodies have been clearly advised of the Government's commitment to the Gleneagles agreement. They are aware that Her Majesty's Government discourages sporting contacts with South Africa, and that current Sports Council and Government policy ensures that no public funds are made available to support such contacts, as they might otherwise be for competition with other countries. I only rarely need to approach individual bodies to repeat or clarify that advice.

Council House Sales

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for the delay by Southwark council in processing the application of Mr. A. Castle of 30 Sunray avenue to buy his council home; and when he now expects the transaction to be completed.

Sir George Young: Full details of this case are being urgently sought from the London borough of Southwark, and I shall write to my hon. Friend when I have the council's reply.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for the delay by Southwark council in proceeding with the application of Miss L. Colwell of 78 Red Post hill to buy her council home; and when he now expects the transaction to be completed.

Sir George Young: I understand that Southwark council dispatched the necessary legal documentation on 3 December and proposed a completion date of 13 January. If there are any outstanding difficulties, perhaps my hon. Friend will write to me.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on deterrents to prospective purchasers of council flats in the London borough of Southwark.

Sir George Young: I have had many representations on behalf of tenants of the London borough of Southwark who wish to buy their flats, expressing concern about delays in the processing of their applications, and about the level of service charges they will be required to pay.

On service charges, the provisions in the Housing and Planning Bill, introduced last week, will provide purchasers of flats with better protection by requiring fuller estimates of charges to be given before sale, and limiting charges for repairs during the early years of the lease by reference to the pre-sale estimates.

On delay, I met representatives of Southwark council last August, expressed concern at their performance and requested changes in their procedures to expedite the handling of right to buy applications. There has since been some improvement in the council's performance, but it is still not wholly satisfactory and my Department is monitoring the situation closely.

Housing Authorities

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the numbers of employees of housing authorities who are housing authority tenants.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 50 housing authorities owning the highest numbers of empty dwellings, giving the figures and an indication of how many of these dwellings have been empty for more than one year.

Mr. John Patten: The 50 English local authorities which, in their housing investment programme returns, reported owning the largest numbers of vacant dwellings, including those which were closed, at 1 April 1985, are as follows:

	Total vacant		*Vacant more than 1 year*
	Number	*Percentage of stock*	*Number*
1 Liverpool	6,547	10·3	3,588
2 Manchester	4,950	6·1	1,505
3 Hackney	3,379	7·4	1,319
4 Southwark	3,203	5·1	1,581
5 Sheffield	2,858	3·1	637
6 Birmingham	2,805	2·3	261
7 Islington	2,586	6·3	547
8 Sandwell	2,375	4·2	350
9 Lewisham	2,228	5·3	690
10 Newham	2,190	7·0	672
11 Bradford	1,952	5·2	710
12 Wolverhampton	1,929	4·8	338
13 Wandsworth	*1,887	4·8	687
14 Salford	1,822	4·3	465
15 Lambeth	1,811	3·7	460
16 Newcastle upon Tyne	1,788	3·8	277
17 Gateshead	1,706	4·7	385
18 Tower Hamlets	1,534	8·2	790
19 Greater London Council	1,524	3·5	—
20 Sunderland	1,477	3·2	814
21 Oldham	1,339	5·1	479
22 Camden	1,247	3·7	529
23 Leeds	1,207	1·3	417
24 North Tyneside	1,076	3·7	317
25 Nottingham	1,069	2·3	31
26 Greenwich	1,058	2·9	137
27 Kingston upon Hull	1,056	2·3	16
28 Rochdale	1,034	4·7	160
29 Coventry	1,028	4·0	296
30 Leicester	988	2·9	138
31 Haringey	971	4·0	335
32 Kirklees	952	2·6	38
33 Dudley	906	2·5	192
34 Walsall	851	2·2	65
35 Westminster, City of	839	3·6	392
36 Brent	825	3·8	319
37 Calderdale	786	4·9	260
38 Easington	776	4·1	54
39 Rotherham	743	2·1	160
40 Preston	700	6·1	172
41 Wirral	694	2·8	3
42 Hammersmith and Fulham	679	3·6	150
43 Barnsley	663	2·1	102
44 Wakefield	654	1·5	27
45 Norwich	628	2·7	50
46 Hillingdon	627	3·3	26
47 Rochester upon Medway	621	5·6	11
48 Burnley	600	8·2	284
49 Tameside	592	2·8	25
50 Derby	579	2·7	57

*Total including closed dwellings, if any, is not available

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing authorities which underspent their housing investment programme allocation in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: The following authorities' prescribed capital expenditure on housing in 1984-85, as reported in their 1985 HIP2 submissions, was less than their HIP allocations:

£ thousands

	HIP allocation incl. Homes Insulation Scheme	*Gross expenditure on HIP's*
Teesdale	1,116	983
Wear Valley	2,160	2,137
East Yorkshire	1,290	1,264
Blaby	774	579
Rochford	1,860	1,624
Tower Hamlets	12,311	11,321
Rother	1,542	1,415
Epsom & Ewell	1,230	957
Mole Valley	1,870	1,664
Surrey Heath	1,315	1,270
Isles of Scilly	205	196
Torridge	1,874	1,547
Nuneaton & Bedworth	2,470	1,717
South Lakeland	2,090	1,917
Hyndburn	3,675	3,644
Wigan	9,345	9,180

Theatres (London)

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on the Greater London council's proposals to dispose of its interests in the Lyric, Garrick, and Lyceum theatres.

Mr. Tracey: As my noble Friend the Minister of State announced today in another place, the GLC applied for consent under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 to the sale of its freehold interests in these three theatres for the nominal value of £1 each to the Theatres Trust. Consent was also sought for the granting of a 125 year lease on the Lyceum to Mecca Leisure Group Ltd. on commercial terms.

After careful consideration of these applications, we have concluded that the disposal of the freehold interests in the Lyric and Garrick to the Theatres Trust for a nominal sum would be justified. This will ensure that the theatres will continue in theatrical use, and that the Theatres Trust will have the resources necessary to maintain them as such. Consent to these disposals has therefore been given to the GLC today.

We accept also that it would be in the interests of Londoners for the Lyceum to continue in entertainment use, but we are not satisfied that the proposals put forward by the GLC are necessary for this to be achieved, while at the same time being in the best interests of the GLC's successor authorities and their ratepayers. Consent to the council's applications in respect of the Lyceum has therefore been refused.

It is now for the GLC to reconsider its proposals and to put forward alternatives if it wishes to do so. In the event that the council's interest in the Lyceum theatre is retained until abolition day, it will be for successor authorities to consider the future of the theatre. In the expectation that the property will pass into the ownership of the London Residuary Body, we would expect that body to take into account the concerns which have been expressed about the continued use of the theatre in considering its future ownership.

Rents

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has decided the deemed rent increase, and the increase in reckonable expenditure on management and maintenance of their own housing, for local authorities receiving housing subsidy.

Mr. John Patten: We have considered carefully the views of the local authority associations on the consultation papers which were sent to them in November on the subject of calculating entitlement to housing subsidy for 1986-87.

My right hon. Friend has decided, jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales, to determine an increase in the local contribution of 65p a dwelling a week. It is for local authorities themselves to decide how to finance that contribution. On management and maintenance, it has been decided to increase the expenditure counting towards the subsidy calculated by 4 per cent. over the level assumed for 1985-86.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he or his Department has had any discussions with the London Residuary Body over its interim budget.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *141*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 22 January, at column *224*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the final budget of the London Residuary Body will be published.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1986, c. *141*]: This is a matter for the London Residuary Body, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1985.

Procurator Fiscal (Kirkcaldy)

Mr. Gourlay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the additional building in Kirkcaldy was acquired for the use of the procurator fiscal's department; what is the reason for the delay in making use of the building; and when he expects this additional office will become available for the fiscal's staff.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *339*]: The additional building at 3 East Fergus place, Kirkcaldy, was acquired by the Property Services Agency in July 1984. Significant adaptations are necessary to make it fit for occupation by the procurator fiscal. While public expenditure constraints mean that I cannot put these in hand this year, I shall do everything I can to make finance available for this work in 1987. Meanwhile, I deeply regret the problems caused to the procurator fiscal and her staff.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, at 1981-82 prices, how much in each year since 1981-82 the Government have allocated to London boroughs in respect of rate support grant, housing subsidy and housing investment programme allocation.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 24 January, 1986 c. *341*]: The information for all London boroughs is as follows:

£ million at 1981-82 prices†

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Rate Support Grant*	1,135	1,135	1,109	994	955
Housing Subsidy	384	288	253	266	284
Housing Investment allocation‡	466	522	466	407	334

* as given in the latest Supplementary Reports.
† cash values adjusted using the GDP deflator.
‡ this may be supplemented by the prescribed proportion of capital receipts.

GLC (Property Disposal)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 29,400 sq ft of light industrial units in Monier road for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 17,950 sq ft of light industrial units in Gladstone terrace for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 21,950 sq ft of light industrial units in Heckford street for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 24,100 sq ft of light industrial units in the New Lyndenburg II centre for which the Greater London council applied on 18 July 1985.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1986, c. *342*]: No applications have been received from the GLC for consent to the disposal of these light industrial units. Consent has, however, been given to contracts for development works at Heckford street and New Lydenburg centre.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to place in the Library the information on rent arrears which he promised to supply on 4 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *263*.

Mr. John Patten: The information on rent arrears in different local authorities will be placed in the Library shortly.

TRANSPORT

British Airways

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Airways, he will raise with him the number of occasions over the last six months on which British Airways has failed to provide an immediate back-up aircraft for the Glasgow to London shuttle when a scheduled aircraft has been unable to meet the passenger demand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Day-to-day management matters such as this are the responsibility of the board of British Airways.

Drink-driving

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many motor car drivers involved in accidents resulting in death or serious injury, in each of the last five years have been found to have a blood alcohol content of more than 120 mg. alcohol per 100 ml. blood; and what proportion of the total number of drivers involved in such road accidents this has represented in each year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on blood alcohol levels of involved drivers is not available in accident reports. However, data on breath testing were given to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 13 January 1986, at column *481*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline what new facilities, rolling stock and track will be needed in the British Rail southern region for the Channel tunnel rail link; what are the estimated costs of each; and if he will give an estimate of total extra money he intends to make available to British Rail for Channel tunnel-related facilities and improvements.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR currently proposes that the main items of expenditure will be specialised passenger rolling stock; freight locomotives, terminals and sidings and Freightliner wagons; international passenger facilities at Waterloo and Ashford; track and signalling improvements and connections; and maintenance facilities. BR will consider the investment case for, and the cost of, each of these elements on their commercial merits in the usual way, and whether the returns will be sufficient to service the necessary borrowing.

Rail Electrification (Dorset)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce his decision on British Rail's proposals for railway electrification in Dorset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 December 1985, c. *43*]: I have today given approval to

British Rail for the electrification of the line from Bournemouth to Weymouth at a cost of some £13·5 million, and for new rolling stock to run on principal services between London, Bournemouth and Weymouth at a cost (including associated facilities) of some £30 million. This scheme will bring the total investment we have approved for BR over the last 18 months to nearly £635 million.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of the current level of oil prices, he will take steps to secure a reduction in North sea oil output.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General when he expects to receive a copy of the results of the Manpower Services Commission survey on the community programme and its graduates, carried out last autumn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Returns from the 1985 autumn interview survey of participants on the community programme, which is carried out by independent consultants, are currently being processed. I do not expect to receive this report before April, but I will place a copy in the Library of the House as soon as it is available.

Mr. Millan asked the Paymaster General (1) whether he will increase the average wage of £63 per week for funding under the community programme; and what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission on this matter;

(2) if he will increase the agency fee payable to local authorities for managing projects under the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: We keep under review the levels of approved costs which can be reimbursed under the community programme and make changes whenever this would improve the cost-effective use of taxpayers' money. The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission regularly discusses all such issues connected with the efficient administration of the programme.

Trade Unions (Public Funds)

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General if he will list the trade unions which have received public money under section 1 of the Employment Act 1980; how much each union received; and what was the year in which it was received.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The certification officer has provided the following information for the period from the introduction of the scheme on 1 October 1980 up to 24 January this year. No payments were made in 1980.

	Payments						
Union	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total*
Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers—Engineering Foundry and Construction Section	—	—	—	—	1,199,922·19	—	1,199,922·19
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association	451·14	677·57	416·15	432·56	—	—	1,977·42
Association of Education Officers	—	—	206·68	—	—	—	206·68
Association of Management and Professional Staffs	2,323·07	1,856·22	—	—	—	—	4,179·29
Association of Optical Practitioners Ltd.	1,508·33	1,577·05	—	1,385·23	—	—	4,470·61
Association of Polytechnic Teachers	—	—	—	—	—	540·94	540·94
Association of Public Service Finance Officers	524·35	596·43	619·35	621·28	628·95	—	2,990·36
Association of Public Service Professional Engineers	—	386·60	—	—	—	—	386·60
Barclays Group Staff Union	—	10,941·13	—	11,427·24	—	—	22,368·37
British Association of Occupational Therapists	1,404·63	2,260·10	328·67	2,016·58	—	—	6,009·98
British Orthoptic Society	—	—	147·11	—	—	—	147·11
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	—	1,297·97	1,443·54	—	—	—	2,741·51
Clearing Bank Union	—	—	—	41·16	—	—	41·16
Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union	—	—	—	—	168,443·67	—	168,443·67
Immigration Service Unions	—	—	221·78	—	511·98	—	733·76
Institute of Journalists	—	587·53	978·52	699·63	509·08	—	2,774·76
National and Provincial Building Society Staff Association	—	—	—	—	868·66	—	868·66
National Association of Fire Officers	—	—	176·84	—	—	—	176·84
National Association of Head Teachers	—	322·17	4,431·38	242·09	—	—	4,995·64
National Association of Inspectors and Educational Advisers	—	—	—	—	—	22·68	22·68
Nat West Staff Association	—	—	—	7,733·93	—	—	7,733·93
Professional Association of Teachers	4,068·71	4,456·78	4,600·83	4,828·81	6,175·07	—	24,130·20
Retail Book, Stationery and Allied Trade's Employees Association	—	—	—	1,392·89	1,539·34	—	2,931·34
Retained Firefighters Union	—	—	—	—	—	332·19	332·19
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom	—	—	67,871·38	36,964·59	8,538·33	—	113,374·30
Society of Radiographers	2,654·28	—	2,346·42	3,411·49	2,879·64	—	11,291·83
The Society of Chiropodists	—	1,189·40	1,283·52	1,300·93	—	1,197·77	4,971·62
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawan Cymru (National Association of the Teachers of Wales)	—	—	—	—	1,965·23	—	1,965·23

Training Schemes

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a breakdown of the number of places covered in

the north-west region by the following schemes *(a)* the community programme, *(b)* community industry, *(c)* enterprise allowance and *(d)* the youth training scheme, showing mode A and B placements.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 20 January at column *38*.

Ethnic Minority Statistics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General on what criteria areas were selected for inclusion in the pilot tests which have been initiated by his Department to collect information on ethnic minority unemployment statistics.

Mr. Alan Clark: The criteria used for selecting unemployment benefit office areas for inclusion in the pilot testing of the collection of ethnic minority unemployment statistics were:

1. an area of high unemployment and significant ethnic minority concentration;
2. an area of high unemployment and low ethnic minority concentration; and
3. an area of good employment with a significant mixture of minority communities.

Job Start Scheme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his policy underlying the taxation of the £20 a week special allowance for people employed in a job paying less than £80 a week within the framework of the job start scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Taxation policy is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Income derived from employment is ordinarily subject to tax.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in the percentage of the retail prices index in mortgage interest payments between April 1979 and April 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The weight attaching to the component of the retail prices index which relates to mortgage interest payments increased from 3·1 per cent. to 4·6 per cent. between 1979 and 1985. The index for mortgage interest payments rose by 158 per cent. between April 1979 and April 1985.

Miss Juliet Kent

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the reply of 22 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *121*, when he expects the proceedings to recover wages owed to Miss Juliet Kent to begin.

Mr. Trippier: Formal action to institute proceedings for recovery under section 22(5) of the Wages Councils Act 1979 was taken on 30 October 1985, but it is not possible at present to say when the case will come before a court.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Motor Vehicles (Theft)

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of total recorded crime in London in each of the last three years consisted of motor vehicle theft; and what proportion was cleared up.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table:

Offences of motor vehicle theft recorded by the Police Metropolitan Police District and City of London — *Percentages*

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Recorded offences of motor vehicle theft as a percentage of all offences recorded by the police	15	14	13
Percentage of recorded offences of motor vehicle theft cleared up by the police	9	9	9

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he gives to motor vehicle manufacturers in relation to the prevention of auto crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government believe that motor vehicle manufacturers have a significant role to play in preventing autocrime by designing and producing more secure cars. Last November, I chaired a conference devoted to autocrime, and attended by motor manufacturers, at which both the findings of a Home Office funded research project on design solutions to autocrime and the related report of a working group on car security set up by the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention, were presented. One of the initiatives to emerge from the recent crime prevention seminar held by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was a British standard for car security to be prepared by the British Standards Institution with the help of motor manufacturers.

Voluntary Services Unit (Grants)

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in respect of grants given by the voluntary services unit, if he will give the value of grants approved or made for 1985-86, with details of the name, type and purpose of the organisation in receipt of each grant, and the value of each grant.

Mr. Waddington: In the following tables the types of organisation or project in respect of which grants have been made or approved so far in 1985-86 are grouped according to the nature of the organisation or, where more appropriate, the nature of the project which the grant is intended to support. Where the grant is for a specific project, the purpose of the project is shown if that is not evident from the name of the organisation carrying out the project or to which the grant is paid.

Group 1
National organisations which provide services or resources to other voluntary organisations or exist to encourage and develop voluntary activity

Name and purpose	*Amount of grant* £
Action Resource Centre—arranges secondment of business personnel into voluntary projects and organisations	33,000

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Association of Researchers in Voluntary Action and Community Involvement—provides forum for researchers and practitioners into voluntary involvement	10,700
British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres—supports settlements and social action centres	26,500
COPE—national organisation for groups providing support for socially isolated and disadvantaged families	4,900
Councils for Voluntary Service—National Association—for research into recent work on ethnic minorities	1,000
Festival Welfare Services—co-ordinates voluntary welfare organisations at open-air festivals	21,800
National Association of Young People's Counselling and Advisory Services—promotes young people's counselling and advisory services	27,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations—the leading national resource centre for voluntary organisations	865,000
National Federation of City Farms—provides general support to the city farm movement	27,400
National Federation of Community Organisations—supports local community associations	133,000
National Federation of Self Help Organisations—provides support for self help organisations within the Afro-Caribbean Community	25,750
National Youth Bureau (Young Volunteer Resource Unit)—provides support to young volunteer agencies and those working with young volunteers	122,000
Standing Conference of Women's Organisations—supports local groups of women's organisations	2,000
Volonteurope—exchange information on voluntary activities in Europe	5,000
Volunteer Centre—main national resource centre for volunteering	679,000
Sub Total	1,984,050

Group 2
National Organisations which also recruit and deploy volunteers

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Women's Royal Voluntary Service—undertakes a wide range of welfare work and provides assistance in emergencies	4,600,000
Community Service Volunteers—involves people in community service and encourages voluntary and community action	539,000
Community Transport—removal and supply of furniture for the socially deprived, and minibus services for voluntary groups	40,000
Horticultural Therapy—Land Use Volunteers—places volunteers skilled in agriculture and horticulture in projects benefiting the disabled and disadvantaged	11,000
International Voluntary Service—undertakes community projects through short-term workcamps involving international volunteers	19,000
Pensioners' Link Association—voluntary work in support of the elderly	96,200
RELEASE (Princedale Trust)—uses volunteers for drug counselling	15,000
Retired Executives Action Clearing House (REACH)—links retired people with voluntary groups	20,700
Time for God—places young Christian volunteers in community service projects	12,000
Sub Total	5,352,900

Group 3
National Organisations concerned with the support and development of Community work

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Birmingham Settlement—Unemployment Resource Worker—provides practical advice and support to self-help groups of unemployed people	22,975
British Council of Churches (Community Work Resource Unit)—promotes community work and release of resources by churches	20,000
Church Army—Inner Cities Unit—provides direct practical support to local church based community workers	17,625
CETU (Community Education Training Unit)—works to establish credibility of community development in areas (at present in Yorkshire) where support structures and relationships between local authorities and voluntary bodies are poor	34,000
Community Council for Wiltshire—provides consultancy service to voluntary bodies about information systems	10,000
Community Projects Foundation—a non-departmental public body which demonstrates new approaches to community work in projects which it undertakes in cooperation with local authorities	886,000
Community Roots Trust—training and other support for self employment particularly for those from ethnic minorities	6,250
Federation of Community Work Training Groups—supports regional training groups	29,000
Student Community Action Development Unit (SCADU)—coordinates and supports more than 100 university and polytechnic student groups which are engaged in local community work	35,000
Sub Total	1,060,850

Group 4
Innovative local voluntary projects with the potential to produce lessons of wider significance

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Barton, Oxford, Community Computer Project—to develop use of micro-computer for local community work, provision of advice, information etc	15,000
Coventry Voluntary Services Council—Coventry media project (to produce community material for cable television)	59,875
Hammersmith & Fulham Council for Voluntary Service (Race Relations Project)—to make local voluntary organisations more aware of needs of ethnic minority groups and encourage participation of these groups in voluntary activities	22,000
Kent Volunteer Bureaux—to develop model systems of record keeping and self-monitoring by volunteer bureaux	22,800
Leeds Council for Voluntary Service (Leeds Community Fund)—continued from United Funds W Yorks Development Project on payroll giving for charitable purposes	5,500
Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Service (Race Awareness Consortium)—an approach to the need for better race awareness by those managing voluntary work by a consortium of voluntary organisations	24,400
Manchester Council for Voluntary Service—ethnic minorities liaison project	29,900

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Midlands Group of Volunteer Organisers (Project VBX)—to advise and provide practical support to Volunteer Bureaux in particular in connection with the use of unemployed volunteers	23,880
National Council for Voluntary Organisations Management Development Unit—project on voluntary organisations' services to ethnic minorities	10,750
Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service Charities Information Project—project to coordinate information on charities	2,625
Sefton Community Resource Action Project—to train community workers in a non-institutional setting	7,000
Stonebridge (Harlesden) Bus Garage Project—part of a multi-purpose local community project	20,000
Turning Point, Lewisham—an evaluation of a scheme providing field-based training in community work for a multi-ethnic society	8,000
United Funds (West Yorkshire Development Project)—a pilot project for a national convenanted payroll deduction scheme for supporting voluntary and charitable organisations	5,000
Warrington Workshop for Voluntary Action—promotion of a form of local voluntary action which uses a study of local history and residents' recollections	10,700
Sub total	267,430

Group 5
Miscellaneous special grants to voluntary organisations

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Gamblers Anonymous General Services Board—to support and supplement the work of local GA groups	1,000
Institute of Charity Fundraising Managers' Trust—development of professional standards for fundraisers	18,750
Local Development Agency Fund Support Unit (NCVO)—provides administrative support for the fund	17,000
Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service—a regional CVS	15,000
National Council for the Welfare of Prisoners Abroad—advice and welfare for British prisoners in foreign prisons	18,000
Northern Association for Community Care—provides residential short term breaks for groups of handicapped and disadvantaged people	33,000
"Operation Drake" (Drake Fellowship)—provides opportunities for unemployed young people to develop themselves through active training and participation in wide variety of unusual community projects	15,000
West End Coordinated Voluntary Services—coordinated system of support for homeless people in London	115,500
Sub Total	233,250

Group 6
Small grants to projects under a special scheme for the development of local voluntary action

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Hull—Community Resources Development Project	5,154
Salford—Community Involvement Project	998
Southampton—training for voluntary organisations	6,000
Tyne and Wear—Community involvement for temporarily employed	310
Wiltshire—Information Resource Exchange	9,524
Sub total	21,986

Group 7
Charity Reviews

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
Lancashire County Council—charity review	17,100
Norfolk County Council—charity review	16,400
Sub total	38,500

Group 8
Grants in respect of Refugees

Name and purpose	Amount of grant £
British Refugee Council—National Organisation providing support for refugees in the United Kingdom (includes grant for co-ordination of Vietnamese programme)	396,450
Refugee Action—Works with refugees in the United Kingdom (grants made for work within the Vietnamese)	178,618
The Ockenden Venture—Works with refugees, displaced children, and students. (Grants made for work with the Vietnamese)	160,795
Sub total	735,863
GRAND TOTAL	9,694,829

Immigration

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the electoral register is currently used by the immigration authorities; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine readable form.

Mr. Waddington: The register of electors is consulted by the immigration department in appropriate cases. There are no current plans for machine readable versions of the register to be used.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of visitors from the Indian sub-continent refused leave to enter the United Kingdom, the number of those on whose behalf temporary admission is granted following representations by hon. Members and the number of those who are subsequently granted visitor's visas.

Mr. Waddington: The table below gives the number of passengers from the Indian sub-continent who, having been refused entry, were removed in the year to end-November 1985. It is not possible to say how many of these passengers initially sought entry as visitors.

	Number
Bangladesh	1,062
India	1,948
Pakistan	1,486

The other information requested is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of visitors from the Indian sub-continent who, having been granted temporary entry following representation by an hon. Member *(a)* fails to comply with an order to be removed within 14 days without representations on their behalf and *(b)* disappear without further trace.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not available in the form requested.

Sentencing

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to what factors he attributes the difference in the custodial sentencing rates in 1983 in magistrates courts of adult males found guilty of indictable offences in the petty sessional divisions of Chester (28 per cent.), Ellesmere Port (17 per cent.), and Macclesfield (16 per cent.), respectively; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to what factors he attributes the difference in the custodial sentencing rates in 1983 in magistrates courts of adult males found guilty of indictable offences in the petty session divisions of Brighton (30 per cent.), Hastings (25 per cent.), and Lewes (14 per cent.), respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Sentencing is a complex process, and factors which might account for variations between different areas cannot easily be identified. The choice of sentence in a particular case, within the range provided by law, must remain a matter for the court dealing with the case, subject to the defendant's right of appeal. As to general principles, we take opportunities to draw to the attention of the magistrates relevant guidance of the Court of Appeal, including guidance on the use of custody, and to emphasise the value of using non-custodial sentences wherever appropriate. Fresh guidance on sentencing powers and principles will be given in the new edition of "The Sentence of the Court", due to be published in late February.

Mr. P. Reid

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to answer the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside's letter of 18 October concerning Mr. P. Reid.

Mr. Mellor: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 16 January.

Drink-driving

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motor car drivers charged with drinking and driving offences in each of the last five years have been found to have a blood alcohol content of more than 120 mg. per 100 ml. blood; and what proportion of the total number of drivers charged with such offences this represented in each year.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to findings of guilt for offences of driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle while having a breath, blood or urine alcohol concentration in excess of the prescribed limits (80 mg. per 100 ml. of blood, 35 microgrammes per 100 ml. of breath or 107 mg. per 100 ml. of urine). A breakdown of the alcohol concentration recorded in these findings of guilt is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table 16 of the issue for 1984), copies of which are in the Library. In 1984, out of a total of 79,369 findings of guilt for these offences, 78 per cent. (62,290) of those found guilty were recorded as having alcohol in excess of 120 mg. per 100 ml. of blood (or equivalent for a breath or urine test). There were, in addition, 22,100 findings of guilt for the offences of failing to provide a specimen for initial breath test or for evidential test, or being unfit through drink or drugs, while driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle.

Byelaws

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the likely effect on business of the provisions of the model byelaws recently approved by his Department.

Mr. Mellor: It is not clear to me which model byelaws my hon. Friend has in mind, but if he will write to me I shall be glad to consider the matter further.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the advisory committee on animal experiments will publish its report.

Mr. Mellor: The advisory committee on animal experiments does not publish a regular report on its work, but from time to time its reports to my right hon. Friend on subjects of special investigation are published. The animals procedures committee which is to replace the present committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*, will be required to make to my right hon. Friend an annual report on its activities, which will be published.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what organisations the advisory committee on animal experiments has consulted.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend receives advice, which he makes available to the committee on matters in which it is interested, from scientific and professional bodies and animal welfare organisations. Members of the committee also visit places where experiments are carried out.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many laboratories the advisory committee on animal experiments has visited.

Mr. Mellor: This information is given in an appendix to the "Statistics of Experiments on Live Animals, Great Britain" published each year by my right hon. Friend. In 1984, the last year for which statistics are available, members of the committee made three visits to places registered under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, to see experiments in progress and to have discussions with licensees.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress the advisory committee

on animal experiments has made in assessing the use of animals in painful psychological and behavioural experiments.

Mr. Mellor: The advisory committee is continuing its examination of psychological and behavioural experiments using live animals, which involve the infliction of stress. The committee expects in due course to report to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria will be used to choose the veterinary surgeon, and the person responsible for day-to-day care of laboratory animals, in connection with premises registered to perform animal experiments under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: Before deciding whether or not to approve the persons nominated for these functions by applicants for certificates my right hon. Friend will take into account, in the light of the views of his inspector, the qualifications, training, experience and character of those nominated.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number of licences for experimentation on animals in the field of microsurgery he estimates will be applied for under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible at this stage to make a precise estimate. However, the numbers of applications for personal and project licences authorising the use of live animals for the purpose of training in this highly specialised area is likely to be very small in proportion to the total numbers of applications for each kind of licence.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the members and their area of expertise of the advisory committee on animal experiments.

Mr. Mellor: The present membership of the advisory committee is as follows:

Dr. M. Balls — Chairman of Trustees of Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments; reader in medical cell biology, University of Nottingham.
Professor D. Blackman—Professor of Psychology, University College, Cardiff.
J. Brice, Esq.—consultant neurosurgeon, Wessex Neurological Centre.
Dr. C. Coid — Head of Division of Comparative Medicine MRC Clinical Research Centre, Harrow.
Professor A. Dayan — Professor of Toxicology, DHSS Department of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.
Professor the Rev. G. R. Dunstan — Emeritus Professor of Moral and Social Theology, University of London, King's College.
T. Field-Fisher, Esq., QC—Recorder, Chairman of RSPCA Legal Committee.
Dr. J. Hampson — Chief Animal Experimentation Research Officer, RSPCA.
Clive Hollands, Esq. — Director, Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection; Secretary, committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation.
Sir Andrew Huxley, FRS — Past President, Royal Society; Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.
Professor S. Jennett—Professor of Physiology, University of Glasgow.
Dr. B. B. Newbould — Research Director, ICI Pharmaceuticals.
N. Snodgrass, Esq.—Retired Veterinary Surgeon.

Firearms (Heathrow)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how may foreign nationals, by nationality, not working for or associated with foreign airlines are permitted to carry firearms at Heathrow.

Mr. Hurd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that an operations manager, who is a Zimbabwean employed by the British Airports Authority, holds a firearm certificate in connection with the performance of duties at Heathrow. This authorises the possession of pistols specially designed to scare birds.

Turkish Citizens

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of Turkish citizens in inner London, their status, and the authority for their residence within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Based on information available from the 1981 and 1983 labour force surveys and the 1981 census of population, it is estimated that there were between 10,000 and 20,000 Turkish nationals usually resident in Great Britain in the early 1980s, about half of whom were living in inner London. The other information is not available.

Special Event Radio

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about special event radio.

Mr. Hurd: Following the occasional use of low-powered radio at sporting and other events, I have decided to establish a broader-based experiment in the use of such radio to provide information or other services to those attending events such as festivals, county or other shows, motor racing meetings and other sporting events. The experiment will run for two years from 1986, and up to 25 licences for special event radio will be available in each year of the experiment. Licences will be issued by the Home Office, and, subject to the availability of frequencies, will be available for recognised events which are of not more than two weeks duration and which take place within a single site. Depending upon the site, the maximum effective radiated power will be 50 milliwatts, and frequencies will be allocated in the medium wave band. A licence fee of £450 will be payable to cover Home Office and Department of Trade and Industry costs; where, however, a licensee proposes to broadcast on separate occasions at the same site, a fee of £100 will be payable for successive licences, provided that the technical characteristics of the broadcasting station remain the same. It is my intention that special event radio should be subject broadly to the same conditions on the content of broadcasts, advertising and sponsorship as the experimental neighbourhood community radio stations due to begin broadcasting in the near future.

Full details of the general and technical conditions and the licensing procedure for special event radio are set out in notes for the guidance of prospective licencees, available from the Home Office. Applications for licences for events in 1986 should reach the Home Office by 28 February 1986. Consistent with the experimental nature of

the scheme, applications will be selected with a view to providing experience of special event radio at a range of different events in different locations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Private Residential Care (Elderly People)

16. **Ms. Harman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to guarantee the continued payment of fees for elderly or disabled people in private residential care who were paying their own fees until 1985 and who are now dependent on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: In most such cases benefit will be payable up to the level of the normal limits laid down by Parliament. However, larger amounts may be payable in a few exceptional cases.

51. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the current requirements for the registration and licensing of all nursing homes and residential care homes for the elderly under the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984; and how many of each were so registered in each of the past three years.

Mr. Whitney: We are satisfied that the Registered Homes Act 1984 and associated regulations which came into force on 1 January 1985 improved and strengthened the registration arrangements for nursing homes and residential care homes. It is too soon to assess their impact but the Department's social services inspectorate is conducting a study over two years to see how local authorities are implementing the new legislation and what effect it is having on standards in residential care homes and we shall consider their report in due course with interest.

The numbers of registered residential care homes in England for elderly and disabled people at 31 March of the last three years was as follows:

	Number
1983	4,509
1984	5,222
1985	*6,443

*Provisional.

Comparable information on nursing homes is not available. The total number of nursing homes registered in England, excluding those with operating theatres, at 31 December each year was:

	Number
1982	1,036
1983	1,127
1984	1,295

38. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the operation of the procedures for placing elderly people in residential homes and nursing homes at his Department's expense.

Mr. Newton: We are currently reviewing the financial limits for payments of supplementary benefit in such cases, as I indicated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) earlier today, and as I have stated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) today, we are working with the local authority associations with a view to improved co-operation between the Department and local authorities in this field.

Basildon Hospital (Births)

17. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of babies born at Basildon hospital in each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The total numbers of births at Basildon hospital in the years 1980 to 1984 were as follows:

	Number
1980	2,275
1981	2,211
1982	2,071
1983	2,169
1984	2,278

Information for 1985 is not yet available centrally.

Social Security Reform

18. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings he expects to make by replacing the current system of single payments by the social fund as set out in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: A decision on the resources to be devoted to the social fund will be taken nearer the time when the fund is introduced.

30. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received since the publication of the White Paper on "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: A number of organisations and individuals have expressed views on various aspects of the White Paper proposals.

50. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he would allocate extra funding if the social fund budget allocations run out before the end of the financial year under his proposals for social security reform.

Mr. Newton: Realistic budgets and effective monitoring of spending throughout the year should ensure that payments in any period are consistent with the annual budget, and we shall maintain contingency margins to respond to unpredictable levels of demand which put pressure on the allocations of individual offices.

61. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown by sex of the figures contained in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under the proposals in "Reform of Social Security" how payment for residential care and nursing homes will be made.

Mr. Newton: This will be given further consideration in the light of the current review of supplementary benefit financial limits in such cases, and of the outcome of the

proposed working party with the local authority associations described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) today.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown by gross income level of the totals illustrated in the bottom line of tables 3(i)B, 3(ii)B and 12(ii)B of the technical annex to the White Paper on the reform of social security, distinguishing, where possible, between couples and single parents, using the following or similar gross weekly income bands: under £50, £50-74, £75-£99, £100-£124 and £125 plus.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 January 1985, c. *697-98*]: The number of sample cases is too small to justify a separate income band for under £50, but otherwise the information requested is given in the tables. Gross income has been taken to cover all normal weekly income, including current family income supplement and child benefit and other state benefits, but excluding housing benefit.

As in the technical annex, all numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10,000. As a result the combined totals may not exactly match the totals in the original tables.

Table 3(i)B of the Technical Annex to the White Paper 'Reform of Social Security'
Working families with children: changes in receipt of FIS/family credit: by gross weekly income
Effect of structural reform

Thousands

Gross weekly income	*Increases* £5+	£4-5	£3-4	£2-3	£1-2	<£1	*Total increased*	*No change*	*Total decreased*	*Decreases* <£1	£1-2	£2-3	£3-4	£4-5	£5+
Couples															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	20	*	*	*	*	*	20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	70	*	*	*	*	*	90	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Over £125	130	20	20	20	20	10	210	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	220	20	20	20	20	10	320	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Single Parents															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	10	*	*	*	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	40	*	*	*	*	*	40	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Over £125	20	*	*	*	*	*	30	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	80	*	*	*	*	*	90	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

* Less than 5,000.

Table 3(ii)B of the Technical Annex to the White Paper 'Reform of Social Security'
Working families with children: changes in Disposable income after meeting housing costs: by gross weekly income
Effect of structural reform

Thousands

Gross weekly income	*Increases* £5+	£4-5	£3-4	£2-3	£1-2	<£1	*Total increased*	*No change*	*Total decreased*	*Decreases* <£1	£1-2	£2-3	£3-4	£4-5	£5+
Couples															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	20	*	*	*	*	*	20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	40	10	*	10	*	*	70	*	30	*	10	*	*	*	10
Over £125	110	10	30	30	30	10	230	10	60	10	20	10	*	*	20
Total	170	30	30	30	40	20	320	20	90	10	20	10	10	*	30
Single Parents															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	10	*	*	*	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	20	*	*	*	*	*	30	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	10
Over £125	20	*	*	*	*	*	30	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	50	*	*	*	10	*	80	*	20	*	*	*	*	*	10

1. Without 20 per cent. rates contribution.
2. *=less than 5,000.

Table 12(ii)B of the Technical Annex to the White Paper 'Reform of Social Security'
Working families with children: changes in disposable income after meeting housing costs by gross weekly income
Effect of structural reform

Thousands

Gross weekly income	*Increases* £5+	£4-5	£3-4	£2-3	£1-2	<£1	*Total increased*	*No change*	*Total decreased*	*Decreases* <£1	£1-2	£2-3	£3-4	£4-5	£5+
Couples															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	10	*	*	*	*	*	20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	40	*	*	10	*	10	70	10	30	*	*	10	*	*	10
Over £125	110	10	20	20	30	10	200	10	70	10	20	10	10	*	20

Gross weekly income	Increases £5+	£4-5	£3-4	£2-3	£1-2	<£1	Total increased	No change	Total decreased	Decreases <£1	£1-2	£2-3	£3-4	£4-5	£5+
Total	160	20	30	30	30	20	290	20	100	10	20	20	10	10	30
Single Parents															
Up to £75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£75-01-£100	10	*	*	*	*	*	10	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
£100-01-£125	20	*	*	*	*	*	30	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	10
Over £125	20	*	*	*	*	*	30	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	50	*	10	*	*	*	70	*	20	*	*	*	*	*	10

< With 20% rates contribution but taking no account of the effects of rates reform.
* less than 5,000

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what consideration he has given to the effect of his proposals in "Reform of Social Security: Programme for Action", on the medical rehabilitation services; if they will provide any disincentive to treatment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the effect of his proposals in "Reform of Social Security; Programme for Action," on the employment medical rehabilitation services; if they will provide any disincentives to rehabilitation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *60*]: We do not anticipate that the proposals in the White Paper will discourage those who might avail themselves of either of the services referred to by the right hon. Member. We shall, however, continue to keep the matter in view as the detailed arrangements for the schemes outlined in the White Paper are developed.

Benefits (Uprating)

19. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the next benefits uprating, and on which date in July it is proposed that this uprating will come into effect.

Mr. Major: The next main uprating of social security benefits will come into effect in the week beginning 28 July. The uprating will be based on the movement of the retail price index from May 1985 to January 1986. The January RPI will be published on 21 February and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, will make a statement shortly afterwards giving the details of the uprating.

Pensioners (Entitlement)

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the position of pensioners who are too young to have built up entitlement under the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Newton: None. But representations were made during the consultation period following publication of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517) about the position of pensioners who are too old to have built up entitlements under the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Social Work Training

21. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the resources for social work training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We shall be taking into account the resources likely to be required when considering with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and the other Government Departments and organisations affected, the proposals for qualifying training made by the council.

29. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the existing system of social work training.

44. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve social work training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Changes in the present arrangements for social work training have been proposed by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work which has statutory responsibility for promoting such training and approving its content. It is currently engaged in wide consultations on a proposal to combine the two main qualifications in social work and to extend the training period by a year to enable students to spend more time in supervised practice before qualification; and the resource implications are being examined. Appropriate training for staff already in post is also important: responsibility for meeting their needs rests with employers, who have a wide and regularly updated range of local and national training resources to draw on.

49. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to implement the recommendation of the Jasmine Beckford inquiry report on social work training.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) earlier today.

Child Care (Research)

22. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what conclusions he draws from the latest research carried out by his Department into the state of child care in Britain.

Mr. Whitney: I recognise the importance to the improvement of social work practice of the findings of the recent research commissioned into aspects of work with children in care. A programme of dissemination has been initiated to bring these results to the attention of social work practitioners and managers. The research suggests that social work with families and children is complex and difficult, and high professional standards and sophisticated social work skills are needed.

Social Security Review

23. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on responses received to the social security review.

Mr. Newton: Final proposals were published on 16 December in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691). A Bill to give effect to these proposals was published on 17 January and will be debated on Second Reading later today.

War Widows

24. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the commitment in the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security", that local authorities will retain the power to apply special treatment to war pensioners when assessing housing benefit entitlement, will apply also to war widows.

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Students (Benefits)

25. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in respect of the proposals in the White Paper for social security concerning student eligibility to housing and supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: Since publication of the White Paper we have received approximately 60 written representations and inquiries regarding these proposals.

60. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans for further withdrawal of social security benefit for students in the long vacation.

Mr. Newton: We have no present plans for changes in social security benefits for students beyond those set out in the consultation paper sent to the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Local Authority Associations on 7 January, which would restrict students' access to housing benefit for unoccupied accommodation in the long vacation but would not otherwise affect long vacation entitlement. The Government's long-term objective however remains as stated in paragraph 3.34 of Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on social security benefits payable to students.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the committee plans to submit its report by the middle of March.

Medical Negligence

26. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry into the possibility of introducing a no-faults compensation scheme to replace actions for medical negligence.

Mr. Whitney: The question of no-fault compensation for victims of medical accidents was examined by the Royal Commission on civil liability and personal injury which reported in 1978. The commission considered there would be serious difficulties in administering such a scheme, for example in distinguishing medical accidents from the natural progression of a disease or injury or from a foreseeable side effect of treatment. They concluded that such a scheme should not be introduced in this country. The Government do not consider that circumstances have changed since the commission reported to the extent necessary to justify a further inquiry.

Tranquilliser Addiction

27. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to renew his Department's grant to the Tranx centre in Harrow and to other bodies combating tranquilliser addiction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: TRANX, Harrow, is funded under the Department's drugs initiative, the purpose of which is to pump-prime local projects. As in other schemes of this kind, three years is the maximum period for which central funding can be provided, after which local projects are expected to look for continued support to their local statutory authorities, which are responsible for the planning and provision of health and social services.

Mentally Handicapped Children

28. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the objectives of his Department's policy on mentally handicapped children; how he monitors its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We want, as a high priority, co-ordinated health and social services in each locality for mentally handicapped children and adults, and a major shift from institutional health care to a range of community care according to individual needs. The main aims identified for field authorities* include provision of the support and relief services necessary to enable families to care for mentally handicapped children at home, and suitable alternatives for children who cannot live at home, including supported placement with other families. For children who need continuing health care in a residential health setting, our objective is provision outside hospital in small home-like units as near as possible to the child's family and with easy access to and from the community.

The Department's monitoring includes studying the plans of health authorities and the statistics on children in hospital and in NHS units in the community. Regional health authorities have been asked to monitor the action of district health authorities working in consultation with local authorities to get long-stay mentally handicapped children out of hospital. In appropriate cases Ministers raise the question of progress towards this objective with them, and also wider questions of collaboration with local authorities, in our annual reviews of regional health authorities. However, not all aspects of developing services are readily identifiable and measureable, nor is detailed central monitoring appropriate when policy allows for implementation locally, according to local knowledge, circumstances, needs and professional practice.

The national development team for mentally handicapped people examines authorities' self-monitoring arrangements, and informs my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services of the current state of mental handicap services.

* Outlined in the White Paper "Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped" Cmnd. 4683 (1971), recently summarised in the paper "Mental Handicap: Policies and Priorities" appended to the Government response to the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, 1984-85 Session: Community Care, Cmnd. 9674 (1985).

Nursing

31. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has had from the nursing profession in respect of the implementation of the recommendations of the Griffiths report, and if he will make a statement.

37. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received from representatives of the nursing profession about their role in the management of the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend has recently received a letter from the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing.

Crown Immunity

32. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the abolition of Crown immunity in areas for which he is responsible.

Mr. Hayhoe: Representations about the Crown immunity of the National Health Service have been received from a number of right hon. and hon. Members, and from the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the British Pest Control Association, the General Municipal and Boilermakers Allied Trades Union, the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the National Association of Health Authorities and the Royal College of Nursing.

Home Helps

33. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has rescinded the circular recommending 12 home helps per thousand of elderly population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: This guideline figure for home helps was suggested in a circular issued in 1972 in connection with the preparation of local authority 10-year development plans, which have now been discontinued. Simple single indicators for the provision of individual services are no longer recognised as useful. It is for each social services authority to decide on the level and nature of the home help service to be provided, taking into account local need and other factors including the availability of voluntary, private and informal care.

54. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions about home helps he proposes to give to the social services inspectorate on its monitoring of social services department.

Mr. Whitney: Local authorities are responsible for providing home help services and for monitoring their performance. The social services inspectorate's role is to help local authorities secure the most effective use of professional and other resources, normally by comparing provision in a range of authorities and by identifying good practice and spreading knowledge about it. These are the purposes of the inspection of home help services which is in the inspectorate's work programme for 1986.

Ancillary Workers

34. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the remuneration of National Health Service ancillary workers.

Mr. Whitney: The pay and conditions of National Health Service ancillary staff are matters for the ancillary staffs Whitley council. The management side of the council is currently considering the pay claim for 1986-87 presented by the trade union side and informal discussions are taking place between representatives of both sides. The next scheduled meeting of the council is on 13 February.

36. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the pay of National Health Service ancillary workers.

Mr. Whitney: Seven hon. Members have forwarded a circular letter issued by the trade union side of the ancillary staffs Whitley council. We have also received 11 other representations from hon. Members and members of the public since the pay claim for 1986-87 was presented to the council on 11 November 1985.

Claimants (Rates)

35. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on his proposal to make claimants pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of their rate bills, contained in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: The representations received on this proposal, which was first published in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517), are summarised in paragraph 3.55 of the White Paper.

Family Credit Scheme

39. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates he has of the level of co-operation that employers will be willing to give in order to operate the new family credit scheme.

Mr. Newton: We would expect that employers, with whose organisations we shall be continuing to consult on the detailed working of the scheme, will co-operate fully in its operation.

Oral Contraceptives

40. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to issue new guidelines for the prescription of oral contraceptives to girls aged below 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I hope to make an announcement soon.

Unemployment Benefit

41. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the practice of ceasing to pay unemployment benefit whilst investigations are made into the circumstances of an employee leaving his previous employment.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to change these procedures which are necessary to safeguard public funds.

Limited List Prescribing

42. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the extent to which the limited list of prescribable drugs is achieving its objectives.

Mr. Hayhoe: The savings flowing from the selected list scheme of prescribable drugs are on course for the target of £75 million a year and are already being spent elsewhere in the National Health Service. This initiative has also stimulated pharmaceutical companies to reduce prices of many of their products to the level the National Health Service can afford. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs has worked hard and effectively to ensure that clinical needs of patients are met at reasonable cost to the National Health Service.

Dental Treatment

43. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to make any changes to the procedures used for investigating complaints about dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: The procedures for investigating complaints are under review.

North-Western Region

45. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the provision of services by the individual district health authorities in the north-west region.

Mr. Hayhoe: The provision of services by district health authorities is monitored by regional health authorities, to which they are accountable. The hon. Member may therefore wish to direct any inquiries about district level services to the chairman of North-Western regional health authority.

Privatisation (Northern Region)

46. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he had with the chairman of the northern regional health authority on the implementation of the Government's privatisation programme.

Mr. Whitney: We discussed competitive tendering with all regional chairmen on 16 October 1985.

Regional Health Authorities (Funding)

47. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from regional health authorities about proposed levels of funding for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The level of resource allocations is inevitably the subject of discussion from time to time at annual regional reviews and other meetings between Ministers and regional health authority chairmen.

Family Income

48. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies he has conducted into the distribution of income within families with low incomes.

Mr. Newton: Studies in connection with the social security review looked at the difference in income distribution between families as a tax unit and households, which may include other adults, though not into the distribution of family income between all the different members of the family. The Green Paper (Cmnd. 9519) refers to the differences in apparent income if young unemployed adults are treated as members of the household in which they live rather than as individuals.

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore

52. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive a report from the Bloomsbury district health authority on the future of the royal national orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that Bloomsbury health authority considered the recommendations in the Le Quesne report on the future of orthopaedic services, and the responses to consultation on the report, at its meeting on 4 December. The authority agreed in principle a number of proposals affecting the Royal National orthopaedic hospital at Stanmore, deferred others for further consideration and agreed that there should be discussions with North-East Thames regional health authority on the report's recommendations, and in particular on the projected funding for the service levels recommended. Any proposals for major changes at Stanmore which arise from any of these discussions will need to be the subject of full public consultation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is already committed to taking the final decisions on any proposals for major change. A formal report would be made to the Secretary of State only if and when that stage is reached.

Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel

53. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel in connection with its claim for recognition for industrial relations purposes.

Mr. Whitney: I met the general secretary and other representatives on 27 November to discuss the association's claim for recognition at both national level and locally in particular health authorities.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

55. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he can provide about re-admission figures for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped as a result of the trend towards short-term care.

Mr. Whitney: Information on re-admissions to mental illness hospitals and units up to 1983 is contained in table A1.3 of booklet 1, "Mental illness hospitals and units in England: trends in admissions, discharges and residents", in the DHSS series "Mental Health Statistics for England 1983". Corresponding information for mental handicap

hospitals and units is contained in table B1.3 of booklet 2 in the same series. The booklets also contain, at tables A7.2 and B7.2 respectively, information on lengths of stay.

Some more up-to-date, but less detailed, information is included in the DHSS Statistical Bulletins 6/85, "Mental illness hospitals and units in England, results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1984", and 7/85, "Mental handicap hospitals and units in England, results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1984". Copies of these booklets and statistical bulletins are in the Library.

It may be helpful to point out that while some re-admissions represent a further attempt to treat a patient who has already received in-patient treatment and needs it again, a growing number, particularly for elderly mentally ill people and for mentally handicapped people, reflect the trend, which I welcome, towards arranging a succession of brief admissions at regular intervals for people living with their family or other informal carers, primarily or partly to provide respite for the carers. Our figures of course include both groups.

Newcastle Central Office

56. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General in the Appropriation Account, volume 8, clases XI-XII, 1984, dealing with financial discrepancies arising from industrial action at the Newcastle central office of his Department.

Mr. Newton: Certain computer analyses breaking down total expenditure between different types of benefit were not produced during the dispute. As a result, some of the individual figures quoted in the appropriation accounts may be less precise than usual. The report from the Comptroller and Auditor General drew attention to this, but did not suggest any impropriety or irregularity in accounting. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the report until it has been considered by the Public Accounts Committee in the usual way.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in support of the proposed social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The responses are not generally in a form which can sensibly be used to provide a simple breakdown of numbers for or against this proposal. However, the important points made about it, and the Government's conclusions, are in chapter 4 of the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691), particularly at paragraphs 4.13 to 4.16.

Mucodyne

58. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has now received to add the drug Mucodyne to the prescribed list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Many letters and other representations about the drug Mycodyne and other oral mucolytics have been received. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs has considered this matter as I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 24 October 1985 at column *231*. Amending regulations came into effect on 1 December 1985.

Funeral Costs

59. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he will make following the implementation of the White Paper on social security reform for funeral costs incurred by those not in receipt of family credit, housing benefit or income support.

Mr. Newton: Our aim, as set out in the White Paper, is to help people on low incomes who are unable to meet the reasonable cost of a funeral for which they are responsible. To minimise detailed questioning of applicants, we intend to take receipt of income support, family credit or housing benefit as an indication of low income. We are at present considering whether it would be possibble to extend help in exceptional cases to any other applicants on comparably low incomes — for example, because they had not claimed one of the qualifying benefits—without introducing a system which entailed intrusive questioning and complex administration.

NHS (Management Reorganisation)

62. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress made in the reorganisation of senior management in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Good progress is being made with implementation of the general management function in the National Health Service. All regional and district general managers are now in post, and about two thirds of the expected final number of unit general managers have been appointed. New management arangements for all 14 regional health authorities, and for 168 district health authorities, out of a total of 191, have been approved.

Mentally Ill People (Residential Care)

63. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing the recommendation on residential care for the mentally ill of the second report of the Social Services Committee on community care.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) earlier today. None of the recommendations in the committee's report related specifically to residential care for mentally ill people.

Oldham District General Hospital (Hip Operations)

64. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many senior house officers are at present available to assist the consultant orthopaedic surgeon with hip operations carried out at Oldham district general hospital.

Mr. Whitney: I regret we do not hold such information centrally. The hon. Member may like to make his inquiries of the chairman of Oldham district health authority which is responsible for the management of Oldham district general hospital.

Supplementary Benefit and Residential Care (Report)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take on the report of the working party on supplementary benefit and residential care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Supplementary benefit payments for people in residential care were among the matters considered by a working party, set up by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Social Security, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales in conjunction with the local authority associations, which examined the scope for improving collaboration between the Department and local authorities over financial support for residents of private and voluntary residential care homes. A copy of the working party's report has been placed in the Library.

The working party's main conclusions were:

i. long term solutions should be sought to the problems created by the existing parallel systems of local authority and supplementary benefit support for people in residential care;
and

ii. arrangements should be explored for extending local authorities' existing multi-disciplinary assessment arrangements to anyone in residential care claiming benefit and for local authorities to advise DHSS local offices on an appropriate level of payment for particular homes.

These recommendations have now been discussed with the local authority associations and we have agreed to set up a further joint working party to consider means of harmonising financial support for people in residential care homes. We have also agreed to carry out pilot studies to test the feasibility of the initial working party's recommendations on assessing the need of supplementary benefit claimants for residential home care and on the provision by local authorities of advice on the reasonableness of charges. Consideration is also being given to the position of people in nursing homes who claim supplementary benefit.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Mid Glamorgan he envisages will be affected by his proposed changes in housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available. The sample data used for illustrative purposes in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" are not broken down by counties.

Feldene

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what complaints, representations or comments have been made to his Department about the drug Feldene and its effects upon patients; and if he will describe the nature of the said complaints, representations and comments stating what investigative action his Department is carrying out or is proposing to carry out into or about Feldene;

(2) what advice his Department has given, is giving or is proposing to general practitioners and other doctors and patients about prescribing Feldene or piroxicam;

(3) what information he has about the drug Feldene or its generic equivalent, and its effects upon patients; if he will describe the nature of the information available to him, stating what investigations and action his Department is carrying out or is proposing to carry out into or about Feldene or its generic equivalent;

(4) if he will make a statement on his policy on the prescription of the drugs Feldene and piroxicam following the recent study by the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Hayhoe: Piroxicam (trade name Feldene) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug licensed for the treatment of gout and pain and inflammation in rheumatic disease and other musculo-skeletal disorders. I am advised that piroxicam, like other drugs in the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory class, can cause adverse reactions; advice to doctors on these is contained in the British National Formulary and in prescribing literature. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has received some 2,440 reports from doctors of suspected adverse reactions to piroxicam since the product was first marketed; an analysis of these reports is available from the CSM to doctors. All such reports are evaluated by the committee, which keeps the safety of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs under close surveillance.

I am advised that there is nothing to add at present to the prescribing advice contained in the British National Formulary. The Committee on Safety of Medicines is currently making a further special review of the safety of non-steroidal drug, including piroxicam.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to honour the undertaking given on 2 April 1985, *Official Report*, column 1186, to review the limits on board and lodging payments; and what form the review will take.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) earlier today.

Dental Charges

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation requiring dentists to advertise charges for private consultations, examinations, fillings, resin dentures and gold soft crowns.

Mr. Hayhoe: I welcome the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading that the rules of the General Dental Council on advertising, which prevent dentists from publishing charges for private treatment, should be relaxed. Discussions with representatives of the council are taking place.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to publish the report of the Schanschieff committee of inquiry into unnecessary dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will make an announcement in due course.

Women's Hospital (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to visit the women's hospital, Liverpool, to inspect medical facilities.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Regional Health Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each regional health authority the names of any members who were nominated by trade unions.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nominations for members of regional health authorities are not sought from individual trade unions. In accordance with paragraphs 2*(d)* of schedule 5 to the National Health Service Act 1977, the Trades Union Congress and the managerial, professional and staff liaison group are consulted before appointments to health authorities are made. Current members of regional health authorities appointed by the Secretary of State from amongst the nominations of these bodies are as follows:

REGION AND MEMBER

East Anglian—Mr. M. Upcroft.
South East Thames—Mr. A. P. Robinson.
South West Thames—Mr. M. Ward.
Wessex—Mr. R. Lee.
Oxford—Mr. K. Jerrome.
South Western—Mr. R. E. Heal.
West Midlands—Mr. S. B. Shuttleworth.
Mersey—Mr. E. Bromley.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department issues guidance or minimum standards on how many speech therapists should be employed in relation to population.

Mr. Whitney: The Quirk report recommended in 1972 that there should be an increase to six speech therapists per 100,000 population by 1992. At that time the ratio was 1.76 and had reached 4.6 by 1984, the latest year for which figures in this detail are available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reports or research has been undertaken by his Department on speech therapy.

Mr. Whitney: The following research projects have been supported by the Department since March 1980:—

Miss M. E. Wynter and Mrs. S. P. Martin, Central School of Speech and Drama, London: Numerical Classification of Deviant Voice Quality (completed).

Mrs. M. Eversham and Dr. F. Fransella, Hertfordshire Area Health Authority: An Investigation of the Effect of Stuttering Relapse Rate of a Combined Programme of Training in Special Technique and Psychological Reconstruction (completed).

Dr. D. Bainton, Miss R. David, Frenchay Hospital, Bristol: Evaluation of the Levels of Outcome in Stroke Patients with Dysphasia who are treated by either Speech Therapists or Volunteers (completed).

Dr. K. E. Patterson, Dr. J. Morton, MRC Applied Psychology Unit, Cambridge: Efficacy of Cues for Word Finding in Aphasia — Implications for Therapy and Theory (completed).

Dr. M. C. Fairhurst, University of Kent: A User-Orientated and Adaptively Structured Therapy Aid for the Speech-Impaired Child (completed).

Miss M. E. Edwards, Nottingham Health Authority: Criteria of Selection of Children for Speech Therapy (completed).

Dr. P. Grunwell and Dr. J. Connolly, Leicester Polytechnic School of Speech Therapy. Development of Objective Procedures in Assessment and Planning for Phonological Disability in Children 1983-1986 (September).

Dr. M. A. Chamberlain, University of Leeds: Communication Aids Provision 1983-1986 (November).

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to initiate new research into the value and role of speech therapists.

Mr. Whitney: Experience shows that it would not be appropriate to attempt broadly based research into the value of the work of speech therapists; rather, attention needs to be focused on individual treatment techniques dealing with different types of speech and language disability.

We are in the process of commissioning a project to evaluate the work of communication aids centres and this will show the contribution of speech therapists in the fast-developing field of communication aids.

We have no plans at present for initiating further research.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many speech therapist posts have been frozen in the past 18 months;

(2) how many speech therapist posts have been completely withdrawn in the past 18 months.

Mr. Whitney: The complement of speech therapists is a matter for decision by each health authority in the light of its assessment of service needs and available resources. We have no information centrally on the many decisions taken in this context.

Accommodation Charges

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to bring into line the capital assets disregard arrangements for the assessment of part III accommodation charges with those covering entitlement to supplementary benefit; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) today.

Hospital Kitchens

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who in the National Health Service has the ultimate administrative responsibility for health and safety standards in hospital kitchens.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health and safety standards in hospital kitchens are the operational responsibility of health authorities. Following the Griffiths report, in discharging this responsibility authorities will expect their general managers to ensure that arrangements are made for securing and monitoring standards in this important area.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Crown notices have been issued regarding National Health Service hospitals in each of the last five years; and what were the results.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of Crown notices to health authorities in 1985 are not yet available. The figures for the years 1980-84 are as follows:

Year	Improvement	Prohibition	Total
1980	24	5	29
1981	93	6	99
1982	79	12	94
1983	40	10	50
1984	28	6	34

Health authorities are required to comply with the terms of a Crown notice and there are arrangements for any failure to do so to be brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. This has not been necessary in any case.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an investigation into the condition of the kitchens at Kings College hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: South-East Thames regional health authority has been asked for an urgent report on the allegations of poor hygiene standards in the kitchens at Kings College hospital. According to its interim report, a programme of upgrading work had already been agreed with the local environmental health officer and is being implemented. There are also training schemes for kitchen staff agreed by the environmental health officer. An inspection of the kitchens was carried out by the local environmental health officer on Friday 24 January. The final report by the regional health authority will give its response to the recommendations arising from this inspection.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the identity of those hospitals which have kitchens with such low hygiene standards that they could be prosecuted, except for the practice of Crown immunity; and if he will publish such information.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge- Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) on 24 January at columns *347-48*. All allegations of poor food hygiene standards in National Health Service hospitals which are brought to the Department's attention are followed up.

Smoking

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much grant has been paid to the Health Education Council to discourage smoking as the principal known cause of lung cancer in each of the last eight years and in total over that period.

Mr. Whitney: Over the past eight years the Health Education Council (HEC) has spent £9·8 million specifically on its anti-smoking programme, that is:

Year	£ million
1977-78	0·2
1978-79	0·3
1979-80	0·4
1980-81	0·7
1981-82	1·1
1982-83	2·4
1983-84	2·6
1984-85	2·1

In addition, there is expenditure as part of other HEC programmes, in particular the coronary heart disease programme, which is also directed against smoking.

Maternity Wards (Salesmen)

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to prevent access by travelling salesmen to new mothers in maternity wards in National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Representatives of baby milk manufacturers are given access to mothers in maternity wards only with the agreement of the health authority and health professionals. Whilst breastfeeding is undoubtedly best and mothers are encouraged to breastfeed, new mothers who cannot or choose not to should learn about infant formulae and bottle-feeding under the supervision of health professionals.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has of any change of attitude among young people towards the misuse of heroin and cocaine following the Government's anti-drugs advertising campaign.

Mr. Whitney: Preliminary results of the independent evaluation of the campaign are now available. They suggest that there has been an increase in awareness of the negative consequences of using heroin; a deflation in the image of heroin and of misusers; an increase in the proportion saying they would reject heroin if offered and that there are indications of a more accurate, realistic basis for rejection of heroin. Cocaine is also seen as dangerous and this view appears to have been unaffected by the campaign. A copy of the full evaluation results will be placed in the Library when they are available.

Abortion

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the places approved by him under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following places have been approved for the period 1 February 1986 to 31 January 1988.

Acland Nuffield Hospital, Oxford
Alexandra Hospital, Cheshire
Alexandra Hospital, Kent
Avenue Clinic, Hove
Bath Clinic
Beechwood Private Clinic, Sheffield
Belvedere Nursing Home, Scarborough
Blackdown Nursing Home, Leamington Spa
Bromhead Nursing Home, Lincoln
BUPA Hospital, Bushey
BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Merseyside
BUPA Hospital, Norwich
Calthorpe Nursing Home, Birmingham
Chalybeate Hospital, Southampton
Chesterfield Nuffield Hospital, Bristol
Clare Park Clinic, Farnham
Cleveland Nuffield Hospital, Stockton-on-Tees
Cotswold Nuffield Hospital, Cheltenham
Danum Lodge Nursing Home, Doncaster
Dean Park Nursing Home, Bournemouth
Duchy Hospital, Truro
Duchy House Nuffield Hospital, Harrogate
Evelyn Hospital, Cambridge
Exeter Nuffield Hospital
Fairfield Nursing Home, Buckhurst Hill
Fallodon Private Nursing Home, Leeds
Fitzwilliam Hospital, Peterborough
Foscote Private Hospital, Banbury

Fulford Grange Hospital, Leeds
Garden Hospital, London NW4
Highfield Private Hospital, Rochdale
HRH Princess Christian's Hospital, Windsor
Hull Nuffield Hospital
Ipswich Surgical Nursing Home
Leicester Nuffield Hospital
Leighan Private Clinic, London SW16
Marie Stopes Nursing Home, London NW2
Merseyside Nursing Home, Liverpool
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital
New Hall Hospital, Salisbury
New Victoria Hospital, Kingston upon Thames
Park Hospital, Nottingham
Parkfield Private Hospital, Rotherham
Parkview Clinic, London W5
Plymouth Nuffield Hospital
Raleigh Nursing Home, London SW2
Robert Nursing Home, Birmingham
Rosslyn Nursing Home, East Twickenham
Royal Masonic Hospital, London W6
Salop Nuffield Hospital, Shrewsbury
Sarum Road Private Nursing Home, Winchester
Somerset Nuffield Hospital, Taunton
South Manchester Private Clinic, Stockport
St. Wilfrid's Nursing Home, Doncaster
Thames Valley Nuffield Hospital, Slough
Victoria House Nursing Home, Rochester
Wellesley Hospital, Southend on Sea
Wessex Nuffield Hospital, Hampshire
West Sussex Clinic, Worthing
Winterbourne Hospital, Dorchester
Wistons Nursing Home, Brighton
Woking Nuffield Hospital
Wye Valley Nuffield Hospital, Hereford
Yorkshire Clinic, Bingley

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the savings if all the main national insurance benefits were reduced by £14 for a single person and £28 for married couples, without any offsetting increases in supplementary benefit or housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: If the main national insurance benefits were reduced by £14 for a single person and £28 for married couples the saving to the national insurance fund would be about £9 billion in a full year.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish tables, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for each of a single wage married couple with two children aged four and six years and three children aged three, eight and 11 years earning £60, £70, £80, £90, £100, £110, £120, £130, £140, £150, £160 and £170 *(a)* under the existing tax and benefit systems and *(b)* under the benefit system proposed in Cmnd. 9691, using the illustrative benefit figures in the technical annex;

(2) if he will publish figures, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model tables, comparing net weekly spending power for a lone mother with two children aged four and six years, under the existing tax and benefit systems and under the benefit system proposed in Cmnd. 9691, using the illustrative figures in the technical annex, and in each of the following circumstances *(a)* not working, after one year on benefit, *(b)* earning £20 a week from part-time work, *(c)* earning £40 a week from part-time working and *(d)* working full-time and earning £60, £70, £80, £90, £100, £110 and £120 per week.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out a table for the years 1970 and 1984 showing numbers of recipients and dependents in receipt of supplementary benefit, and distinguishing between retirement pensioners, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, national insurance widows with and without dependent children, and lone parents.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows, giving numbers for December 1983, the latest date for which information is available.

(Thousands)

	1970			*1983*		
	Recipients	*Dependents*	*Total*	*Recipients*	*Dependents*	*Total*
Retirement pensioners	1,701	388	2,089	1,556	267	1,823
Unemployed	240	377	617	1,826	1,627	3,453
Sick and disabled	323	229	552	241	109	350
National insurance widows with children*	20	36	143	3	5	31
National insurance widows without children*	87			23		
Lone parents†	191	374	565	449	763	1,211
Others‡	175	24	199	252	118	370
Total	2,738	1,429	4,166	4,349	2,888	7,238

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry
* Children under 16
† Not included in other groups
‡ Includes supplementary pensioners without retirement pension or widows pension.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table similar to table 6A in the technical annex to the social security White Paper, Cmnd. 9691 showing *(a)* the number of people in each client group who will be unaffected by his proposals, *(b)* the numbers gaining or losing less than £1, *(c)* the numbers gaining or losing between £1 and £5 and *(d)* the numbers gaining or losing between £5 and £10, distinguishing in each case between (i) child benefit, (ii) supplementary benefit or income support, (iii) family income supplementary or family credit, (iv) free school meals, (v) free welfare milk and (vi) housing benefit, assuming a minimum 20 per cent. rates contribution.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Earnings-related Pensions

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Kensington, *Official Report*, 17 December 1985, columns *147-48*, if he will now publish comparable figures showing entitlement to earnings-related pensions under the proposals in Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Newton: The following table shows the amount of earnings-related pension a contracted-in single man or woman retiring in April of each year with a full contribution record would receive under the scheme proposed in "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) and the Social Security Bill 1986. The amounts are on exactly the same basis as those shown in my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend on 17 December 1985 at columns *147-48*, but exclude the basic flat rate pension of £38·30. As earnings-related pensions to people retiring in this century are unaffected by the proposed changes set out in the Social Security Bill, the amounts up to and including 1998 are identical with those given earlier. The amounts shown for 2003 and 2008 do, however, reflect these changes. It should be noted that these figures are unlikely to replicate any individual's actual experience, since they assume that earnings remain constant at a given level throughout a person's working life.

Amounts of Earnings-related pension

£ per week

Earnings	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1988*	*1993*	*1998*	*2003*	*2008*
Men									
¼ average	·85	·95	1·25	1·45	1·80	2·60	3·45	3·25	3·00
½ average	3·85	4·70	5·65	6·45	8·00	11·90	15·75	14·95	13·80
¾ average	6·85	8·40	10·10	11·50	14·25	21·15	28·05	26·65	24·60
average	9·85	12·10	14·50	16·50	20·45	30·40	40·35	38·35	35·40
1½ average*	13·65	16·95	20·40	23·25	29·00	43·35	57·70	54·85	50·70
2 average									
Women									
¼ average†	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
½ average	1·70	2·05	2·55	2·95	3·65	5·45	7·25	6·90	6·35
¾ average	3·65	4·45	5·40	6·20	7·70	11·50	15·30	14·55	13·45
average	5·55	6·85	8·25	9·45	11·75	17·55	23·35	22·20	20·55
1½ average	9·40	11·60	13·95	15·95	19·85	29·65	39·50	37·55	34·70
2 average	13·20	16·35	19·60	22·35	27·90	41·70	55·55	52·85	48·85

* Those figures for men on 1½ and 2 × average earnings are identical, because they are above the upper earnings limit.
† Below the lower earnings limit—no pension entitlement.

Prescriptions

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of prescriptions dispensed each year for the past five years, broken down to show the number of items and the number of actual prescriptions; and how much has been paid to pharmacists for the items prescribed.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of prescriptions broken down to show the number of items as well as total costs in the last five years in England were:

Year ending	*Number of prescription forms*	*Number of items dispensed*	*Total costs (including net ingredient cost)* £
1980	183,690,348	303,333,862	898,099,067
1981	181,093,257	299,973,076	1,026,335,282
1982	186,697,829	311,268,587	1,180,894,802
1983	188,538,148	315,275,070	1,307,859,137
1984	190,809,484	320,542,611	1,408,743,185

Disabled People

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of totals and age ranges for *(a)* registered disabled persons and *(b)* registered mobility allowance holders; and what projections of future trends have been made in each case.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of wheelchairs currently issued by the Department of Health and Social Security by type, manual or electrical; and what projections have been made of future demands.

Mr. Newton: In 1985, 141,400 non-powered and 8,200 powered wheelchairs were issued to users in England bringing the totals in use (at 30 September 1985) to 425,000 non-powered and 19,200 powered wheelchairs.

Recent trends indicate that the number of non-powered wheelchairs in use is likely to increase by 7 to 10 per cent. each year and that of powered wheelchairs by 4 to 5 per cent. each year.

Disease Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has, broken down by numbers, ages, sex, regional basis, etc. of polio victims, brittle bone sufferers, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease and spinal injuries.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have whatever information is available as soon as possible.

Income Disregard

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current figure for income disregard in respect of old people admitted to local authority homes; when this figure was last changed; how it compares with the income disregard for supplementary benefit; what representations he has received in respect of the case for adjusting it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *392*]: The income disregards for assessing ability to pay charges in local authority (part III) residential homes have been effective in their present form since November 1975. The following table compares them with those related to supplementary benefit:

Source of income	*Supplementary benefit*	*Part III*
Mobility allowance	A	A
Attendance allowance	*A	†A
Constant attendance allowance paid with war pension	*A	†A
Payments made to holders of the Victoria or George Cross	A	A
Payments (other than those derived from a liable relative) intended and used for leisure/amenity items or items for which the supplementary benefit scheme does not provide and for which housing benefit is not payable	A	—
Charitable or voluntary sums for a specific purpose not provided by the Part III home	—	B
Industrial injuries constant attendance allowance	*A	†B
Gallantry and meritorious service awards	A	B
War pensioners' clothing allowances	C	B
War disablement pensions	C	C
Service attributable disablement and widow's pensions	C	C
Industrial injury disablement pensions	C	C
Workmen's compensation and any supplements	C	C
War and industrial widow's pension or widower's pension	C	—
That part of a war widow's or widower's pension and industrial widow's or widower's pension which exceeds the standard rate of National Insurance widow's or widower's pension	—	C
Police and firemen's disablement pensions	C	C
Police and fire service special widow's pensions	C	C
Civil list pensions	C	C
A pension, including widow's pension, from former employers	E	D
Redundancy payments paid by weekly or other periodical instalments	E	D
Occupational pension in the form of an annuity arranged by the employer	E	D
Cash in lieu of mine-workers' concessionary coal	E	D
Miscellaneous income resources such as payments from charities, benevolent funds or annuities	—	C
Miscellaneous income resources such as regular payments from charities, trusts or from friends, relatives not mentioned in regulations or analgeous to them	C	—

Key to symbols

A Complete disregard.
B Discretionary disregard up to full amount.
C Disregard up to maximum of £4 in total.
D Disregard of £1 but not more than £4 together with disregard at C. No more than £1 can be disregarded in total of payments from any of these sources.
E Taken fully into account.
* This does not apply to certain claimants in residential care and nursing homes.
† Payment ceases after four weeks' residence in part III.

The responses to the consultative document on part III assessment published in January 1984 were broadly in favour of aligning the treatment of both income and capital with the supplementary benefit arrangements. Possible means of harmonising financial support for people in residential care, including residents in part III homes, are among the matters to be examined by the proposed working party with the local authority associations described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) today.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 29 January 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Malins asked the Attorney-General what was the average time between receipt of application for civil legal aid and determination thereof in England and Wales in each year from 1979-80 to 1984-85.

The Attorney-General: The average time taken to issue legal aid certificates was as follows:

	Days
1979-80	48
1980-81	51
1981-82	50
1982-83	49
1983-84	55
1984-85	56

Further information, giving a breakdown of these figures, is contained in appendix 2G to the Law Society's report for 1984-85, published in the 35th Legal Aid Annual Report page 94.

Mr. Malins asked the Attorney-General what proportion of the total criminal legal aid bill in each of the last five years in England and Wales has been recovered from defendants through contribution orders.

The Attorney-General: The proportion of the total criminal legal aid bill recovered in contributions in each of the last five years is set out in the following table:

£ million	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Expenditure	85·9	97·0	108·3	121·1	136·1
Receipts	2·1	2·0	1·9	2·0	1·9
Percentage recovered	2·5	2·1	1·7	1·6	1·4

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Services (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the savings which resulted from competitive tendering for local authority services for each of the past three years; and what are the total estimated savings that can be extrapolated from this information for the current financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although some information is available about the savings estimated to accrue from the award of work to contractors, it is impossible to estimate the total efficiency gains which have resulted from exposure of in-house services to competition.

Direct Labour

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to use his powers under part 3 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 relating to local authority direct labour organisations which have made less than five per cent. return in each of the past three years.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has to date used his powers under section 17(4) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct five local authorities to submit special reports on construction work carried out by their direct labour organisations. In one case he has decided to take no further action. In the other four cases he has not yet decided what action to take.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses have been received from (i) individuals, (ii) church bodies, (iii) conservation organisations and (iv) others in reply to his Department's consultation paper, The Ecclesiastical Exemption From Listed Building Control, published in 1984; and if it is intended to publish an official reply to them.

Mr. Tracey: 136 responses have been received, as follows:—

(i) individuals: 34
(ii) Church bodies: 38
(iii) conservation organisations: 25
(iv) others: 39, of which 29 were from local authorities or their associations.

The Government are continuing discussions with Church bodies and other interested organisations. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement after these discussions have been completed.

Waste Management

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the conclusions and recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Environment, report No. 11: Managing Waste: the Duty of Care: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply of 22 January from my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) at columns 293-4.

Local Authority Housing Stock

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest total capital value of local authority housing stock; and how this compares to five and 10 years ago.

Mr. John Patten: The market value of the local authority housing stock in England at present is estimated to be in the region of £75 billion, on the basis of hypothetical vacant possession. Estimates are not available for five years ago or ten years ago.

Commonwealth Games (Welsh Participation)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the implications for Welsh participation in the Commonwealth Games, he will intervene following the selection of six South African rugby players for the world fifteen squad to play the British Lions in Cardiff on 6 April.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have been asked to reply.

The possible implications of sporting contacts with South Africa for participation in the Commonwealth games have been made clear to the Welsh Rugby Union on a number of occasions.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish changes in the overall make-up of *(a)* total, *(b)* current and *(c)* relevant expenditure in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87, taking account of changes in definition and service transfers from year to year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 December 1985, c. *473*]: The following table gives the level of current, relevant and total expenditure as set out in annex A of Rate Support Grant Reports (England) for the relevant years. Changes in definition and service transfers are explained in the notes.

Total, current and relevant expenditure at settlement

£ million cash

Service	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
			Current expenditure			
Education	8,086	8,865	9,155	9,532	*9,963	10,498
School meals and milk	247	325	273	263	296	280
Libraries, museums and art galleries	261	302	313	327	347	396·5
Personal social services and port health	1,554	1,860	2,020	2,159	2,332	2,525
Police	1,816	2,031	2,238	2,358	2,493	2,707
Fire	414	449	468	513	549	582·5
Other Home Office services	248	278	311	333	356	376·5
Local transport	1,281	1,423	1,462	1,555	†1,544	1,747
Urban programme	39	—	—	—	—	—
Local environmental services	2,057	‡2,262	2,268	‖2,307	2,420·5	2,644
Agricultural services	—	—	¶84·5	86·5	90	•95
Consumer protection and trading standards	44	48	49·5	52	52·5	57·5
Employment	59	64	66	70·5	73·5	78·5
Non-HRA housing	74	93	80	■91	110·5	145
Housing benefits	—	—	—	•82	93	121
Unallocated current expenditure	—	—	904	660	594	—
Total current expenditure	16,180	18,000	19,692	20,389	21,314	#22,253·5
			Other rate fund expenditure			
Revenue contributions to capital outlay	582	565	575	513	599	549
Loan charges	1,674	**1,965	2,000	2,030	2,377	2,630
Rate fund contributions to HRA	254	347	325	††246	316	366
			Other rate fund income			
Interest receipts	−267	−414	−285	−295	−445	−470
Total relevant expenditure	18,423	20,463	22,307	22,883	24,161	25,328·5
Non-relevant expenditure		176	193	208	230	237·5
Estimated specific and supplementary grants		−2,124	‡‡−2,366	‖‖−2,549	¶¶−2,576	−2,776
Total expenditure		••18,515	20,134	20,542	21,815	22,790

Notes:

Changes in current expediture

(these changes are also reflected in relevant and total expenditure)

* In 1985-86 Education provision reduced because of the transfer of non-advanced further education to central government (£62 million).
† In 1985-86 Local Transport provison reduced because of the transfer of London Region Transport out of the local authority sector (£132 million).
‡ Prior to 1982-83, Local Environmental Services (LES) excluded urban programme current expenditure (in 1981-82, £3·9 million for urban programme).
‖ Prior to 1984-85, LES included administration costs of rate rebates. For 1984-85 onwards these costs shown within a separate Housing Benefit line (see •).
¶ Prior to 1983-84, all agricultural services shown within LES. From 1983-84, provision for land drainage and flood protection shown separately from LES (transfer from LES of £84·5 million).
• In 1986-87, agricultural services includes in addition to land drainage and flood protection, smallholdings and coast protection previously included in LES (transfer from LES of £0·7 million).
■ Prior to 1984-85, non Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing included administration costs of rent allowances. From 1984-85 onwards, these costs shown within a separate Housing Benefit line (see •).
• For 1984-85 onwards, Housing Benefit administration provision shown separately and including additional discretionary rent rebates and allowances, and discretionary rate rebates. (In 1984-85, £82 million).
In 1986-87 current expenditure total reduced because of transfer to central government of various functions consequent on the abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan County Councils (£23 million).

Changes in relevant expenditure
(these changes are also reflected in total expenditure)

** From 1982-83 onwards loan charges include certain leasing payments previously classified as running expenses.
†† Prior to 1984-85 Rate Fund Contributions to HRA included administration costs attributable to rent rebate scheme. From 1984-85 onwards, these costs shown within a separate Housing Benefit line (see •).

Changes in total expenditure

‡‡ From 1983-84 onwards, the total of specific and supplementary grants includes new in-service teacher training grant (£40 million in 1983-84). From 1984-85 onwards, the total of specific and supplementary grants includes new housing benefit administration grant (£44 million in 1984-85).
** From 1985-86 onwards, the total of specific and supplementary grants includes new education support (£21 million in 1985-86) and public tranport infrastructure grants (£9 million in 1985-86).
•• From 1982-83, the definition of total expenditure was changed by the addition of the cost of interest paid on temporary borrowings for revenue purposes together with the cost of any discounts granted for prompt payment of rates. Also from 1982-83, the amount of interest receipts on rate fund revenue balances was no longer an item added to relevant expenditure to reach total expenditure.

PRIME MINISTER

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of the United Kingdom's deficit in manufactured trade with other EEC members.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to do so, but these topics are often raised generally at meetings of the European Council.

Law Centres

Mr. Knowles asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the co-ordination between the Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department and the Department of the Environment of current responsibilities for the operation and funding of law centres; and if she will take steps to assign these responsibilities to a single Minister.

The Prime Minister: Law centres are independent local bodies (depending on local initiative and support at first instance) and are managed accordingly. The Government as such are not responsible for their operation. Financial assistance is currently provided to a number of individual law centres by the Department of the Environment under the urban programme in accordance with its general principles, priorities and procedures, and seven law centres currently receive support from the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Home Office voluntary services unit has general co-ordinating responsibilities within Government for relations with and support for the voluntary sector as a whole. There are no current plans to alter the present arrangements.

Westland plc

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will institute proceedings against Collette Bowe under the Official Secrets Act for the unauthorised disclosure of official information in relation to the Westland affair.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the statement which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to the House on 23 January.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to introduce legislation to strengthen section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act; and in what respect.

Mr. Trippier: Legislation to amend section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits. This will take account of comments received on the proposals set out in the Health and Safety Commission's consultative document issued in August 1984.

Mr. Meacher asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the views of the member of the Health and Safety at Work Executive responsible for operation of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in the National Health Service on the lessons learnt from the seven years' experience of Crown notice operation.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Commission has recently reviewed standards of health and safety in Crown premises. I am expecting its advice shortly.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Meacher asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the Secretary of State for Employment's letter to the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union dated 27 November 1985 regarding Crown immunity and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; if he will identify the cases referred to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The General, Municipal and Boilermakers Allied Trade Union wrote on this matter to the Secretary of State for Employment's predecessor. I have arranged for a copy of my right hon. and noble Friend's reply to the GMBATU to be placed in the House of Commons library. The hon. Member should ask the GMBATU for any further information on its report which he requires.

TRANSPORT

Channel Fixed Link

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of the decision on the fixed Channel link for the future of container ports in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The potential diversion of containers from lift-on, lift-off shipping services to rail

services using a fixed link was taken into consideration when assessing the proposals for a fixed link. As I made clear in my reply on 20 December at column 345 to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), the Government will not seek to influence banks and other institutions by publishing information about the Government's assessments of the traffic that will use the link.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to increase from 50 per cent. to 80 per cent. the allowance given to private industries to create new railway sidings in preparation for the completion of the fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail with a view to developing throughout the United Kingdom an electrification programme in preparation for the completion of a fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman is already aware that I am ready to approve proposals from him for worthwhile investment in the railways.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate a series of trans-shipment centres in preparation for the completion of a fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have no plans at present for any trans-shipment centres other than those already in the CTG proposal.

Public Transport (Expenditure)

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will show estimated expenditure in 1985-86 and planned expenditure in 1986-87 by local authorities, London Regional Transport and public transport joint boards on *(a)* revenue support, *(b)* concessionary fares, *(c)* public transport investment and *(d)* public transport administration.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested which is available is as follows:

	Revenue support		*Concessionary fares*		*Public transport investment*	
	Estimated 1985-86 £ million	*Planned 1986-87 £ million*	*Estimated 1985-86 £ million*	*Planned 1986-87 £ million*	*Estimated 1985-86 £ million*	*Planned 1986-87 £ million*
London Regional Transport	*109	*79	¶ n/a	¶ n/a	230	261
Metropolitan areas (passenger transport authorities)	†259	‖273	†116	‖234	‡65	‡40
Other local authorities	¶ 97		¶ 137		‡10	‡10

Notes:

* Revenue deficit.

† Budgets: a further £40 million spending being financed from reserves.

‡ 1986-87 provision, not strictly comparable with 1985-86 estimated outturn because it excludes internally financed expenditure by public transport undertakings.

‖ PE provision, local authority budgets not yet available.

¶ Excluding expenditure in metropolitan areas, but concessionary fares includes expenditure of £72 million by London local authorities.

Information on public transport administration is not separately identifiable.

British Rail

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail a possible review of the policy of moth-balling locomotive power.

Mr. David Mitchell: The deployment of locomotives is a management matter for the British Railways Board.

MOT Test Certificates

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to require the chassis number of motor vehicles to be recorded on Ministry of Transport test certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I will consider requiring vehicle identification numbers to be recorded on test certificates when a greater proportion of vehicles of testable age have them. Only since 1982 have all vehicles had to be marked with a readily accessible identification number.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to require motorists to display insurance and Ministry of Transport test certificates on vehicle windscreens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A windscreen display would not give conclusive evidence of insurance — where, for example, policy conditions were breached. It would be open to abuse and, for vehicle testing purposes, I would have to be convinced that instituting such a system would be cost-effective.

Laker Airways

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government will apply for the coupons offered in the recently announced provisional settlement of the United States anti-trust class action which arose out of the collapse of Laker Airways.

Mr. Ridley: No. As my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry explained to the House on 11 December, the Government's view is that the unilateral application of United States' anti-trust law to air services operated under the United Kingdom-US Air Services Agreement (Bermuda 2) is not compatible with the United Kingdom's

rights under the agreement and is damaging to the trading interests of the United Kingdom. Since the Government therefore consider that the bringing of the class action is incompatible with our rights under Bermuda 2, there can be no question of Government Departments benefiting from the settlement.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Illegal Fishing

42. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what was the number of prosecutions in 1984 and 1985, respectively, for illegal fishing in the sea.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The respective figures are 50 and 55. The figure for 1984 has been revised.

Cigarettes (Illegal Sale)

43. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions for illegal sale of cigarettes were made in 1985.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There are no available statistics in relation to contraventions of the relevant provision which is section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937.

Policemen (Prosecutions)

44. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many policemen were prosecuted for breaches of discipline during 1985.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My Department does not prosecute policemen, or any other person, simply for breaches of discipline. Prosecutions are only undertaken in respect of breaches of the criminal law. Breaches of police discipline are a matter for chief constables or, in the case of officers above the rank of chief superintendent, police authorities. Should the case be reported to the procurator fiscal and Crown Office and reveal no criminal conduct, but a possible disciplinary breach, it may be referred to the deputy chief constable for such action, if any, as he considers appropriate.

Children and Young Persons (Prosecutions)

45. **Mr. John Home Robertson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will keep a record of prosecutions under section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1939.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No.

Dangerous Driving

46. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions were undertaken in each of the last five years in respect of causing death by dangerous driving; and how many of those prosecutions resulted in convictions.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Figures are available for 1980 to 1984 and are as follows:

	Persons proceeded against	*Persons against whom charge proved*
1980	47	34
1981	35	25
1982	31	27
1983	31	26
1984	22	20

Bankhead Incident (Report)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he expects to receive reports on the cause of the explosion and subsequent loss of life which occurred recently in the Bankhead area of Rutherglen; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that these reports are made available to the public.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal at Glasgow has been making inquiry into the death of five persons arising from the incident at Kingsbridge drive, Rutherglen on 29 November 1985 to which the hon. Member refers, and I expect to receive his report during the course of next month. Also, I am informed that the Health and Safety Commission has directed the Health and Safety Executive in terms of section 14(2)*(a)* of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to investigate the incident and to make a special report to the commission. I understand that a copy of this report will be made available next month to the procurator fiscal. Recognising that this is an issue of public interest there is a likelihood that my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, will wish to instruct a fatal accident inquiry. The final decision will be taken once my noble and learned Friend has had an opportunity to consider the reports to which I have referred.

Death report which are prepared and submitted by procurators fiscal to Crown Office are confidential and in accordance with the normal practice the report of the procurators fiscal in this case will not be made available to the public. It is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission to decide whether the report by the Health and Safety Executive should be published.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Misuse

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the number of drug misusers in Britain, by county or by health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: Since drug misuse is usually a covert activity, it is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the total number of drug misusers in Britain. Information on the number of drug addicts notified by medical practitioners to the chief medical officer at the Home Office in 1984 is given, by police force area, in tables 3.11-3.13 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs, United Kingdom, Supplementary Tables, 1984". Some research carried out in two urban areas in England in 1981 suggested that the number of notified addicts was only one fifth the number of opioid addicts in the local population at that time. The research also indicated that the number of opioid addicts may have been matched by a similar

number of people misusing other drugs. However, it is likely that the number of drug misusers varies greatly, according to the locality and over time.

Television Licences

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the electoral register is currently used in conjunction with the administration of television licences; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine readable form.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The electoral register is currently used by the National Television Licence Records Office to assist in identifying addresses occupied by more than one household. No decision has yet been taken on the use of the electoral register when it is available in machine readable form.

Prison Sentences (Reviews)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what review is currently taking place into the claim that those sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for their part in the Birmingham bomb outrage of the early 1970s can now prove their innocence.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is examining the case carefully in order to determine whether material which has been sent to him contains new evidence of a kind which would make it appropriate for him to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

Mrs. Cherry Groce

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects the investigation by the police complaints authority into the shooting of Mrs. Cherry Groce to be completed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the report of the investigation into the shooting of Mrs. Groce is with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Detention Centres

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number and proportion of boys received into detention centres in any recent convenient period who were assessed as being unfit and removed from the regime or transferred to another establishment.

Mr. Mellor: The information is not available currently. However, the prison department recently initiated a three-month monitoring study to determine the incidence of cases where, on reception, an inmate was assessed as unsuitable for detention in a detenction centre because of his physical or mental condition and the action taken in each case. I will write to the hon. Member when the results of the study are available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the percentage of juveniles and young adults, respectively, received into detention centres who *(a)* have been in the care of a local authority and *(b)* have been in residential care.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Youth Custody (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentages of *(a)* detention centre trainees and *(b)* youth custody trainees in any recent convenient period were from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 18 December 1985 at column *170*.

Youth Custody (Suicides)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many actual and attempted suicides there were in detention centres and youth custody centres, respectively, in any recent convenient period.

Mr. Mellor: Between 1 January 1984 and 31 March 1985, the latest period for which full information is available, there were 110 instances of non-fatal self-injury with apparent suicidal intent in youth custody centres and five such instances in detention centres. There were no suicides in either youth custody or detention centres during this period. There has been one suicide in a youth custody centre since.

"Red Herrings"

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department's broadcasting division made any representations to the British Broadcasting Corporation about the television programme, "Red Herrings", due to have been shown on 23 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The broadcasting department made no representations to the BBC about this programme. I understand that the BBC withdrew the programme because advertisements encouraging people to watch it had been placed in the press by interested parties in advance of the broadcast. It is a long-standing policy of the BBC not to show programmes in such circumstances, in order to avoid the dangers of political or commercial manipulation.

Police (Entry Requirements)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the minimum entry requirements necessary for males and females to enter the Metropolitan police service.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The statutory qualifications for appointment as a police officer are set out in regulation 14 of the Police Regulations 1979, which provides a minimum height requirement of 172 cm (about 5′ 8″) for men and 162 cm (about 5′4″) for women. These are the minimum height requirements for the Metropolitan police, but the Commissioner uses the discretion provided by regulation 14 to accept certain candidates below the minimum height who possess special qualities or skills.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables as to the minimum entry requirements for males and females to enter their police forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The statutory qualifications for appointment as a police officer are set out in regulation 14 of the Police Regulations 1979, but the minimum height and eyesight requirements vary from one force to another. I am sending details to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bryan Hubbard

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his reasons for refusing entry into the United Kingdom to Mr. Bryan Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Hubbard applied through his solicitors in 1982 for an entry clearance to visit the United Kingdom but declined to attend an interview with an entry clearance officer. His application was therefore refused because we could not be satisfied that he qualified for admission under the relevant provisions in the immigration rules.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to prohibit the use of animals in cosmetic tests.

Mr. Mellor: No, but under the proposed new legislation all applications for project licences for the testing of cosmetics will be referred to the new Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take into account the therapeutic necessity of a new product when issuing licences for experiments on animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: Under clause 5(4) of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* my right hon. Friend is required to weigh the likely adverse effects of scientific procedures on animals against the likely benefit of the work. He will take into account, where it is relevant, the possible therapeutic effect of a product.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspections were made by his Department's inspectors, employed under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, between 1980 and 1985; and what proportion of these visits were unannounced.

Mr. Mellor: The information available on the number of visits made by the cruelty to animals inspectorate to Departments within places registered under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, and to other places, relates to the years 1980 to 1984 and is given in table 24 of the "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals, Great Britain 1984" (Cmnd 9574). The majority of these visits were made without notice.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspectors are currently employed under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

Mr. Mellor: One chief inspector, two superintending inspectors and 12 inspectors.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the estimated number of licences in the substantial severity category of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* that are expected to be applied for;

(82) what is the estimated number of licences in the moderate severity category of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* that are expected to be applied for;

(3) what is the estimated number of licences in the mild severity category of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* that are expected to be applied for.

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible to give reliable estimates in advance of the new licensing system coming into operation. It is likely that most work will fall into the mild or moderate categories.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are regulations ensuring that suffering experienced by animals during the LD50 test is kept to a minimum.

Mr. Mellor: The pain condition imposed under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 requires any animal in severe and enduring pain to immediately and humanely killed. Similarly, under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*, all personal licences will contain a condition requiring the immediate humane killing of any animal found to be in severe pain or severe distress which cannot be alleviated. There will also be a condition in every personal licence requiring the holder to take precautions to reduce to the minimum consistent with the purposes of the procedure any pain, distress or discomfort to the animals used.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are regulations to ensure that animals undergoing the LD50 test are anaesthetised.

Mr. Mellor: No. LD50 tests are not normally performed under anaesthesia, unless an anaesthetic agent is itself the subject of the test. The purpose of an LD50 test is to determine the toxicity of a particular substance and the administration of an anaesthetic, which is itself toxic, would be likely to invalidate the result.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of animals used in each LD50 test.

Mr. Mellor: The specific information requested is not available a LD50 tests are not separately identified in the current returns of statistics of experiments performed on living animals. The number of animals necessary for toxicity studies varies widely. A formal LD50 test employs five dose levels with 10 animals in each group. Other determinations in use might require as few as 10 animals in all.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has as to the breeds of dogs, other than greyhounds and purpose-bred animals, used in experiments in laboratories in each of the years between 1980 and 1985, and as to where these dogs were obtained;

(2) what information he has as to the number of greyhounds used in experiments in laboratories in each of the years from 1980 to 1985, and as to where they were obtained.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available, as data on individual breeds of dogs and the sources from which animals are obtained are not collected in the current returns on statistics of experiments performed on living animals. Information on the number of experiments started on all breeds of dogs in the years 1980 to 1984 is given in table 14 of "Statistics of

Experiments on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1984" (Cmnd 9574); the corresponding figure for 1985 will not be available until the summer.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animal experiments have been conducted since 1980 in connection with forensic studies; and what species of animals were used for this purpose.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of experiments performed and species of animal used for this purpose under licences granted by the Secretary of State is not available. Section 12 of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 empowers a High Court judge to grant a licence or give a certificate authorising experiments on living animals where this is essential for the purposes of justice in a criminal case. We believe that this power is rarely exercised.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which drugs intended for the treatment of cancer require the LD50 test.

Mr. Mellor: I take it that the question refers to the testing of new drugs. The testing requirements for these will depend on the precise nature of the drug concerned and are determined, in the light of this, by the appropriate regulatory authorities.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which regulations currently demand either a precise or approximate LD50 determination in laboratory animals.

Mr. Mellor: The specific information requested is not collected centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Acute toxicity studies, including LD50 values to varying degrees of precision, are required by regulatory authorities in the United Kingdom, the European Community and in other countries as part of the safety testing of a wide range of products, including vaccines, industrial, agricultural and household chemicals, pesticides and some medicines, as well as other products in daily use.

Special Branch

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to amend the Home Office guidelines on the work of the special branch, published on 19 December 1984, so as to prohibit the offer by any police officer of any money to a student in higher or further education in exchange for information in relation to any special branch responsibilities.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 21 November 1985 *Official Report*, column 272, whether he is now in a position to give the information requested in relation to any of the squads and units referred to; if he expects consultation to be completed and decisions made before the districts are abolished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1986, c. *10*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the squads and units mentioned are still the subject of consultation and no decisions have yet been taken as to their future roles and organisation. I understand that consultations are likely to have been completed and decisions reached on the special patrol group, the district support units and district crime squads before the abolition of districts. However, the future of district juvenile bureaux (youth and community sections) may not have been decided by that time, and in this event the bureaux will continue to operate as at present (but reporting to area headquarters rather than districts) until their future is determined.

Robbery squads and intelligence and surveillance units operate on an area basis, so decisions on their future will not be affected by the timetable for the abolition of districts.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the practice of the community relations branch of the Metropolitan police to maintain lists of the party political affiliations of London borough councillors.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 January, c. *459*]: The Commissioner informs me that it is not his practice to maintain such lists. Information of this nature was sought on one occasion recently in connection with the commissioner's duty under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to establish community-police consultative arrangements throughout the Metropolitan police district. I understand that a number of local political parties had represented that his policy of opposing the affiliation of political parties as such to community-police consultative groups was effectively excluding them from the consultative process in areas where, as minority parties, they were not represented among council nominees to the local consultative group. Information about the political affiliation of councillors was requested from borough councils, as a one-off exercise to help in considering these representations. This information is, of course, publicly available. I understand that most councils have already provided it and that none has objected to the request.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Co-operative College Lusaka

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent intensive training course held at the Co-operative college, Lusaka, and the assistance contributed by the Plunkett foundation.

Mr. Eggar: The course, which took place in November, was concerned with the marketing and distribution of agricultural produce. The students were nominated by the co-operative unions in Zambia, and the instructors included four tutors from the Plunkett Foundation; the cost of their services was met from the British aid programme. I am grateful to the foundation for its contribution to the success of the course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Greenway asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will detail visits, home and overseas, made by each Select

Committee since 1979, indicating the number of members involved, the place and purpose of the visit and the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Revenue Statistics

Mr. Alexander asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage and amount of national income derived from taxation for each year since 1979, in total and broken down between taxes on income and expenditure, national insurance and rates.

Mr. Moore: The figures are as follows:

	*Total taxes and national insurance etc contributions**		*Taxes on personal incomes*		*Taxes on other incomes*		*Taxes on expenditure other than rates*		*National insurance etc contributions*		*local authority rates*	
	£ billion	per cent.†	£ billion	per cent.†	£ billion	per cent.†	£ billion	per cent†	£ billion	per cent.†	£ billion	per cent.†
1978-79	58·5	34	18·9	11	4·3	2	18·1	10	10·2	6	5·8	3
1979-80	72·8	35	20·9	10	6·2	3	25·1	12	12·0	6	6·9	3
1980-81	85·7	36	24·9	11	6·9	3	28·6	12	14·4	6	8·7	4
1981-82	102·0	39	28·6	11	9·5	4	33·5	13	16·5	6	11·0	4
1982-83	110·7	39	30·4	11	11·4	4	34·8	12	18·7	7	12·2	4
1983-84	118·1	39	31·3	10	12·3	4	37·4	12	21·3	7	12·3	4
1984-85	128·3	39	32·6	10	15·7	5	39·8	12	22·9	7	13·0	4

* Total taxes include taxes on capital and royalties, which are not included in the remaining columns. Therefore the components shown do not add up to the totals shown.

† As a proportion of the average measure of gross domestic product (at market prices).

‡ Including petroleum revenue tax and corporation tax.

European Community

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the European Economic Community Council has received a report from the European Economic Community Court of Auditors about the recent intergovernmental agreement to provide additional finance to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. The Court of Auditors referred to the 1984 intergovernmental agreement in paragraphs 1.10 to 1.13 of its annual report on the Communities' accounts published in the *Official Journal* on 16 December 1985 (OJ c326). The report is under discussion in the Council's Budget Committee. Copies are available in the Library of the House. An explanatory memorandum on the report was submitted on 17 January 1986.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the £117,917,000 being paid to the European Economic Community under article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77 represents an actual increase in European Economic Community contributions by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *410*]: No. The sum of £117·917 million is that part of the advance payment of £134 million of non-VAT own resources announced on 21 November 1985 at columns 248-249 which could not be financed from the provision remaining in class II, vote 9. It was financed initially from the Contingencies Fund and the Government are now seeking supplementary provision to repay the fund. Advance payment of the £134 million in November, rather than in December, represented a change in timing but not in the level of our contributions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's policy on the latest developments in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We remain deeply concerned about the internal situation in South Africa. We shall continue to use our influence and contacts, including our contacts with the South African Government, to press for fundamental reforms and emphasise the need for the widest possible dialogue about the political future of South Africa.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the South African Government on behalf of the seven prisoners in South Africa currently sentenced to death and awaiting execution, in particular, Clarence Payi and Theresa Ramashula; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We consider such representations on compelling humanitarian or human rights grounds. There are no such grounds in the case of Clarence Payi. Her Majesty's Embassy in South Africa is investigating the case of Theresa Ramashula and others convicted with her.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 20 January to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), *Official Report*, columns *34-5*, what were the reasons why he considers that public statements by foreign Governments on matters which are both internal to the United Kingdom and the concern of the private sector are not helpful; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As we have made clear on a number of occasions, this is a matter to be decided by the board and shareholders of Westland plc.

British Council

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his plans to develop the work of the British Council following Britain's withdrawal from UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: There are no plans to develop the work of the British Council as such, as a result of Britain's withdrawal from UNESCO, but as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development indicated in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lindsey, East (Sir P. Tapsell) on 23 January, the volume of work done by the British Council on behalf of the ODA in support of education, will increase.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government have taken in respect of human rights violations in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have repeatedly made clear to the Salvadorean Government our concern over human rights violations. Most recently my right hon. and learned Friend raised the matter with the Salvadorean Foreign Minister in November 1985. But, we and many other countries recognise the improvements that have taken place under President Duarte. We are also concerned about increasing human rights violations committed by the guerrilla forces active in El Salvador.

Uganda

Mr. Lewis Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received about the latest developments in Uganda.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received regular reports from our high commissioner in Kampala about the situation in Uganda during the recent outbreak of fighting. He has informed us that the National Resistance Army led by Mr. Yoweri Museveni has effective control of the capital and of the southern half of the country including all major routes into Uganda. Life in those areas is returning to normal and it is hoped that the airport at Entebbe will soon be open to scheduled airline flights. It is already open to charter flights. The high commission has no reports of any British citizens being harmed in the fighting and only a small number have indicated any wish to leave.

We are in contact with Mr. Museveni and the National Resistance Army in Kampala.

We hope that Uganda will at last achieve a stable administration which puts into practice full respect for human rights and brings about a reconciliation of the factions which have been at war. Britain is ready to support such a process with aid and training for the rehabilitation of this country, which has suffered so much.

WALES

A5 (Bypasses)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make a statement of his intentions following receipt of the final report of consulting engineers into the need for and feasibility of providing bypasses for communities on the A5 on Anglesey.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The report was received last month and is now being studied. I hope to be able to indicate my views on the need for improvements in the late spring.

Drinking Water (Lead Pollution)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any areas within the Welsh water authority's remit where levels of lead in drinking water exceed limits stipulated in European Community directive (80/778/EEC) relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Yes, there are areas within the Welsh water authority's remit where the maximum acceptable concentration for lead can from time to time exceed the limit stipulated in the European Community directive (80/778/EEC).

The Welsh water authority's lead in water indentification survey has given rise to a programme of modifications and additions to existing treatment processes to reduce plumbo-solvency. This programme will enable the Welsh water authority to meet the Government's target date of December 1989 for reducing lead concentrations in drinking water to acceptable levels. This is in line with the Government's application to the European Commission for an article 20 delay in respect of the lead parameter.

Tourism

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the future of the Wales tourist board in the light of the recommendations of the first report from the Trade and Industry Committee into tourism in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In accordance with normal practice the Government will be considering the recommendations of the Trade and Industry Committee and will respond in due course. Full account will be taken of the importance of the industry to the Welsh economy.

DEFENCE

Greenham Common

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he remains satisfied with security at Greenham common.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January, c. *356*]: Security at Greenham common remains under close and continual review.

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for security at Greenham common of the lessons learnt from exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January, c. *356*]: Exercise Brave Defender successfully tested plans and procedures for the ground defence of vital installations in this country against attack by enemy special forces during a period of tension or war. A first impressions report was placed in the House of Commons Library on

22 October 1985 and detailed analysis is continuing. My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot refer to the details of the security plans for specific RAF stations.

Royal Air force (Aircrew)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 46 navigators and 89 pilots who have expressed a desire to leave the Royal Air Force on premature voluntary retirement, are currently serving with Royal Air Force Germany.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 December 1985, c. *100-101*]: Four navigators and two pilots.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Voluntary Export Restraint Agreements

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department has carried out any studies of the effect and cost of voluntary export restraint agreements.

Mr. Howard: My Department keeps all restraints which have an effect on trade under careful scrutiny.

Trade Marks

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he plans to allow the Patent Office Trade Marks Registry to accept applications for registration of service trade marks under the Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984.

Mr. Pattie: It is the Government's intention to implement the Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984 one year early, namely on 1 October 1986, but this is contingent on the passage of the Patents, Designs and Marks Bill. Under the commencement provisions of that Bill, an application for registration of a service mark which is received before the date on which the 1984 Act comes into force will, while having no legal status before that date, become a valid application on that date. It is not possible to give a precise indication at this stage of how long before that date the Trade Marks Registry will be able to accept such applications, but it should be several weeks and will I hope be at least two months.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to make available for publication details of amateur radio licensees' call signs and addresses.

Mr. Butcher: All applicants for amateur radio licences are asked whether they are prepared for their call signs and addresses to be published. For many years, details of those who have agreed have been published by the Radio Society of Great Britain. Recently, I have received a number of requests for this information to be made more widely available. With effect from 1 January 1987, I intend to make it available to any person or organisation on payment of a fee which covers the cost of producing the necessary computer tapes and makes a small contribution to the costs involved in amateur radio licensing.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any applications have been received for licences for the export of any defence equipment to El Salvador.

Mr. Howard: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to make public information of this kind.

CR6 Taxi

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to whether, following the takeover of the Carbodies company, it is the new company's intention to continue with the development and production of the CR6 taxi cab: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Manganese Bronze plc., which acquired Carbodies Ltd. in 1973, set up London Taxis International in April 1984 to co-ordinate its various taxi interests. With regard to the CR6 taxi, my Department has been monitoring progress on the project and is currently discussing its future with LTI.

Cosmetics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to ban cosmetics that require experimentation on animals.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC (Trade Statistics)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what have been the average annual percentage changes in United Kingdom exports to and imports from the European Economic Community for total visible trade and for manufactured goods, respectively, since 1972.

Mr. Butcher: The average annual increases in the value of United Kingdom trade with the European Community, excluding Spain and Portugal, between 1972 and 1985 are as follows:

Exports: 21·5 per cent. (total) and 18·4 per cent. (manufactures).
Imports: 20·2 per cent. (total) and 21·3 per cent. (manufactures).

Weights and Measures (Examiners)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many examiners are in post at the national weights and measures laboratory; what are their grades; what is the average annual salary in each grade; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total salary bill of the laboratory in each year since 1979, together with his best estimate for the years 1985 to 1986-87.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *383*]: There are 10 examiners currently in post at the national weights and measures laboratory of which six are in the senior professional and technology officer grade and four are in the higher professional and technology officer grade. The average annual salary for these grades is £15,610 and £13,570 respectively.

Because of organisational changes, it is not possible to give strictly comparable figures for the laboratory's salary bill over the requested period. Approximate figures are as follows:

	£ thousands
1979-80	310
1980-81	410
1981-82	470
1982-83	550
1983-84	640
†1984-85	620
1985-86	*620
‡1986-87	660

*Forecast.
†Responsibility for work under Parts IV to VI of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 transferred from NWML during 1984-85.
‡Estimate subject to uncertainty in staffing levels.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Stores

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the operational costs of keeping butter stored in intervention in Norfolk per year compared with the market value of the butter stored;

(2) what are the operational costs of keeping butter stored in intervention in Lincolnshire per year compared with the market value of the butter stored;

(3) what are the operational costs of keeping butter stored in intervention in north Yorkshire per year compared with the market value of the butter stored;

(4) what are the operational costs of keeping butter stored in intervention in Humberside per year compared with the market value of the butter stored;

(5) what are the operational costs of keeping grain stored in intervention in Norfolk per year compared with the market value of the grain stored;

(6) what are the operational costs of keeping grain stored in intervention in Lincolnshire per year compared with the market value of the grain stored;

(7) what are the operational costs of keeping grain stored in intervention in north Yorkshire per year compared with the market value of the grain stored;

(8) what are the operational costs of keeping grain stored in intervention in Humberside per year compared with the market value of the grain stored.

Mr. Gummer: Storage costs are not recorded separately for different areas. The average annual costs of storage and handling are about £13 per tonne for cereals and £77 per tonne for butter. The current average market prices are £112 per tonne for feedwheat and barley and £1,845 per tonne for butter.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the level of butter stored in intervention, and where it was stored, within Humberside in January as compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985;

(2) what was the level of grain stored in intervention, and where it was stored, in Humberside in January compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The following stocks of intervention butter and grain were stored in Humberside as at 1 January 1984, 1985 and 1986. Records of storage locations in 1979 are no longer available.

(tonnes)

Location	1984	1985	1986
Butter			
Hull	(2)352	(3)2,166	(4)2,846
Grimsby	2,901	6,301	6,448
Grain			
Alexandra	—	6,038	20,770
Aughton	—	—	9,011
Bridlington	—	—	3,400
Cranswick(2)	—	4,949	22,084
Driffield	28,937	71,754	70,872
Goxhill	—	6,091	1,554
Grimsby	—	—	15,594
Hessle	—	—	25,225
Hull	—	11,122	11,122
Killingholme	—	3,266	9,489
King George	—	—	8,558
North Ferriby	—	—	13,702
Pocklington	—	—	12,312
Preston	—	—	12,921
Scunthorpe	—	23,436	138,374
Ulceby	—	10,248	10,298

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the level of butter stored in intervention, and where it was stored, in Lincolnshire in January compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985;

(2) what was the level of grain stored in intervention, and where was it stored, in the county of Lincolnshire in January compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The following stocks of intervention butter and grain were stored in Lincolnshire as at 1 January 1984, 1985 and 1986. Records of storage locations in 1979 are no longer available.

(tonnes)

Location	1984	1985	1986
Butter			
Easton	480	747	997
Grain			
Bardney	—	12,478	36,293
Boston	—	—	12,758
Bracebridge Heath	—	23,327	18,261
Carr Lane	6,886	9,206	26,426
Colsterworth	—	—	16,363
Faldingworth	4,193	—	—
Fishtoft	—	—	2,804
Fulbeck	—	—	7,353
Gainsborough	6,523	—	6,654
Grantham(3)	—	8,812	72,792
Heighington(2)	2,731	—	13,132
Hemswell	15,306	72,464	72,824
Holton Le Clay	—	—	14,493
Horncastle	3,843	20,284	22,555
Ingham	—	—	12,082
Lincoln	—	35,107	109,545
Manby	25,229	51,301	51,300
Normanby	—	—	9,103
Osbournby	—	8,866	8,866
Owmby	—	8,188	9,005
Quarrington	—	—	8,547
Skegness(2)	10,172	29,521	33,106
Swinderby	—	15,554	16,059

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the level of butter stored in intervention in January in Norfolk, and where it was stored, as compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985;

(2) what was the level of grain stored in intervention, and what were the storage points, in Norfolk in January compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The following stocks of intervention butter and grain were stored in Norfolk as at 1 January 1984, 1985 and 1986. Records of storage locations in 1979 are no longer available.

(tonnes)

Location	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Butter			
Kings Lynn	—	190	(2)2,524
Thetford	—	152	1,672
Grain			
Aylsham	—	—	10,063
Bressingham	—	39,505	48,953
Diss	1,960	12,007	11,972
Downham Market	—	—	11,426
Dunham	—	15,515	5,036
Fakenham	—	—	11,639
Fersfield	—	—	18,828
Foulsham	—	10,981	16,739
Furlong	—	8,404	8,741
Kings Lynn	10,955	14,407	14,090
Markshall	—	—	5,935
Methwold	—	9,832	9,842
New Forge	—	53,533	60,955
Pickenham	—	—	7,426
Rackheath	46	7,562	8,576
Runcton	—	—	5,017
Shipdham (2)	—	—	23,139
Snetterton	23,482	67,725	70,159
Stoke Ferry	—	—	15,058
Thetford	—	7,348	10,834
Trafford	—	9,267	9,991
Walsingham	10,656	16,117	16,132
Wells	—	359	359

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the level of butter stored in intervention, and where was it stored, in north Yorkshire in January as compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985;

(2) what was the level of grain stored in intervention, and where was it stored, in north Yorkshire in January as compared with the same date in 1979, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The following stocks of intervention butter and grain were stored in north Yorkshire as at 1 January 1984, 1985 and 1986. Records of storage locations in 1979 are no longer available.

(tonnes)

Location	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Butter			
Northallerton	795	1,219	2,355
Grain			
Holme	—	7,509	—
Melmerby	—	1,467	25,912
Ouseburn	—	4,949	5,483
Tadcaster	—	20,248	37,934
Tholthorpe	—	946	6,855
York	—	75,110	57,671

Food Prices

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the rate of increase of food prices in the United Kingdom since May 1979 and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Between May 1979 and December 1985, the food component of the retail price index rose at an average annual rate of 6·5 per cent. In contrast, during the period February 1974 to May 1979 when the previous Administration held office, retail food prices rose at an average rate of 16·4 per cent. per annum.

EC (Social Butter Scheme)

Mr. Oakes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer on 9 December 1985, *Official Report*, columns *485-486*, to the right hon. Member for Halton, if his Department has held any further discussions with the dairy trade about extending the existing Community social butter scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department is in continuing contact with the dairy trade and other interested parties about the suggestion that the United Kingdom should seek an extension to the existing Community "social butter" scheme. Work on assessing the various implications of this is nearing completion and I hope soon to be able to consider the results.

Lime Subsidy

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider the re-introduction of the lime subsidy in respect of land where liming may be expected to improve soil condition or fertility.

Mrs. Fenner: Under the capital grant schemes assistance is available for liming as a capital improvement in the less favoured areas or for part of an approved programme of grassland reseeding and regeneration, excepting on heathland and moorland.

The use of lime for routine maintenance is regarded as a cost-effective operation of normal good husbandry and I have no plans to introduce a general subsidy. Such a measure would be contrary to the European Community rules on state aids.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further and Higher Education (Statistics)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the age distribution of students in *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education according to the following ranges: 18 to 21 years, 22 to 25 years, 26 to 35 years, 35 to 45 years and 45 plus years.

Mr. Walden: The table shows the readily available information on student numbers in the 1984-85 academic year by age. Evening only figures in further education have not been shown because of difficulties over multiple enrolments.

Thousands

Age range	Non-advanced Further Education (England)		Public Sector Higher Education (England)		Universities (Great Britain)	
	Full-time	*Part-time day*	*Full-time*	*Part-time day*	*Full-time*	*Part-time (1983-84)*
18 to 21	81	167	163	45	*210	*2
22 to 24	10	30	34	25	41	4
25 to 29	8	74	18	22	20	10
30 to 34	5	24	9	13		
35 to 44	6	38	9	15	20	19
45 and over	4	86	3	7		
TOTAL 18+	114	419	236	127	291	35

* Includes a small number of students under the age of 18.

Further and Higher Education (Finance)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what amendments he proposes to make to his plans for financing further and higher education during the next five years.

Mr. Walden: The Government's plans for public expenditure on further and higher education for the financial years 1986-87 to 1988-89 were published earlier this month in the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). My right hon. Friend has no plans to amend them, but they will be subject to review in the normal way as part of the yearly review of public expenditure.

Maintained Schools (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the numbers of pupils in maintained schools in the London borough of Waltham Forest *(a)* who went on to further and higher education in 1981-82 and 1983-84 and *(b)* who gained A levels, O levels and CSE, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: Information is given in the table:

Leavers from maintained schools in Waltham Forest
Data averaged over the three years 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84

	Percentages	*Numbers (000's)*
With 1 or more A level pass	11·6	1·09
With no A level but:		
5 or more higher grade passes* at O level or CSE	6·1	0·57
1 to 4 higher grade passes at O level or CSE	23·5	2·21
With no higher grades but 1 or more other grade†	43·7	4·12
With no graded result	15·3	1·44
Intending to pursue courses of full-time further or higher education	17·8	1·68

Source: School Leavers Survey. Data subject to sampling error.
Notes:
* O level grades A to C and CSE Grade 1.
† O level grades D, E and CSE Grades 2 to 5.

Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend expects to meet representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in the next few weeks to discuss a number of matters of common concern.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the latest pupil-to-teacher ratios for England and for each local education authority, including and excluding head teachers, in *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* primary schools, *(c)* secondary schools, *(d)* special schools and *(e)* sixth form colleges.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 January 1986, c. 713]: The information is shown in the table. It relates to January 1985. The pupil-teacher ratios including head teachers and, exceptionally, excluding head teachers, in maintained nursery, primary, and secondary schools, including sixth form colleges, special schools and sixth form colleges in each local education authority are as follows:

Pupil-Teacher ratios in January 1985

	Primary schools		*Secondary schools (including sixth form colleges)*		*Sixth form colleges*		*Nursery schools*		*Special schools*	
	Including head teachers	*Excluding head teachers*	*Including head teachers*	*Excluding head teachers*	*Including head teachers*	*Excluding head teachers*	*Including head teachers*	*Excluding head teachers*	*Including head teachers*	*Excluding head teachers*
Barking	21·14	23·16	15·43	15·68	—	—	—	—	5·90	6·30
Barnet	19·89	21·77	14·32	14·58	11·10	11·35	16·30	21·70	5·50	6·00
Bexley	23·18	25·77	16·66	16·98	—	—	20·00	25·00	7·70	8·40
Brent	18·43	19·76	12·26	12·45	—	—	14·30	19·50	5·10	5·50
Bromley	23·27	25·93	16·43	16·76	—	—	—	—	6·80	7·60

	Primary schools		Secondary schools (including sixth form colleges)		Sixth form colleges		Nursery schools		Special schools	
	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers
Croydon	22·11	24·42	15·36	15·70	—	—	23·80	36·90	6·00	6·40
Ealing	20·07	21·71	14·60	14·84	—	—	15·40	22·00	6·50	7·20
Enfield	22·60	24·38	15·07	15·32	—	—	—	—	6·90	7·40
Haringey	18·93	21·02	13·09	13·24	—	—	13·00	16·20	4·60	4·90
Harrow	20·99	22·58	14·30	14·61	11·36	11·62	—	—	6·70	7·30
Havering	22·72	24·96	15·56	15·83	—	—	—	—	7·40	7·90
Hillingdon	22·39	24·67	15·71	16·04	—	—	26·40	48·30	7·50	8·60
Hounslow	19·96	21·69	15·69	15·93	—	—	—	—	5·40	5·80
Kingston upon Thames	22·23	24·38	15·23	15·54	—	—	17·70	23·10	7·00	7·60
Merton	21·80	24·20	16·84	17·35	—	—	22·50	30·00	6·10	6·70
Newham	20·23	22·27	13·75	13·95	—	—	18·60	26·00	5·50	5·90
Redbridge	23·58	25·95	16·01	16·29	—	—	—	—	6·70	7·30
Richmond upon Thames	20·99	23·39	16·38	16·70	—	—	17·50	33·00	5·20	5·90
Sutton	24·92	27·91	16·77	17·16	—	—	20·10	30·10	6·60	7·10
Waltham Forest	21·14	22·95	13·77	14·13	—	—	19·70	32·80	4·40	4·50
Inner London	17·13	18·76	13·11	13·31	—	—	16·90	22·90	5·70	6·20
Birmingham	22·58	24·59	16·32	16·66	12·25	12·47	24·10	39·20	6·80	7·40
Coventry	22·32	24·84	15·63	15·85	—	—	26·60	34·00	6·50	7·20
Dudley	23·16	25·17	15·55	15·87	10·70	10·88	33·90	90·50	8·80	9·90
Sandwell	22·28	24·85	15·11	15·35	9·19	9·37	20·30	30·50	7·10	7·80
Solihull	23·34	25·89	16·21	16·49	11·93	12·06	—	—	6·80	7·40
Walsall	20·80	23·07	14·75	14·97	—	—	31·30	73·10	5·80	6·40
Wolverhampton	19·33	21·42	14·90	15·13	—	—	20·60	41·20	5·80	6·30
Knowsley	21·56	24·07	14·87	15·13	—	—	—	—	6·40	7·10
Liverpool	20·60	23·30	15·77	16·07	—	—	18·10	25·30	6·70	7·40
St. Helens	22·47	25·36	15·48	15·73	—	—	21·00	42·00	8·40	9·10
Sefton	23·30	25·96	16·58	16·86	13·52	13·85	19·90	39·80	6·40	7·10
Wirral	23·69	26·01	16·00	16·26	—	—	15·20	22·80	7·50	8·30
Bolton	23·85	26·77	15·77	16·00	10·07	10·31	21·70	33·60	6·50	7·10
Bury	22·40	25·22	15·42	15·76	10·59	10·84	20·40	34·00	6·30	7·00
Manchester	22·08	24·66	14·28	14·51	10·57	10·70	16·10	21·70	6·20	6·70
Oldham	22·91	25·67	16·61	16·88	—	—	—	—	7·20	8·00
Rochdale	22·45	24·83	14·87	15·21	—	—	20·60	30·80	6·30	7·00
Salford	21·33	23·82	15·03	15·37	10·82	11·06	22·50	51·90	7·90	8·60
Stockport	23·23	26·30	16·15	16·39	8·68	9·09	25·10	45·70	6·80	7·40
Tameside	23·34	26·07	15·74	16·05	11·01	11·22	14·30	20·60	6·40	7·10
Trafford	22·91	25·96	16·39	16·83	—	—	—	—	7·60	8·60
Wigan	21·16	23·51	15·10	15·37	11·61	11·79	17·60	26·40	7·00	7·70
Barnsley	21·13	24·35	16·21	16·53	10·78	10·97	16·70	27·80	6·60	7·30
Doncaster	21·24	23·91	16·40	16·77	—	—	—	—	7·80	8·40
Rotherham	21·55	24·25	16·50	16·75	10·82	11·08	21·10	30·10	6·80	7·50
Sheffield	20·04	22·23	15·37	15·61	—	—	14·90	17·80	5·40	5·90
Bradford	20·22	22·52	16·80	17·34	—	—	16·10	21·90	5·50	6·00
Calderdale	21·82	25·00	16·76	17·17	—	—	18·80	26·40	6·00	6·70
Kirklees	22·05	24·95	16·81	17·16	10·85	11·11	21·40	36·30	6·50	7·20
Leeds	22·48	25·32	16·33	16·80	—	—	20·60	32·50	6·20	6·70
Wakefield	21·70	24·86	16·98	17·47	—	—	19·40	36·10	7·60	8·40
Gateshead	19·20	21·50	15·43	15·71	—	—	15·00	30·00	8·00	8·90
Newcastle upon Tyne	19·30	21·19	14·37	14·62	—	—	12·10	14·40	5·70	6·30
North Tyneside	19·13	20·95	14·09	14·49	10·92	11·14	19·00	28·50	7·20	7·80
South Tyneside	20·82	23·38	14·57	14·83	—	—	19·10	38·10	7·70	8·70
Sunderland	21·85	23·88	15·92	16·17	—	—	18·60	29·90	7·40	8·10
Isles of Scilly	13·30	20·69	11·23	12·23	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	24·06	27·60	16·59	16·86	10·33	10·51	20·20	27·20	6·40	7·10
Bedfordshire	23·07	26·94	17·30	17·78	11·24	11·34	19·10	25·90	6·40	7·00
Berkshire	23·16	26·41	15·99	16·32	—	—	17·70	25·20	6·90	7·40
Buckinghamshire	24·17	27·57	16·37	16·73	—	—	29·90	71·40	7·90	8·70
Cambridgeshire	23·30	26·62	16·92	17·25	12·10	12·35	20·10	31·90	7·30	8·00
Cheshire	22·83	26·56	17·01	17·31	10·67	10·93	21·60	36·00	7·10	7·90
Cleveland	22·19	24·42	16·26	16·57	11·17	11·41	19·90	46·50	7·00	7·60
Cornwall	23·47	28·39	16·91	17·20	11·12	11·36	20·40	56·70	6·60	7·30
Cumbria	21·12	25·67	15·70	15·99	11·09	11·39	17·70	27·60	6·80	7·90
Derbyshire	22·38	26·00	16·84	17·17	—	—	19·70	34·20	6·80	7·40
Devon	23·65	28·01	16·76	17·13	—	—	21·90	41·80	7·90	8·70
Dorset	23·65	27·27	17·11	17·53	—	—	—	—	8·40	9·40
Durham	22·01	25·38	16·77	17·06	12·68	12·93	19·70	32·90	7·40	8·60
East Sussex	23·12	26·26	17·06	17·36	12·85	13·21	20·70	35·80	7·00	7·70
Essex	23·94	27·21	16·99	17·28	10·24	10·36	28·70	47·80	7·80	8·60
Gloucestershire	23·05	27·43	16·83	17·22	—	—	—	—	7·60	8·40
Hampshire	24·08	27·41	17·15	17·48	12·17	12·36	21·60	43·20	8·20	9·10
Hereford and Worcester	24·13	28·80	17·35	17·81	12·80	13·06	—	—	6·90	7·60
Hertfordshire	22·23	25·68	15·96	16·33	—	—	21·30	36·30	6·90	7·60

	Primary schools		Secondary schools (including sixth form colleges)		Sixth form colleges		Nursery schools		Special schools	
	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers	Including head teachers	Excluding head teachers
Humberside	20·92	23·66	16·15	16·56	10·87	11·01	22·80	35·70	8·00	8·70
Isle of Wight	23·82	29·29	17·83	18·45	—	—	—	—	8·00	8·70
Kent	23·64	27·12	16·98	17·36	—	—	17·90	29·60	7·70	8·40
Lancashire	23·71	27·21	16·56	16·89	11·49	11·68	20·30	36·70	6·90	7·60
Leicestershire	22·86	25·71	16·13	16·44	10·98	11·16	24·50	—	7·10	7·90
Lincolnshire	24·37	29·52	17·15	17·66	—	—	22·50	37·50	8·30	9·50
Norfolk	22·13	26·41	16·47	16·82	10·76	11·12	21·10	37·90	8·10	9·10
North Yorkshire	22·03	26·97	16·58	16·95	11·77	12·00	20·40	45·90	7·10	8·00
Northamptonshire	22·17	25·56	16·27	16·64	—	—	18·90	33·70	6·90	7·60
Northumberland	23·30	28·48	16·91	17·52	—	—	28·00	84·00	6·80	7·70
Nottinghamshire	20·96	23·69	15·63	15·90	10·60	10·83	16·90	25·80	7·40	8·10
Oxfordshire	23·94	28·77	17·24	17·61	12·79	13·03	22·60	48·90	6·20	7·00
Shropshire	21·49	25·34	15·85	16·19	11·49	11·75	15·40	25·00	7·40	8·20
Somerset	24·21	29·37	17·64	18·04	11·14	11·36	—	—	8·10	8·80
Staffordshire	22·40	25·55	16·13	16·49	10·18	10·27	28·60	62·00	7·10	7·80
Suffolk	22·14	26·26	17·02	17·47	—	—	22·80	44·30	7·40	8·10
Surrey	22·34	25·31	16·31	16·65	12·18	12·40	15·90	23·20	7·20	8·00
Warwickshire	22·58	26·01	16·93	17·32	11·55	11·84	20·90	41·90	8·10	8·90
West Sussex	23·38	26·52	16·91	17·19	11·33	11·50	24·40	42·00	7·60	8·50
Wiltshire	23·43	28·10	17·30	17·63	—	—	—	—	6·80	7·70
England	22·16	25·19	16·12	16·45	11·33	11·54	19·70	30·70	6·90	7·50

NORTHERN IRELAND

Smear Tests

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider granting additional funding to Northern Ireland health authorities to meet the increased demand for smear tests.

Mr. Needham: I can assure the hon. Member that I shall take account of the pressures on cervical screening services in considering the financial allocations to health and social services boards for 1986-87.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to clear the backlog of smear tests at the Eastern health board; and what steps will be taken to prevent a similar backlog from developing.

Mr. Needham: At the beginning of January the board introduced an eight-week moratorium on the taking of routine screening smears. It now intends to recruit additional staff to assist with the processing of cervical smears. In the longer term the decentralisation of laboratory services from the eastern area will reduce the work load on the laboratories concerned.

Housing Standards

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the housing in Northern Ireland falls below statutory fitness levels.

Mr. Needham: The Northern Ireland house condition survey 1984, published by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, states that 10·4 per cent. of the total dwelling stock was recorded as statutorily unfit in 1984. Copies of the survey are being made available in the Library.

Housing Finance

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will explain the £44 million reduction in Northern Ireland housing finance.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on 19 December 1985, at columns 267-68, which indicated that the public expenditure allocation for housing in Northern Ireland in 1986-87 will be £355 million. This compares with £357 million in the current financial year. I understand that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has estimated that, in order to maintain its expenditure at current levels in real terms, the resources available to it in 1986-87 from all sources would have needed to be some £44 million higher to take account of falling capital receipts and increasing loan repayments. It is not possible to increase the public expenditure allocation given other pressures on the Northern Ireland block.

Housing (Construction Jobs)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate how many construction jobs will be lost due to the £44 million cutback in housing funding.

Mr. Needham: Until the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the other housing agencies have determined the distribution of resources available to them in 1986-87 over their capital and revenue programmes, it will not be possible to estimate the number of jobs in the construction industry being supported by the housing programme.

Lignite Mining (Lough Neagh)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the environmental impact of opencast lignite mining on the Tyrone shores of Lough Neagh.

Dr. Boyson: There are at present no proposals to mine lignite in County Tyrone. Whilst it is believed that a substantial deposit exits in the area, the drilling programme already undertaken is too limited to establish the economics of mining or to permit the development of a mine plan which would reveal the extent of any environmental impact on the area. to enable these issues

to be addressed the Department of Economic Development has given notice of its intention to award a prospecting licence which would allow the deposit to be fully investigated.

Short Brothers

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of workers employed at Short Brothers for each month in 1984 and 1985.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
January	6,047	6,549
February	6,053	6,581
March	6,080	6,683
April	6,085	6,724
May	6,179	6,888
June	6,264	6,935
July	6,292	6,948
August	6,328	6,980
September	6,410	7,033
October	6,482	7,131
November	6,506	7,177
December	6,524	7,186

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Government have given any undertaking to Short Bros. of Belfast in respect of any losses arising from cancellation of the agreement between Shorts and Sikorsky in respect of co-operative helicopter production.

Dr. Boyson: No.

Belfast (Road Scheme)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost of the new road scheme in Belfast, the number of new jobs created by the project and the estimated date of completion.

Mr. Needham: It is assumed that the hon. Member is referring to the Dublin road-Great Victoria street link, a central Belfast road scheme for which tenders were invited in mid-January. The cost estimate of the scheme, inclusive of land acquisition costs, is around £700,000 providing about 10 man-years of employment. The estimated date of completion is February 1987.

SCOTLAND

Rating System

10. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the present system of rating in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No. The Government's dissatisfaction with the present rating system in Scotland is made clear in our Green Paper, published yesterday.

16. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to introduce measures to reform the rating system in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot forecast what will be the results of the consultation period which began yesterday, nor can I anticipate the Queen's speech next Session, but our Green Paper says that we are at present planning to find room for a Bill in 1986-87.

37. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further progress has been made on proposals for reform of the rating system.

Mr. Ancram: I invite the hon. Gentleman to read our Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", published yesterday.

Coal Industry

11. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the Scottish area of the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss employment in the Scottish area of the coal industry.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No.

Employment

12. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: At 10 October 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland under the age of 25 years was 140,021.

Steel Industry

13. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 23 January, when we discussed their views on the steel industry in Scotland.

23. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will pay an official visit to the Ravenscraig steel complex to discuss with workers and management the social and employment aspects of steel making in west central Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for such a visit at present.

Nature Conservation

14. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy on the Nature Conservancy Council's report, "Afforestation and Nature Conservation".

Mr. John MacKay: The Nature Conservancy Council has produced a draft report on afforestation and nature conservation and has sought and received comments on it from interested Government Departments and other bodies. It has not yet published a final report, and I am not therefore in a position to make a statement.

Fuel and Transport Costs

15. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent, in formulating regional aid and development policies for Scotland, he takes account of regional variations in fuel and transport costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The statutory requirements for the designation of the assisted areas are in section 1(3) of the

Industrial Development Act 1982. In establishing the current structure of assisted areas in 1984 those requirements were followed.

Policy Initiatives

17. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new policy initiatives he has introduced since his appointment as Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Where I conclude on due assessment of the issues that new initiatives are required, they will be announced.

Detoxification Centres

18. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Government policy on the construction of detoxification centres in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The provision of facilities and services for people with alcohol-related problems is a matter for local authorities and health boards.

Voluntary organisations wishing to provide facilities of this nature may be eligible for grant under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Teachers (Dispute)

19. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the teaching unions in Scotland to discuss their campaign for an independent pay review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: At his invitation my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) and I met representatives of the teachers' unions on 27 September 1985.

21. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received on the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend and I continue to receive many representations about the teachers' dispute.

22. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what fresh initiatives he intends to take in the teachers' dispute.

38. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to introduce any new initiative to settle the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Rifkind: I am carefully considering all options, but I believe the immediate need is for the teachers and their employers to get into negotiation on a realistic basis.

26. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any new proposals to protect Scottish schoolchildren from the consequences of the current industrial action by members of the Educational Institute of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The interests of schoolchildren can best be served by a speedy settlement of the dispute. The management of the education service is the responsibility of the education authorities and it is their paramount duty to do all they can to maintain efficient schooling pending such a settlement.

34. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy relating to a solution of the current dispute in Scottish education.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Rate Support Grant

20. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities on the rate support grant for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: None. My predecessor the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) had regular meetings with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on rate support grant including grant for 1985-86.

SSHA (Rents)

24. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will hold an inquiry into the affairs of the Scottish Special Housing Association, in view of its recent decision to increase rents by 11 to 28 per cent.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that the range of percentage increases in rents is in fact 9 to 13 per cent. and the average 11·2 per cent. I can see no grounds for an inquiry on the lines suggested by the hon. Member.

Economy

25. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British industry to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to have an informal meeting with both the Confederation of British Industry and the Scottish Trades Union Congress in the near future. He is also to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry on 10 February and expects to meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy on a date to be arranged.

Agriculture (Review)

27. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet leaders of the Scottish National Farmers' Union to discuss the 1986 annual review of agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of the union's concern about the results of the 1986 annual review of agriculture and its desire to discuss this matter with me. I am making arrangements to have my first meeting with it and other agricultural interests very soon.

Falkirk

28. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to make an official visit to Falkirk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans in the immediate future to visit Falkirk.

Skoal Bandits

29. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assurances have been given to him concerning the sale of the tobacco product Skoal Bandits to young persons under the age of 16 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The manufacturers of this product have entered into a voluntary agreement with the Government by which they have undertaken that the marketing of Skoal Bandits will be specifically directed to adult tobacco users and that it will not be promoted to young people. The voluntary agreement further provides that retail outlets will be restricted to those where tobacco products are normally sold, and that it will not be offered to retailers who do not normally sell tobacco.

Islands (Agricultural Development)

30. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the European Commission's proposals for an agricultural development programme for the Scottish islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend and my noble Friend the Minister of State have received a number of representations, including those from the hon. Gentleman, encouraging the Government to look favourably on the European Commission's recently-published proposals for the Scottish islands, excluding the Western Isles.

Our evaluation of the proposals which the Commission has tabled, and to which I referred in my written reply to the hon. Gentleman of 13 January, at column *482*, is still proceeding.

Forestry

31. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures for the Forestry Commission's stocks of broadleaf woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay: At 31 March 1985 the Forestry Commission managed some 60,000 hectares of broad-leaved woodland.

33. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will review his forestry policy in Caithness and Sutherland.

Mr. John MacKay: All applications for forestry grant in Caithness and Sutherland are subject to the Forestry Commission's consultation procedures, and the arrangements for consulting the Nature Conservancy Council over proposals falling within sites of conservation importance in that area have recently been reviewed and extended. My right hon. and learned Friend does not, therefore, see any need to consider a change in forestry policy.

Garden Festival (Glasgow)

32. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of Scottish Development Agency moneys being transferred from the Glasgow eastern area renewal and wider East End areas of Glasgow to the garden festival project; and if he will list the individual projects and costs involved.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There has been no direct transfer of funds to the Glasgow garden festival project from funds previously allocated to the east end of Glasgow. In the light of many competing demands for its funds, the agency has reassessed the priorities attaching to particular projects. I am advised that the following projects in the east end of Glasgow are now unlikely to be carried out in 1985-86 or 1986-87: Parkhead rail line (cost £800,000); Barrowfield improvement (£90,000); Green View school stonecleaning (£60,000).

Cooling Towers (Cleaning)

35. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why the advice and guidance on cleaning cooling towers issued by his Department to health boards has not also been issued to Scottish local authorities.

Mr. John MacKay: This guidance was in fact conveyed to local authority directors of environmental health as well as health boards, and I regret that the reply of 25 November 1985, at column *435*, did not make this clear.

Epilepsy

36. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to implement the recommendations of the Hutchinson report in relation to the treatment and care of epilepsy in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The report entitled "the Medical Care of Epilepsy in Scotland" (known as the Hutchinson report) was published in 1968 and was generally well received by the then regional hospital boards. There are no plans to give further consideration to the report.

Death Statistics

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show the number of deaths in Scotland with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985; and if he will break the figures down by age group and month of the year.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia, by age group and month, Scotland

	Under 25	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65-74*	*75-84*	*85+*	*Total*
1984									
January	1	1	—	1	6	13	19	12	53
February	—	—	—	1	4	4	6	9	24
March	—	—	1	—	—	9	5	1	16
April	1	—	—	—	3	2	3	4	13
May	—	—	—	1	3	—	1	—	5
June	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	5
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	Total
August	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	3
September	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	—	4
October	1	—	—	2	1	4	1	1	10
November	—	1	—	—	3	6	7	4	21
December	—	—	—	1	1	4	7	8	21
Total	3	2	1	6	23	44	56	41	176
*1985**									
January	—	1	—	—	5	19	29	11	65
February	—	1	—	—	—	5	18	11	35
March	—	—	—	2	1	2	10	9	24
April	—	—	—	1	2	6	7	3	19
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	7
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	3
August	1	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	7
September	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	3	6
October	—	—	—	—	2	3	—	1	6
November	—	1	—	3	3	6	10	10	33
December	1	—	—	—	4	5	8	9	27
Total	2	3	1	6	17	46	93	66	234

* Provisional figures

SOCIAL SERVICES

Statutory Sick Pay Scheme

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the overall financial effects on employees of the operation over a complete financial year of the statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Major: In 1983-84, the first year of the scheme, £431 million was paid in statutory sick pay. It is estimated that this would have attracted some £130 million in tax and national insurance contributions from employees. Information is not available that would enable precise estimates to be made of the amounts of sickness benefit that would otherwise have been payable to SSP recipients in 1983-84; but on the basis of the financial estimates made when SSP was introduced, it is estimated that about £280 million in sickness benefit would have been payable to them in that year.

Ophthalmic Surgery

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average waiting time for ophthalmic surgery in *(a)* the Bolton area and *(b)* in the regional health authority areas in the United Kingdom, listed by area.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks. Some of it is not available centrally and statistics for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to departments of ophthalmology in National Health Service hospitals in England is given in the table for the latest year for which information is available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of Bolton district health authority who may be able to provide information in respect of Bolton.

NHS hospitals, ophthalmology inpatient departments

Regional Health Authority	Estimated median waiting time (in weeks) of waiting list cases in 1983
Northern	12
Yorkshire	12
Trent	12
East Anglian	11
North-West Thames	9
North-East Thames	9
South-East Thames	11
South-West Thames	10
Wessex	13
Oxford	9
South-Western	15
West Midlands	18
Mersey	9
North-Western	10
Special Health Authorities	9
England	11

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has completed the consideration of the study of specialist claims control undertaken by his Department; what conclusions the study reached on the position of those whose benefits are stopped following an investigation and subsequently restored; if he will publish the study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on 12 June 1985 at columns *482-483*, and to the statement and copy report placed in the Library on that date.

Audiological Rehabilitation Services (North-East Thames)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the plans of the North-East Thames regional health authority for the future development of audiological rehabilitation services within its area following the pending departure of the current consultant physician from the royal national throat, nose and ear hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The planning of audiological services within North-East Thames regional health authority is a matter for that authority and the relevant district health authorities. We have no information on how planning might or might not be affected by the departure of an individual consultant. The general position for the Royal national throat nose and ear hospital remains that Bloomsbury health authority, as part of its strategic planning of services, is considering the future role of the hospital in conjunction with the regional health authority in relation to the services the hospital provides Bloomsbury and the services it provides to a wider area, and its role as a postgraduate hospital. If there are any proposals for major change, they will be the subject of formal consultation in the usual way.

Hearing Aids

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Wolverhampton area have been waiting to obtain a hearing aid for *(a)* six months, *(b)* one year, *(c)* two years and *(d)* two and a half years or more.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information she seeks. It is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Wolverhampton health authority direct.

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many people in Great Britain wear hearing aids and as to how many of these are supplied on the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: It is estimated that over 1¼ million hearing aids are in use, and that 80 per cent. of these are supplied by the National Health Service.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether under 16-year-old mothers will be entitled to help with maternity expenses under the proposed social fund.

Mr. Newton: Under our proposals in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security", maternity payments from the social fund would be awarded to those in receipt of income support or family credit. Where a mother under the age of 16 was in a family receiving one of those benefits, the family would be eligible for a maternity payment.

Drug Misusers (AIDS)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the proportion of drug misusers in each county or health authority who are also acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers who are also drug misusers.

Mr. Hayhoe: Up to the end of December 1985, two cases of full clinical AIDS had been reported in the United Kingdom where injecting drug misuse was the main risk factor.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many two-earner couples currently receive family income supplement; and how many two-earner couples he estimates will receive family credit.

Mr. Newton: There are 10,000 couples receiving family income supplement where both have earnings; this includes cases where one of the couple has some earnings but is working less than the qualifying number of hours for family income supplement. In family credit, on the basis of the illustrative assumptions in the technical annex to the White Paper (Cmnd. 9691), we estimate that the number would be in the range of 20,000 to 30,000.

Sponsored Immigrants

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints he has made to magistrates' courts under section 18 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 against people liable to maintain sponsored immigrants in each of the last 10 years; how much money has been recovered as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Departmental statistics do not show the types of cases in which complaints under section 18 of the Act are made but, as far as I am aware, no action has so far been taken in a case involving a sponsored immigrant. Proceedings would be brought only where it appeared that the sponsor was financially able to meet his responsibilities in whole or in part but satisfactory arrangements for him to do so could not be reached out of court. The statutory provision (which has existed only since the passing of the Social Security Act 1980) provides the necessary support for agreement to be reached with the sponsor out of court.

Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy for the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel to be represented on wages and conditions of service negotiating committees; what information he has as to the proportion of ambulance personnel who are now members of that union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney By long-standing convention, membership of the staff sides of the NHS Whitley Councils is a matter for determination by the staff sides themselves. Staff ought to be able to be represented by organisations of their own choice. The association claims that its audited membership in England and Wales at 31 March 1985 was 3,642—about 18 per cent. of ambulance personnel at 30 September 1984.

Social Security Fraud

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the electoral register is currently used in conjunction with the investigation of fraud by Department of Health and Social Security claimants; and whether there are any plans to use it in that respect when it is available in machine-readable form.

Mr. Major: Electoral registers are freely available to the general public and are on occasion referred to by the Department's fraud investigators in the course of their inquiries. There are no plans to introduce information from the electoral register into any of the computer systems currently in use or being developed by the Department.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to amend sections 2 and 3 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Whitney: I have no such plans.

Food Irradiation (Report)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the advisory committee's report on food irradiation has yet been presented; and if he will announce the date on which the report will be published.

Mr. Whitney: We have received the advisory committee's report and publication is planned for the spring.

Mrs. Barbara Bentley

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington may expect a reply to his letter of 10 April in connection with Mrs. Barbara Bentley of Leamington Spa.

Mr. Major: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 27 January.

Benefits

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of the discussions currently in progress between officials of his Department and interest groups relating to arrangements for the provision of localised information regarding the availability of advice and information about social security benefits.

Mr. Major: As I said in my reply to the hon. and learned Member of 20 January at column *64*, officials are currently discussing with interested groups whether it would be possible to provide social security claimants with more detailed information about local advice centres and agencies. I will let the hon. and learned Member have a further reply about the outcome of the discussions.

Residential Homes

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to review the permitted scale of charges made to residents by *(a)* nursing homes and *(b)* residential homes and which are met by public funds to allow for regional differences in costs of living and also for inflationary pressures.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 28 January at column 782.

Medical Accidents

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will recommend to health authorities that they make available a patient's hospital records to either the patient or a third party, if more appropriate, whenever there is a medical accident;

(2) if he will take steps to make available to the victims of medical accidents all the relevant information they request.

Mr. Whitney: Current guidance from the Department asks health authorities to be as helpful as possible when they are asked to release information voluntarily except where there is a good reason for withholding records either bearing on the defence of a claim or when the request is made without substantial justification. It is usual practice for case notes to be made available to the applicant's medical adviser, to ensure that they are correctly interpreted for the applicant's benefit.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of medical accidents that occur annually according to *(a)* their severity and *(b)* the specialty of the consultant in charge of their case.

Mr. Whitney: Information on which to base such an estimate is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has had, or intends to have, any discussions with the British Medical Association about establishing a no fault liability scheme for the victims of medical accidents.

Mr. Whitney: No such discussions have been held or are in prospect.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to monitor the number of medical accidents in the National Health Service, and the procedure used by complainants.

Mr. Whitney: The monitoring of medical accidents and complaints procedures are, in the first place, matters for health authorities whose aim must be to prevent recurrences. Health authorities are required to report to the Department any accidents due to defects in medicinal products, buildings and plant, equipment and medical and non-medical supplies to enable departmental advice on the problems revealed to be widely promulgated. Summaries of the reports of the Health Service Commissioner are also circulated to health authorities to ensure as far as possible that mistakes are not repeated.

The Department collects information on the number of written complaints received each year about the hospital and community health services and more detailed information about the clinical complaints procedure.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services approximately how many cases referred to the ombudsman in each of the last three years which had to be rejected by him because of clinical judgment are cases of medical accidents.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the suggestion by the deputy Parliamentary Commissioner that there should be an independent body assessing cases alleged to be medical accidents with powers to pay compensation on a no fault basis.

Mr. Whitney: This suggestion has not so far been referred to us for consideration.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases of medical accidents in each of the last three years, regional medical officers have refused to take the cases to stage 3 of the procedure when requested to do so.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the number of cases rejected for stage 3 of the clinical complaints procedure or withdrawn by the complainant was given in my reply to the right hon. Gentleman on 18 December 1985 at column *233*. Cases involving medical accidents cannot be separately identified.

Doctors (Unprofessional Conduct)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the last three years, how many general practitioners have been reprimanded or penalised by family practitioner committees for unprofessional conduct; and what proportion this is of all general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: Investigations by family practitioner committees may lead to general practitioners being found in breach of their terms of service and warned. The numbers in England and the proportion to all general practitioners in England are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Number	170	178	291
Proportion	1 in 137	1 in 133	1 in 83

The 1985 figure is higher than it would have been because administrative difficulties led to some cases being concluded in 1985 which otherwise would have been concluded in 1984. Family practitioner committees are not concerned specifically with unprofessional conduct.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the last three years, how many doctors have been reprimanded or penalised by the regional health authorities employing them because of unprofessional behaviour; and what proportion these figures represent of all doctors with contracts held by regional health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally.

Doctors (Incompetence)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the last three years, how many cases of professional incompetence were investigated by the General Medical Council; in how many cases doctors were found guilty; what was the nature of the incompetence; and what was the sanction applied.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not for Government to account for the General Medical Council's independent exercise of its functions under the Medical Act 1983 but I have passed the right hon. Member's question to the council.

Pearson Report

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the Pearson report's recommendations, which were relevant to his Department, have been implemented; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Whitney: Many of the 30 recommendations relevant to the Department have been overtaken by, for example, the Government's proposals in the recent White Paper "Reform of Social Security," the 1981 White Paper on the reform of the industrial injuries scheme (Cmnd. 8402), and the current consultation exercise on the industrial injuries scheme. To give a detailed reply reflecting the current position in each of the recommendations concerned would involve disproportionate cost. However, if the right hon. Member has any specific recommendations in mind I shall be happy to provide the information he seeks.

Doctors (Complaints)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) in how many cases of complaints against hospital doctors in each of the last three years clinical judgment was involved;

(2) how many complaints against hospital doctors have been made in each of the last three years.

Mr. Whitney: The only available information about complaints against hospital doctors relates to complaints which are wholly or partially clinical, and is as follows:

Written complaints, wholly or partly clinical, relating to National Health Service hospital services, England.

1982	*1983*	*1984*
7,005	8,191	*9,407

* Provisional.

Complaints Procedure

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions in each of the last three years the Health Service Commissioner has criticised the whole or parts of the complaints procedure; and in which cases.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made since July 1985, following commissioners' decisions on claimants' rights of appeal and reference of decisions back to the medical boards in identifying claimants wrongly denied mobility allowance and making repayments to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have now completed a special exercise which has identified a total of 40 cases where mobility allowance was incorrectly withdrawn on appeal against the length of the award. Arrears are outstanding in 28 of these cases and action is in hand to resolve these. Fourteen of these cases are currently receiving the allowance. As regards those cases where a reference back

to the medical board was incorrectly made, identification of the cases from examination of hundreds of thousands of claim files is still proceeding.

NHS (Crown Notices)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to institute the operation of Crown notices for food hygiene in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: As my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement on the Stanley Royd hospital inquiry report on 21 January at columns *190-202*, this is one of the proposals in the report which is being given urgent consideration.

Limited List Prescribing

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by product type of the estimated savings which have ensued to the National Healh Service through the implementation of the limited list prescribing system.

Mr. Hayhoe: Actual savings in each of the therapeutic categories of drugs covered by the selected list scheme are unlikely to be available for some months.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received expressing criticisms of the limited list prescribing system; and how many of this total have been received since the implementation of the scheme.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not readily available in the form requested and could be retrieved only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has now received about the exclusion of mucolytic preparations from the list of drugs now available through the limited list prescribing system.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 28 January at columns *499-500*.

Heating Additions

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what rates of heating additions are presently available; and if he will list the criteria for receiving them.

Mr. Newton: The detailed criteria for receiving heating additions are contained in regulations 11 to 12 and schedule 4 (part 1) to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983 (S.I. 1983, No. 1399). The rates of addition presently available are shown in the following table. Where a claimant is receiving the long-term rate, the available scale margin is offset against the value of additional requirements (including heating additions with the exception of that paid in respect of children under 5) when deciding the extra benefit paid.

Rates of heating addition (November 1985)

Type of heating addition	*Rate* £
Health and/or accommodation heating addition	
Basic rate	2·20
Higher rate	5·45
Disabled persons' heating addition	5·45
Sick or disabled persons' heating addition	2·20
Age-related heating addition	
Child under 5	2·20
Householder over 65	2·20
Householder over 85	5·45
Estate rate heating addition	
1 to 4 rooms	4·40
5 rooms or over	8·80
Central heating addition*	
1 to 4 rooms	2·20
5 rooms or over	4·40
Specific charge heating additions	†

* Payable only to those continuously entitled to a central heating addition since before 5 August 1985.
† Varies depending on charge.

Heating Allowance

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present level of notional fuel element within supplementary benefit; and within the fuel element, what sums are allowed for *(a)* heating, *(b)* lighting, *(c)* hot water and *(d)* cooking.

Mr. Newton: There is no specific element for fuel in the supplementary benefit scale rates. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 2 December at column *132*.

Contraceptives

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to agree to the request of the Northern Ireland Assembly that the new guidelines on the issuing of contraceptives to minors currently being revised by his Department will not apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hayhoe: These guidelines do not apply to Northern Ireland.

Sallah Abdessalem Ben Rabha

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Mr. Sallah Abdessalem Ben Rabha is currently in receipt of any social security benefits.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 27 January at column *399*.

Patients' Rights Leaflets (Translations)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to publishing in the major ethnic minority languages the patients' rights leaflets which must be provided to those patients compulsorily detained under the Mental Health Acts.

Mr. Whitney: Section 132 of the Mental Health Act 1983 requires managers of hospitals or mental nursing homes with detained patients to inform such patients orally and in writing of the reasons for their detention and their rights under the Act. To assist NHS authorities and others to discharge this responsibility when the Mental Health Act was introduced, the Department produced and distributed a set of 13 standard leaflets which could be

used to meet the requirements of the Act. Authorities were reminded that the leaflets would need adaptation to meet particular circumstances and that translation or use of an interpreter might sometimes be required.

The Mental Health Act Commission has since proposed that the Department should make a general distribution of translated leaflets, initially in 12 languages other then English. We know of no firm evidence of any difficulties on a scale which would justify central action by the Department of the kind proposed. We have, however, invited the Mental Health Act Commission, whose members regularly visit these hospitals and mental nursing homes, to let us know if they are aware of evidence of such need on a scale which would justify central action.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of printing and publishing those patients' rights leaflets which must be provided to patients compulsorily detained under the Mental Health Acts; and what would be the cost of providing translations in the major ethnic minority languages.

Mr. Whitney: There is no provision in the Mental Health Act specifically requiring the issue of leaflets to detained patients. We issued standard leaflets to National Health Service authorities and others when the Mental Health Act was introduced, to help them meet certain obligations in the Act to provide advice and information to detained patients.

The information requested about annual costs is not available. There are 13 standard leaflets, some of which are used more than others, and reprints are ordered from time to time as required. Four of the leaflets were reprinted during 1985 at a total cost of £1,716. It has been estimated that translation of six of the 13 standard leaflets into six of the 12 languages suggested by the Mental Health Act Commission would cost £1,570. Printing and distribution costs would be additional.

Patients (English Language)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he makes of the number and proportion of patients detained under the Mental Health Acts whose first language is not English and who lack full comprehension of English.

Mr. Whitney: No such estimates can be provided from information available centrally. We have, however, asked the Mental Health Act Commission whether it knows of any evidence which indicates that there are any significant difficulties of this kind.

Departmental Local Offices

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state for the inner and outer areas of Greater London, respectively, the approximate turnover of staff in grades of clerical assistant and clerical officer, respectively, in social security offices open to the public, together with maximum and minimum rates of turnover naming the offices concerned.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 January 1986, c. *740*]: Following is the information for the year ending 31 December 1985.

Turnover is defined as those staff who leave the Department (including those who retire), change offices within the Department or are promoted within an office. The number of staff who leave the Department (including those who retire) is lower. Both sets of figures are set out in the table:

	Number	*Per cent.*
INNER LONDON		
Clerical Assistant		
Total turnover—262·5 (42·7 per cent.)	Total of leavers—175 (28·5 per cent.)	
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Greenwich West AO	3	100
Minimum rate: Chelsea ILO	2	8·3
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Thames South AO	6	54·6
Minimum rate: Greenwich West AO	0	0
Clerical Officer		
Total turnover—457 (24·9 per cent.)	Total leavers—387·5 (21·1 per cent.)	
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Bloomsbury AO	28	71·8
Minimum rate: Streatham ILO	6	10
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Bloomsbury AO	26	66·7
Minimum rate: Thames North AO	1	4·3
OUTER LONDON		
Clerical Assistant		
Total turnover—191 (50·9 per cent.)	Total leavers—131 (34·9 per cent.)	
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Wimbledon AO	12·5	113·6
Minimum rate: Richmond NIO	0	0
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Eltham AO	5	71·4

	Number	Per cent.
Minimum rate: Richmond NIO	0	0
Clerical Officer		
Total turnover—337·5 (27·4 per cent.)	Total leavers—253 (20·5 per cent.)	
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Wimbledon NIO	9	52·9
Minimum rate: Richmond NIO	0	0
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Wimbledon NIO	9	52·9
Minimum rate: Richmond NIO	0	0

Abbreviations: ILO—Integrated Local Office; AO—Area Office dealing with supplementary benefit only; NIO—National Insurance Office.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 January 1986

ENERGY

Low-income Households

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Energy why he has not complied with the request made in the eighth report of the Select Committee on Energy, Session 1984-85, HC 87, to place a Government review of measures to increase energy efficiency in low-income households in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend will cover this point in his reply to the Committee, which will be made as soon as possible.

Nuclear Safety (Member's Questions)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy why it took his Department 23 working days to respond to certain priority written questions on nuclear safety which had been tabled by the hon. Member for Yeovil; and if he will now ask the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to provide a substantive response within 10 working days.

Mr. Goodlad: The information required was detailed and highly technical. The CEGB expect to write to the hon. Member this week.

WALES

Roads and Transport Expenditure

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show 1984-85 outturn expenditure, 1985-86 estimated expenditure and 1986-87 planned expenditure in Wales on (i) trunk roads *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* routine maintenance, (ii) local authority roads; *(a)* new construction and improvement and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public transport administration, (iv) local authority car parks: *(a)* capital and *(b)* current (net) and (v) road safety.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested, insofar as it is available, is as follows:—

	Net Expenditure (£ million)		
	1984-85 Outturn	*1985-86 Estimated outturn*	*1986-87 Plans*
(i) TRUNK ROADS			
(a) New construction and improvement	83	63	79
(b) Structural maintenance	10	25	20
(c) General maintenance (including lighting)	12	13	14
(ii) LOCAL AUTHORITY ROADS			
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
New construction and improvement	52	64	69
Car parks	2	1	
Other	3	4	
CURRENT EXPENDITURE			
Maintenance	73	77	114
Car parks	−1	−1	
Road safety	1	1	
Other	*25	*26	

* Excluding the National Bus Company External Financing Limit

Higher Education (Advisory Body)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the terms of reference given to the working group set up by the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Wales Advisory Body was asked in March 1985 by the then Minister of State for Wales to give

"consideration to the scope for rationalisation of initial teacher training in the public sector in terms of both larger minimum group sizes and of viable units which are likely to have a continuing future in the 1990s and which will secure high quality, cost effective provision."

The WAB established the working group to comply with this request and, with the agreement of the University Grants Committee, the group is taking account of initial teacher training provision in the university sector as well as in the public (ie, local authority and voluntary) sector.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members and, where appropriate, their academic institutions of the board of the Welsh advisory body on higher education at the time the board set up the working group.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The working group on rationalisation of initial teacher training was set up in accordance with the decision of the WAB committee at its meeting on 26 April 1985 that a rationalisation exercise be carried out. The board approved the membership of the working group at its meetings of 11 June 1985 and 26 September 1985. The membership of the board at that time was as follows:

CHAIRMAN—Professor Emeritus R. W. Steel CBE

Members

Dr. E. J. Brent, Principal, South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
H. Chatfield, National Coal Board South Wales Area
D. Dale-Jones, Regional Officer, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
A. H. Davies, formerly Assistant Director of Education, Mid Glamorgan County Council
H. Davies, British Aerospace
S. G. Dunster, Treasurer, West Glamorgan County Council
H. Evans, Assistant Secretary, Welsh Office Education Department
D. Hugh Thomas, County Clerk and Co-ordinator, Mid Glamorgan County Council
S. G. Keefe, Managing Director, Siliconix Ltd.
Dr. A. H. S. Matterson, Assistant Chief Officer, Council for National Academic Awards
E. Meats, Business and Technician Education Council
L. Pritchard, Assistant Secretary, Welsh Office Finance

Department
T. Quinn, National and Local Government Officers Association
C. Roberts, Deputy Director, Polytechnic of Wales
J. R. Taylor, Plessey Electronics Systems Ltd.
Dr. G. Stockdale, Principal, West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
Dr. A. E. Trotman Dickenson, Vice Chancellor, University of Wales
H. Vaughan, Regional Officer for Wales, National Union of Teachers
P. C. Webb, Staff Inspector, Her Majesty's Inspectorate

Senior Management (Housing)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales who drew his attention to the possible disincentive to business people of the absence of a pool of houses in Wales attractive to and suitable for senior managers referred to in his draft circular, "Housing for Senior Management".

Mr. Mark Robinson: Organisations concerned with inward investment of business and industry.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of the absence of a pool of houses attractive to, and suitable for, senior managers in Wales, referred to in the draft Welsh Office circular, "Housing for Senior Management".

Mr. Mark Robinson: The evidence derives from statements to that effect by representatives of industry and house builders, supported by the views of the Land Authority for Wales and by professional advice in the Welsh Office. The consultations now in progress provide the opportunity for additional evidence to be given.

Circulars (Consultation)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his practice on the time allowed for local authorities to respond to draft circulars issued for consultation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Draft circulars are not normally issued to local authorities for consultation, but when they are sent to local authority associations for that purpose it is my policy to give the associations as much time to respond as circumstances permit.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Grants Committee

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the University Grants Committee; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend last met the University Grants Committee on 1 November 1984, when they discussed the committee's published advice "A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990s". My right hon. Friend, my predecessor the Member for City of London and Westminster South and I have had several meetings with the chairman of the UGC since then.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* table 3.12 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702-II, with all figures converted to 1984-85 prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: The table revalues table 3.12 of Cmnd. 9702 to 1984-85 prices by application of the Treasury GDP deflator (which is assumed to increase by 4·5, 3·5 and 3 per cent. respectively in the years 1986-87 to 1988-89). The components may not always add exactly to the totals shown because the totals in table 3.12 in Cmnd. 9702 were derived from unrounded figures and the figures in the last two years (1986-87 and 1987-88) were rounded to the nearest £10 million and in earlier years to the nearest £1 million.

As explained in part 4, paragraph 10, of Cmnd. 9702, pending decisions on total local authority current expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89, the 1986-87 cash total and its distribution, including the figures for local authority education shown in table 3.12, have been rolled forward for a further two years. The Government will review the figures later this year in the light of the situation and prospects then.

Table 3.12

£ million at 1984-85 prices

	1980-81 outturn	*1981-82 outturn*	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn**	*1985-86 estimated outturn†*	*1986-87 plans*	*1987-88 plans¶*	*1988-89 plans¶*
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT									
Voted in Estimates									
10.1 Schools									
Primary, secondary and other	53	51	41	40	46	49	42	44	43
Other (supporting services fees and non-maintained schools)	10	10	13	19	25	32	37	44	43
10.2 Higher and further education (including teacher training)‖									
Universities									
Current	1,299	1,216	1,371	1,362	1,340	1,312	1,288	1,277	1,274
Capital	147	140	132	123	121	130	139	132	137
Voluntary and direct grant									
Current	97	91	94	92	85	88	82	88	85
Capital	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	9	9
Adult education	10	12	12	14	13	14	14	18	17
Other student awards	6	7	7	4	4	4	5	—	9

	1980-81 outturn	1981-82 outturn	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn*	1985-86 estimated outturn†	1986-87 plans	1987-88 plans¶	1988-89 plans¶
10.4 Miscellaneous education, services, research and administration									
Youth service									
Current	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	—	—
Capital	3	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
Research and other services									
Current	18	21	21	25	26	28	26	26	26
Capital	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Administration									
Current	36	36	35	46	46	48	47	44	43
Capital	—	—	—	1	2	2	1	—	—
10.5 Research Councils, etc.									
Current	413	443	441	460	469	485	492	484	487
Capital	91	83	84	79	77	72	67	70	68
Total voted in Estimates	2,193	2,120	2,260	2,270	2,263	2,273	2,250	2,237	2,231
Other central government									
10.1 Schools									
Primary, secondary and other	−4	−5	−4	−4	−4	−4	—	—	—
Total central government	2,188	2,115	2,256	2,266	2,259	2,270	2,250	2,237	2,231
LOCAL AUTHORITIES¶									
Relevant current spending									
10.1 Schools									
Under fives	285	281	299	309	310	329	319	308	299
Primary	2,675	2,633	2,560	2,520	2,531	2,537	2,504	2,422	2,351
Secondary	3,786	3,853	3,862	3,895	3,912	3,855	3,726	3,601	3,497
Special schools	396	405	416	430	432	417	384	370	359
Other (supporting services and fees at non-maintained schools)	201	208	208	204	206	207	203	194	188
Transport	205	203	201	203	205	201	195	185	180
Meals and milk	509	462	448	444	425	406	255	247	239
10.2 Higher and further education (including teacher training)									
Maintained sector advanced	582	587	664	663	666	648	613	590	573
Maintained sector non-advanced (except adult education)	882	921	957	971	975	920	819	792	769
Adult education	78	78	84	90	90	92	65	62	60
Other student awards	122	125	132	138	138	143	140	132	128
10.4 Miscellaneous education, services, research and administration									
Youth Service	97	100	106	114	115	121	108	106	103
Research and other services	46	48	50	56	57	56	46	44	43
Administration	471	472	474	497	500	510	479	467	453
Total relevant current spending	10,336	10,374	10,459	10,535	10,560	10,443	9,856	9,528	9,250
Non-relevant current spending									
10.2 Mandatory student awards‖	850	898	729	765	744	670	662	652	650
Local authority capital									
10.1 schools									
Under fives‡	12	12	4	5	9	8	7	9	9
Primary, secondary and other	433	288	287	291	244	270	190	185	171
10.2 Higher and further education‖									
Non-universities	137	99	127	121	106	88	71	70	60
10.4 Miscellaneous education services									
Youth service	8	7	13	10	15	10	7	9	9
Research and other services	15	15	20	16	16	15	5	9	9
Total local authority capital	605	422	450	442	390	390	281	273	256

	1980-81 outturn	1981-82 outturn	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn*	1985-86 estimated outturn†	1986-87 plans	1987-88 plans¶	1988-89 plans¶
Total local authorities	11,792	11,693	11,638	11,743	11,694	11,503	10,800	10,452	10,148
Total Department of Education and Science	13,980	13,808	13,894	14,009	13,953	13,772	13,050	12,680	12,370

*. The 1984-85 figures incorporate a distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their provisional outturn expenditure on education.

† The 1985-86 figures incorporate a provisional distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their budgets.

‡ From 1981-82 the under fives capital expenditure includes provision for the urban programme.

‖ The change in the trend of higher education and student awards figures between 1981-82 and 1982-83 reflects the reduction in tuition fees described in Cmnd. 8494.

¶ Pending decisions on total local authority current expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89, the 1986-87 cash total and its distribution, including the figures for local authority education shown in this table, have been rolled forward for a further two years. The Government will review the figures later this year in the light of the situation and prospects then.

Cambridge Science Park

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to visit the Cambridge science park.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

ILEA Schools (Admission of Police)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the names of those Innder London education authority schools which are refusing to admit police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that the Inner London education authority does not keep systematic information on this matter. However, I am informed that a survey conducted by the Metropolitan police in April 1985 showed the following schools as not admitting the police:

North Westminster Community School, NW1 and W9 (Lower Houses) and W2 (Upper House)
Daubeney Infants School, E5
De Beauvoir Junior School, N1
De Beauvoir Infants School, N1
Gainsborough Junior Mixed and Infants School, E9
Gayhurst Junior School, E8
Gayhurst Infants School, E8
Grazebrook Junior Mixed and Infants School, N16
Laburnum Junior Mixed and Infants School, E2
Millfields Junior School, E5
Millfields Infants School, E5
Orchard Junior Mixed and Infants School, E9
Southwold Junior Mixed and Infants School, E5
William Patten Junior School, N16
William Patten Infants School, N16
Clapton School, E5
Hackney Downs School, E5
Stoke Newington School, N16
Skinners' Company School, N16 and E5 (Upper and Lower School)
Hurlingham and Chelsea School, SW6
Ecclesbourne Junior Mixed and Infants School, N1
William Tyndale Junior Mixed and Infants School, N1

Young people need to know about the law and about the rights and responsibilities of citizens. They need to know, too, about the role of the police in maintaining law and order, about crime prevention and about road and other dangers. The action of certain schools in refusing to allow police in school is not in the interests of their pupils and can only hinder good relations between them and the police.

Mendocino Book Company

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to warn the public against paying for diplomas and degrees offered for sale by the Mendocino book company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Government have no knowledge of this company's activities. We deplore the practice of selling bogus qualifications but believe that no solution is possible without legislation. Proposals for legislation are under consideration.

Postgraduate Certificate of Education Courses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reply he has sent to the Secondary Heads Association in response to the letter he has received from it about the decrease in the current year in the number of applications for postgraduate certificate of education courses.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend replied to this letter today. The hon. Member may wish to approach SHA to see whether they are willing to release its contents.

Higher Education (Staff-student Ratios)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the total staff-student ratios for universities and polytechnics in each academic year since 1978-79.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Staff/Student Ratio	Academic Years 1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Universities* (Great Britain)	9·3	9·3	9·4	9·7	10·1	10·2	—
Polytechnics† (England)	8·3	8·4	8·9	9·7	10·3	11·1	11·5

Information for universities for 1984-85 is not yet available.

* The staff-student ratio for universities is defined as the full-time equivalent of undergraduate and postgraduate students divided by full-time academic staff funded wholly from university funds.

† The staff-student ratios for polytechnics are calculated as full-time equivalent student load divided by the full-time equivalent number of lecturers who are involved in teaching.

University of London

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to improve levels of financing for the paediatrics, psychiatry and general practice academic departments at the university of London.

Mr. Walden: Grant allocations for individual universities are a matter for the University Grants Committee.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the salary, at 1 April 1985, 1 November 1985, 1 April 1986 and 1 November 1986, including the rise in public sector pay assumed by the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement, for teachers *(a)* entering the profession as new graduates, *(b)* at the top of scale 1, *(c)* at the mid-point on scale 2, *(d)* at the bottom of scale 3, *(e)* at the top of scale 2, *(f)* at the top of scale 3; and for heads *(g)* of group 2 primary schools and *(h)* of group 12 secondary schools if (i) the formal offer of 12 September 1985, (ii) the informal offer of 14 October 1985 or (iii) the agreement of 24 January 1986 were implemented; and, for each of *(a)* to *(h)*, what is the salary at present actually received.

Sir Keith Joseph: The attached table shows the salary rates, excluding allowances, that teachers who on 1 April 1984 were in the categories listed would have received under all the formal offers, and the informal one of 14 October 1985, made by the employers since January 1985 —so far as this can be determined from the terms of the offers made. The salary rates shown assume normal incremental progression but do not take account of the annual pay increase from 1 April 1986. This has yet to be negotiated.

Teachers' salary rates at 1 April and 1 November 1985, and 1 April and 1 November 1986, on the basis of pay offers for 1985 made by the management panel of the Burnham Committee

Category	*(a) New entrant graduate*	*(b) Top of scale 1*	*(c) Mid-point scale 2*	*(d) Bottom scale 3*	*(e) Top of scale 2*	*(f) Top of scale 3*	*(g) Head group 2*	*(h) Head group 12*
Current salary	6,252	8,556	8,004	7,734	9,597	11,031	11,073	20,706
With 4 per cent. offer added								
1 April 1985	6,502	8,898	8,324	8,043	9,981	11,472	11,516	21,534
1 November 1985	6,749	8,898	8,611	8,324	9,981	11,472	11,516	21,534
1 April 1986	6,749	8,898	8,611	8,324	9,981	11,472	11,516	21,534
1 November 1986	7,001	8,898	8,898	8,611	9,981	11,472	11,516	21,534
With 5 per cent. offer added								
1 April 1985	6,564	8,984	8,404	8,120	10,077	11,583	11,627	21,741
1 November 1985	6,813	8,984	8,694	8,404	10,077	11,583	11,627	21,741
1 April 1986	6,813	8,984	8,694	8,404	10,077	11,583	11,627	21,741
1 November 1986	7,069	8,984	8,984	8,694	10,077	11,583	11,627	21,741
With improvements offered in Burnham Committee on 12 September								
1 April 1985	6,732	9,036	8,484	8,214	10,077	11,582	11,626	21,741
1 November 1985	7,035	9,456	8,844	8,565	10,173	11,694	11,737	21,948
1 April 1986	7,035	9,456	8,844	8,565	10,509	12,087	11,737	21,948
1 November 1986	7,278	9,774	9,123	9,456	10,509	12,087	13,026	24,363
With informal offer of 14 October added								
1 April 1985	6,683	9,146	8,556	8,268	10,259	11,792	11,837	22,135
1 November 1985	6,937	9,146	8,851	8,556	10,259	11,792	11,837	22,135
1 April 1986	6,976	9,198	8,901	8,604	10,317	11,858	11,903	22,259
1 November 1986	7,237	9,198	9,197	8,901	10,317	11,858	11,903	22,259
With agreement of 24 January added								
1 April 1985	6,683	9,146	8,556	8,268	10,259	11,792	11,837	22,135
1 November 1985	6,937	9,146	8,851	8,556	10,259	11,792	11,837	22,135
1 April 1986	7,037	9,283	8,979	8,680	10,413	11,969	12,014	22,466
1 November 1986	7,304	9,283	9,283	8,984	10,413	11,969	12,014	22,466

Notes:

1. New entrants assumed to have entered at point 4 of scale 1 on September 1984.
2. Top of scale 1 and top of scale 2 teachers assumed not to be entitled to good honours graduate additions.
3. Mid-point scale 2 taken as point 7.
4. Head teachers assumed to be at their salary maximum throughout.

5. All examples assume assimilation without promotion to the new scales envisaged in the September package.
6. Examples assume that the 14 October informal offer comprised 6·9 per cent. on all scales from 1 April 1985 rising to 7·5 per cent. on all scales on 31 March 1986.
7. The January agreement consists of a 6·9 per cent. increase on all scales with effect from 1 April 1985 and an additional 1·6 per cent. on all scales from 31 March 1986, calculated on the 31 March 1985 base.

Student Numbers (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has incorporated the latest projection of student numbers published by the Scottish Education Department, in November 1985, into its projections for demand for higher education on a United Kingdom basis.

Mr. Walden: The Department hopes to publish revised projections of higher education student numbers for Great Britain, later this year. These will take account of the latest SED projections of qualified leavers from schools and colleges in Scotland and their projections of student demand.

PRIME MINISTER

Lewisham

Q35. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Lewisham.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rail Travel

Q68. **Mr. Snape** asked the Prime Minister if she will publish details of the number of occasions she has travelled by British Rail since forming her first Administration in May 1979.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the rely I gave on 22 January, at columns 189-90, to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Higher Education

Q74. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Government policy on the age participation rate of 18-year-olds in higher education.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is to provide places in higher education for those who wish to enter, are able to benefit from it and have the necessary intellectual competence, motivation and maturity. The age participation index (for 18 to 19-year-olds) has risen from 12·4 in 1979 to 13·7 in 1984 and is expected to go on rising to reach at least 15·5 by 1995-96. Similar proportionate increases have taken place, and are expected, in the number of mature entrants to higher education.

Ministers (Appointments)

Q113. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Prime Minister how many Ministers of the Crown have been appointed since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: Since 3 May 1979, 171 Ministers (including Whips) have been appointed.

Engagements

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

NHS (Resources)

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister what are the differences in the formulae for allocation of resources for the National Health Service in Scotland and in Wales, respectively; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The provision for the National Health Service in Scotland and in Wales reflects the respective priorities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. In both countries there are formulae for calculating the annual relative funding positions of health boards authorities. A copy of the report on which the Scottish formula is based (Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation) is available in the Library of the House. I have also arranged for copies of the latest Welsh revenue and capital formulae to be placed there.

Westland plc

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister why the Solicitor-General was not consulted regarding the public disclosure of extracts of his letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my statement to the House on 23 January, at column 450, and my speech on 27 January, at columns 651-58.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she discussed with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) the public disclosure of extracts from the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) before the leak inquiry was completed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to what I told the House on 27 January.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister whether her staff at 10 Downing street participated in the drafting of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Westland plc

Mr. Williams asked the Prime Minister on what occasions between 6 January and 22 January she met,

telephoned or wrote to the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan).

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to give details of exchanges between Ministers.

Mr. Williams asked the Prime Minister when she became aware of the letter of 7 January from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); what steps she then took to bring this information into the public domain; and when the letter was released.

The Prime Minister: I saw the letter some hours after it was sent. As I said in the House on 27 January, the Government made clear to Westland plc on 13 January that there was nothing to add to my letter to the company of 1 January. The Solicitor-General's letter was placed in the Library of the House on 27 January.

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister if she will make it Her Majesty's Government's policy that all Departments and the Cabinet Office make available all papers, documents and persons requested of them by any Select Committee of the House inquiring into any aspects of the affairs of Westland plc; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Ministers will decide who should represent their Departments before Select Committees inquiring into the circumstances surrounding Westland, and will observe the normal conventions about the disclosure of documents.

Private Office

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she intends to make any changes in the staffing of her private office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister which Ministers she met on Saturday 4, Sunday 5 and Monday 6 January.

Miss Maynard asked the Prime Minister which Ministers she met on Saturday 4, Sunday 5 and Monday 6 January.

The Prime Minister: It is the practice not to give details of exchanges between Ministers.

Schoolchildren (Dietary Survey)

Dr. Marek asked the Prime Minister if she will ask the Office of Population Surveys and Censuses to publish an interim report of the dietary survey of schoolchildren in 1983 as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister: The survey was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently considering whether to publish an interim report.

Staff

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister if any member of staff in the Cabinet Office or her press office has sought to tender their resignation in the current year; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Pawsey asked the Prime Minister if she will list the total amounts paid in grants by Government Departments to voluntary bodies during the financial year 1984-85; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is shown in the table. The total amount of grant paid in 1984-85 represents a cash increase of 23 per cent. (in real terms just over 17 per cent.) on the total paid in the previous year. In the period between 1979-80 and 1984-85 the level of Government grant giving and payments to voluntary bodies has risen by 140 per cent. (or, in real terms, by 57·8 per cent.).

Grants paid to voluntary bodies by Government Departments 1984-85

	£
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	103,100
Defence	3,285,480
Education and Science	16,582,930
Employment	29,180,000
Energy	344,000
Environment Direct Grants	2,178,070
Urban Programme*	54,000,000
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including ODA)†	24,840,335
Health and Social Security	30,067,928
Home Office	17,087,812
Lord Chancellor's Department	668,860
Northern Ireland Departments	13,710,642
Scottish Office Direct Grants	7,413,080
Urban Programme	10,200,000
Trade and Industry	7,369,617
Transport	564,000
Welsh Office Direct Grants	4,615,288
Urban Programme	2,200,000
	224,411,142

* Includes contributions from Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Social Security and Department of Transport.
† ODA's total (£24,026,902) consists solely of grants to various British charities and educational institutions for work in overseas relief and development.

The total figure excludes payments to voluntary bodies by the Manpower Services Commission. These are for services provided and, for the year 1984-85, they are estimated to be as follows:

	£
Voluntary Projects Programme	7,300,000
Youth Training Scheme	132,300,000
Community Programme	275,000,000
Total	414,600,000

HOME DEPARTMENT

Television Licences

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disclosures of names and addresses took place from the television licensing computer system in 1985; for what purpose those disclosures took place; and which organisations received those names and addresses.

Mr. Waddington: The general principle governing the computer and other records of the National TV Licence Records Office is that personal information (including

names and addresses) is not disclosed to third parties. There are, however, various circumstances concerning the effective administration of the licensing system in which the disclosure of such information may take place, including: *(a)* disclosure to the courts (and in Scotland the prosecuting authorities) for the purposes of a prosecution for licence evasion; *(b)* to a financial institution or a person's estate in connection with arrangements for the payment or refund of his licence fee; and *(c)* for the purposes of approved research. I very much regret that two previous replies to the hon. Member on the question of disclosure from these records, on 9 March 1984 at column 721 and on 30 October 1984 at column 891, did not refer to these circumstances. Information about the number of occasions on which names and addresses have been disclosed in any year and to whom is not collected; but personal data maintained by the National TV Licence Records Office will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Gas Appliances

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions resulted, in each year since 1980, in cases concerning the installation and maintenance of gas appliances.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, relates to proceedings under the Gas Acts 1965 and 1972 and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (Volume 1, table S1.1(a)(iii) in the 1984 issue). In the years 1980 to 1984 there were respectively 46, 50, 38, 33 and 28 such prosecutions.

Airports

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list those United Kingdom airports where there is not a separate channel for the admission of United Kingdom passport holders;

(2) why some United Kingdom airports have separate channels for United Kingdom arrivals and why others direct United Kingdom passport holders to the European Economic Community channel;

(3) whether it is permissible for United Kingdom passport holders to use the European Economic Community entrance channel at United Kingdom airports when there is a long queue at the United Kingdom only channel.

Mr. Waddington: The arrangement of the immigration control at United Kingdom airports is determined by the type of passenger traffic arriving at each port, by the accommodation available and by the number of immigration officers available to clear passengers. The object of chanelling is to clear passengers in the shortest possible time, and the arrangements are reviewed in the light of changes in traffic and staffing levels. At some ports these factors have led to providing a single channel for United Kingdom and European Community passport holders and at others to the provision of separate channels. In the latter case, British citizen passengers may choose to use the separate European Community channel if they wish, and immigration officers are instructed to clear such passengers without delay.

The airports at which immigration service officers are stationed and at which there is no permanent separate channel for the holders of United Kingdom passports at the immigration control are:

Aberdeen	Glasgow
Belfast	Leeds/Bradford
Birmingham	Lydd
Bournemouth (Hurn)	Newcastle
Bristol	Norwich
Cardiff (Wales)	Prestwick
East Midlands	Southend
Edinburgh	Stansted

Police Houses

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of police houses is empty; and if he will take steps to encourage local police authorities to sell to police officers and other tenants of local councils all those that are not specifically required for operational purposes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Our latest information is that some 1,700 police houses—11·6 per cent. of the total police housing stock in England and Wales—have been empty for three months or more. Police authorities are already encouraged to dispose of houses which are surplus to operational requirements and many have given effect to the Police Advisory Board's recommendation that arrangements should be made to sell surplus police houses to police officers.

Civil Defence

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total expenditure on civilian defence in Great Britain and in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the last three years for which statistics are available on a comparable basis.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The total expenditure on civil defence in Great Britain was:

	£ Million
1982-83	55·9
1983-84	69·8
1984-85	84·7

Figures for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are not available.

West Midlands Police

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to the cost of policing the county in each of the last six years, in constant terms.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The net revenue expenditure of the West Midlands police authority for the period requested, calculated in constant terms using 1979-1980 as the base, is as follows:

	£ Million
1979-80	72·964
1980-81	74·261
1981-82	79·681
1982-83	82·096
1983-84	84·768
1984-85	86·281

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands incorporating comparative figures as between 1979 and at the latest available date for the borough of Solihull showing *(a)* the number of police officers per head of population, *(b)* the number of hours per man worked by the police, *(c)* the amount of off-duty time and holiday entitlements, *(d)* the average rates of pay and *(e)* the priority of tasks upon which police time was spent.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The ratio of police officers to population in Solihull was one to 684 in December 1979, compared with one to 651 in December 1985.

The standard number of working hours for ranks from constable to chief inspector has remained 40 per week since 1979, normally consisting of five eight hour shifts and two rest days although overtime is commonly worked. Superintending ranks have no fixed hours, being expected to be available on a 24-hour basis.

Superintendents are allowed eight days "monthly leave" per 28 days period, and more senior ranks 1½ days. In addition to public holidays, all officers have an annual leave allowance, as set out below:

1979	*Under 10 years' service*	*10 or more years' service*	*17 or more years' service*
Constable	18 days	21 days	23 days
Sergeant	20 days	23 days	23 days
Inspector	23 days	26 days	26 days
Chief Inspector	26 days	29 days	29 days
Superintendent	30 days	30 days	30 days
Chief Superintendent and above	Not less than 42 days	Not less than 48 days	Not less than 48 days

1986	*Under 10 years' service*	*10 or more years' service*	*15 or more years' service*	*20 or more years' service*
Constable	20 days	23 days	25 days	26 days
Sergeant	20 days	23 days	26 days	26 days
Inspector	23 days	27 days	28 days	28 days
Chief Inspector	26 days	30 days	30 days	30 days
Superintendent	31 days	31 days	31 days	31 days
Chief Superintendent and above	Not less than 42 days	Not less than 48 days	Not less than 48 days	Not less than 48 days

It would be difficult to calculate the average rates of pay of police officers. The minimum and maximum rates are set out below:

Rates of pay: provinces

	1979		*1986*	
	minimum £	*maximum* £	*minimum* £	*maximum* £
Constable	4,086	6,471	7,212	12,033
Sergeant	6,186	7,095	11,508	13,203
Inspector	7,095	8,058	13,203	14,991
Chief Inspector	8,058	8,969	14,991	16,677
Superintendent	11,124	11,973	20,394	22,143
Chief Superintendent	12,258	13,110	22,671	24,072

I understand from the chief constable that priorities in the use of divisional manpower were not precisely formulated in 1979. Current priorities in the Solihull division are to reduce crime, particularly house burglaries, and improve public tranquility without abrogating responsibility for enforcement of the law. Deployment is a matter of the chief constable.

Community Radio

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many community radio stations he expects to authorise for London on an area or special interest basis; and when he expects to do so;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *625*, when he expects to receive the report of the advisory committee on community radio on the allocation of licences for the operating of area and special interest community radio stations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The experiment in community radio announced on 25 July 1985 by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary envisaged five stations in London (three neighbourhood, two community of interest) out of a total of 21. As to timing, I would refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to a Question from the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Carwright) on 17 January at columns 715-716.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 16 January, *Official Report*, column *625*, if he will list the persons and groups from ethnic minorities with whom the advisory committee on community radio has met.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A comprehensive record has not been maintained of meetings between members of the advisory panel, individually and collectively, and interested individuals and groups from the ethnic minority communities.

Passports

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for a joint passport to continue to be valid in the event of the demise of the holder for all other persons named on the passport over the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: It would be contrary to international passport practice to permit the spouse, or anyone else, to continue to use a family passport after the death of the

holder. Moreover, as my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary informed the House on 24 July 1984 at columns *566-7* the Government's plans for the introduction of a new format machine readable passport mean that the issue of a passport containing particulars of the holder and his or her spouse will have to be discontinued.

Vandal Patrols

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police on his plans to promote, in collaboration with the Manpower Services Commission in the county, vandal patrols and victim support projects.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of West Midlands tells me that his support for crime prevention work funded under the community programme, including vandal patrols and victims support schemes, will depend on a careful assessment of each project, and consultations with statutory and voluntary agencies and discussions within the local community.

Burglaries (Wolverhampton)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of burglaries which have been reported on housing estates in the Wolverhampton area in each of the last six years; and what information he has as to in how many cases a conviction was obtained.

Mr. Mellor: The information collected centrally relates to police force areas. The number of burglaries recorded and the number of persons found guilty of burglary in the west midlands are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables Volume 3" (tables S3.1, S3.2(A) and S3.4(A) of the issue for 1984).

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of neighbourhood watch schemes which have been initiated in the Wolverhampton area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of West Midlands that 46 neighbourhood watch schemes are operating in the Wolverhampton division, and that a further 15 are planned.

Immigration Procedures (Disclosure of Information)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *455*, whether the investigation into the disclosure of information on immigration procedures in the *Daily Telegraph* on 3 December is now complete; what information has been produced to date; if he will now ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to look into the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The investigation is well advanced and is expected to be completed shortly.

Rape

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constable of the West Midlands constabulary as to the number of cases of rape which have been reported to their officers during the last six years; and how many of these did not result in criminal proceedings being instituted against the accused.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested on allegations of rape reported, but not recorded as offences, is not available. The numbers of offences of rape recorded by the Metropolitan police and the West Midlands police force are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table S3.1 of the issue for 1984). Information on the proportion of recorded rapes cleared up in each police force area was given in reply to a Question from the hon. Member for Knowsley North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) on 23 January 1986 at columns *261-2*.

Libyan Nationals

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the immigration and nationality status of those Libyans working for Libyan airlines at British airports; what information he has as to the numbers of Libyans working at each airport; and what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that their presence does not constitute a threat to security.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any other Libyans who left Britain after the Libyan embassy siege *(a)* have since returned to the United Kingdom and *(b)* have applied to return but were refused leave to enter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Apart from Mr. Ben Rabha, none of the Libyans who were in the Libyan People's Bureau on 17 April 1984 and left the United Kingdom on 27 April 1984 has applied to return.

Data Protection

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 27 January to the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West, if a copy of the report of the Data Protection Registrar on the impact of the Data Protection Act on businesses will be placed in the Library; and when he expects to receive the report.

Mr. Waddington: The report has been requested after the Act has come fully into force on 11 November 1987, and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Pub Bombings (Birmingham)

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give the names of the police officers appointed to examine the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings;

(2) when he will report on the result of inquiries into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is examining the case carefully in order to determine whether material

which has been sent to him contains new evidence of a kind which would make it appropriate for him to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. In doing so he is considering whether there is any need to ask the police to undertake further inquiries. Examination of the case is being carried out as quickly as possible, but I cannot yet say when my right hon. Friend will be in a position to reach a decision.

Paul Hill

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Paul Hill, a prisoner at Her Majesty's prison, Gartree, is currently in a 28-day lie-down at Lincoln.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Hill has been transferred temporarily (known in prison slang as a lie-down) to Lincoln prison in the interests of maintaining good order and discipline at Gartree.

Dr. Frank Skuse

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Dr. Frank Skuse, a forensic scientist at the Home Office laboratories in Chorley, is still employed on criminal cases.

Mr. Hurd: Dr. Skuse retired from the Home Office on 31 October 1985.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of Sri Lankan Tamils who have been granted admission on a temporary basis to the United Kingdom since 1 January 1985; how many of these have successfully applied to continue their temporary leave to remain; how many have been removed from the United Kingdom; and what was their destination.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Foreign Visitors (Non-admission)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of non-United Kingdom citizens stopped and refused admission to the United Kingdom from 1 January to 21 January at (i) Dover, (ii) Gatwick, (iii) terminal 1 of Heathrow, (iv) terminal 2 and (v) terminal 3; and what were the comparable figures for 1985.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrivals from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India have been refused admission to the United Kingdom between 1 January and 21 January; and what are the comparable figures for 1985.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to the hon. Member.

Horse Racing

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider the introduction of legislation to seek to permit horse racing on Sundays.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no present plans for legislation on this subject.

Prevention of Terrorism

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: A draft order was laid today under section 14(10) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. If the draft order is approved by Parliament, the Act will continue in force for a further 12 months. I have received Sir Cyril Philips' report on the operation of the Act in 1985 and copies of both the report and my response to it have been placed in the Library and in the Vote Office.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid (Publications)

Mr. Irving asked the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor's Department intends to publish "Getting Legal Aid", "Legal Aid Guide", "Legal Aid Financial Limits" and "Legal Aid for Criminal Offences" in Welsh, Greek, Turkish, Chinese, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi and Urdu; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Responsibility for civil legal aid publicity rests with the Law Society. It is understood that the Law Society is planning to mount a pilot scheme in a limited number of languages to test the level of demand and that decision will be reached in the light of the outcome.

Westland plc

Mr. Dobson asked the Attorney-General when the Solicitor-General first knew that *(a)* the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had carried out and *(b)* the Prime Minister's Office had authorised the disclosure of his letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence.

The Attorney-General: My hon. and learned Friend first knew on 22 January, when he saw the report by the head of the Civil Service, that my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, had himself authorised the disclosure. It was at the same time that he learned of the part played in this matter by officials on the staff of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as she described it to the House in the statement which she made on 27 January.

Mr. Williams asked the Attorney-General when he was first informed of the direct involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) in the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter.

The Attorney-General: On 22 January, when I was given a summary shortly before receiving the report of the inquiry carried out by the head of the Civil Service.

Mr. Williams asked the Attorney-General when he first learnt that officials at No. 10 Downing street had been consulted about the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter.

The Attorney-General: On 22 January, when I was given a summary shortly before receiving the report of the inquiry carried out by the head of the Civil Service.

Mr. Williams asked the Attorney-General whether he recommended any alternatives to a formal inquiry as a method of resolving the controversy about the Solicitor-General's letter.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mr. Williams asked the Attorney-General on what date and at what time he first directly communicated to the Prime Minister his advice that a formal inquiry should be initiated into the publication of part of the Solicitor-General's letter.

The Attorney-General: I had no communication on this matter with my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, until after I had a summary of the report of the inquiry on 22 January. My views on the desirability of holding an inquiry were communicated to the head of the Civil Service, as my right hon. Friend made clear to the House on 27 January.

Mr. Winnick asked the Attorney-General by what means the Solicitor-General first learnt that the Prime Minister wished him to write to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); how this communication determined the content of the letter; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As to the first part of the question, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 27 January at column *652*. The communication in no way determined the decision of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to write the letter, nor did it determine the contents of that letter.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Seed Peas (Cultivar Belinda)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Luton, North of 27 January, he expects to make an announcement regarding the release of stocks of the pea seed Belinda that are free of pea bacterial blight.

Mrs. Fenner: On the basis of scientific tests on samples of these stocks, I cannot regard the pea seed held under statutory notice as free from pea bacterial blight. As to an announcement, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 27 January at column *406*.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Gould asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *344*, what proportion of the 29,994 tonnes of feedwheat held in intervention in Dagenham docks has been treated so as to render it unfit for human or animal consumption; and what plans there are to subject it to such treatment in future.

Mr. Gummer: No grain at the store has been treated in this way, nor are there plans to do so in future.

Untreated Milk Sales

Mr. Nicholls asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the restrictions on sales of untreated milk by farmhouse caterers.

Mr. Gummer: We have received many representations about the new untreated milk regulations. Generally speaking, I think our regulations strike a reasonable balance between various conflicting considerations, but I have looked again at the position of farm house caterers. In the light of this review, we propose to amend the regulations to allow registered dairy farmers to provide untreated milk to farm visitors provided they tell them what they are drinking. My Department will issue the necessary consultation documents next week with a view to making the changes before the holiday season.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels this week.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 30 January.

Warsaw Pact Countries (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all ministerial visits to Warsaw pact countries since May 1979, giving the dates of the visits and the Minister concerned.

Mr. Renton: Ministerial visits to Warsaw pact countries since May 1979 are as follows:

1979

24 to 25 September
Sir George Young, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security, to GDR/East Berlin.

18 to 21 November
Mr. Peter Blaker, Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Poland.

1980

9 to 15 March
Mr. Cecil Parkinson, Secretary of State for Trade, to GDR/East Berlin.

12 to 14 March
Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Romania.

12 to 16 September
Mr. Norman Tebbit, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Trade, to Czechoslovakia for Brno Fair.

26 to 30 September
Mr. Reginald Eyre, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Trade, to Bulgaria.

30 September to 3 October
Mr. Peter Blaker, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Bulgaria.

6 to 8 October
Mr. Hamish Gray, Minister of State, Department of Energy, to Czechoslovakia.

13 to 17 October
Mr. Cecil Parkinson, Secretary of State for Trade, to Romania.

27 to 29 October
Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Hungary.

29 to 31 October
Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Poland.

3 to 5 November
Mr. Peter Blaker, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to GDR/East Berlin.

10 to 14 November
Mr. Cecil Parkinson, Secretary of State for Trade, to Poland.

22 to 25 November
Mr. Peter Blaker, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Czechoslovakia.

1981
16 to 18 March
Lord Trefgarne, Minister of State for Trade, to GDR/East Berlin.

5 to 6 July
Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Moscow (as President of the Council of Ministers).

21 to 24 September
Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to Hungary.

5 to 9 October
Mr. Reginald Eyre, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade, to Hungary.

30 November to 2 December
Lord Trefgarne, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Poland.

14 to 16 December
Lord Trefgarne, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Czechoslovakia.

1982
16 to 18 June
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Hungary.

28 August to 1 September
Baroness Young, Lord Privy Seal, to Czechoslovakia.

25 to 29 September
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Bulgaria.

26 September
Mr. Peter Rees, Minister for Trade, to USSR.

29 September to 3 October
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Romania.

14 to 18 October
Mr. Peter Rees, Minister for Trade, to Hungary.

18 to 20 October
Mr. Peter Rees, Minister for Trade, to Czechoslovakia

15 November
Mr. Francis Pym, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Moscow (President Brezhnev's Funeral)

1983
11 to 14 March
Mr. Peter Rees, Minister for Trade, to GDR/East Berlin

10 to 13 April
Baroness Young, Lord Privy Seal, to Bulgaria.

24 to 29 April
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Moscow.

12 to 14 September
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Hungary.

25 to 29 September
Mr. John Macgregor, Minister of State for Agriculture, to Bulgaria.

4 to 6 October
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to GDR/East Berlin.

6 to 7 October
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Czechoslovakia.

1984
2 to 4 February
Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, to Hungary.

13 to 14 February
Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, to Moscow for President's Andropov's funeral.

13 to 14 February
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Moscow.

May
Mr. Paul Channon, Minister for Trade, to Moscow.

29 June to 3 July
Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Security to GDR/East Berlin.

2 to 3 July
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Moscow.

11 to 13 July
Mr. Paul Channon, Minister for Trade, to Bulgaria.

3 to 7 November
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Poland

14 to 19 November
Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Minister of Health, to Hungary.

1985
8 to 10 February
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Romania.

10 to 11 February
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Bulgaria.

18 to 22 February
Mrs. Peggy Fenner, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to Moscow.

8 to 12 March
Mr. Paul Channon Minister for Trade, to GDR/East Berlin.

13 March
Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, to Moscow for President Chernenko's funeral.

13 March
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Moscow for President Chernenko's funeral.

7 to 11 April
Mr. Peter Rees, Chief Secretary, Treasury, to Hungary.

8 to 10 April
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to GDR/East Berlin.

10 to 11 April
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Czechoslovakia.

11 to 13 April
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Poland.

23 to 26 May
Mr. Channon, Minister for Trade, to Czechoslovakia.

25 to 28 July
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Moscow.

30 August to 3 September
Mr. Michael Jopling, Minister of Agriculture, to GDR/East Berlin.

1 to 7 October
Mr. David Hunt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy, to Budapest.

2 to 7 October
Mr. Peter Brooke, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, to Bulgaria.

Palinauris Investment Ltd.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the majority shareholding of Palinauris Investments Ltd. the owners of Table Bay Marine of Cape Town buying agents for general merchandise for Tristan da Cunha.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the majority shareholding in Palinauris Investments is held by Field Nominees Ltd. of Bermuda, who hold 11,393 of the 12,000 shares.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the size of the cut in the basic rate of income tax required in 1985-86 to reduce the total tax payments (income tax, national insurance contributions, indirect taxes less child benefit where applicable) for those on 50 per cent., 75 per cent., 100 per cent., 150 per cent. and 200 per cent. of national average earnings for single people, married couples and married couples with two children to the same proportion of gross earnings as in 1978-79; and if he will give an equivalent estimate for 1986-87 on the basis of the conventional assumptions of index-linked allowances and duties;

(2) what is his estimate of the size of the cut in the basic rate of income tax required in 1985-86 and 1986-87 financial years to reduce total tax payments (income tax, national insurance contributions, indirect taxes less child benefit where applicable) for those on 50 per cent., 100 per cent., 150 per cent. and 200 per cent. of average earnings for single people, married couples and married couples with two children to the same amount in constant prices as in 1978-79.

Mr. Moore: The available information is in the table. Figures for 50 per cent. and 200 per cent. of average earnings are not given, because indirect tax payments cannot reliably be estimated at these levels.

Reductions in basic rate of income tax required to reduce total tax payments to their 1978-79 levels at percentages of average earnings

Pence

	1985-86			*1986-87*		
	Single	*Married*	*Married with 2 children*	*Single*	*Married*	*Married with 2 children*
As a percentage of gross earnings						
75	5·2	7·1	6·4	5·3	7·2	7·3
100	4·3	5·3	5·1	4·4	5·4	5·7
150	3·5	3·9	4·1	3·6	4·0	4·5
In constant prices						
100	12·6	14·9	12·5	14·5	17·0	14·6
150	11·3	12·7	11·2	13·1	14·6	13·2

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the marginal tax rate (defined as the proportion of additional earnings absorbed in income tax, national insurance contributions and indirect taxation) for each year since 1978-79 on average and for single people, married couples and married couples with two children at 75 per cent., 100 per cent., 150 per cent., 200 per cent. and 500 per cent. of average earnings.

Mr. Moore: Estimates of marginal tax rates defined in the way requested are in the table. Figures for 200 per cent. and 500 per cent. of average earnings are not given because indirect tax payments cannot reliably be estimated at these levels. An estimate of the marginal tax rate on average is not readily available.

*Marginal tax rates**

Percentage of average earnings	*Single*		*Married*		*Married with two children*	
	75 and 100	*150*	*75 and 100*	*150*	*75 and 100*	*150*
	Percentage					
1978-79	47·7	42·0	49·0	43·5	46·1	40·3
1979-80	46·6	41·2	48·1	42·8	45·1	39·5
1980-81	47·0	41·3	48·3	42·8	45·5	39·7
1981-82	48·3	41·9	49·7	43·4	46·8	40·2
1982-83	48·9	41·7	50·2	43·1	47·5	40·0
1983-84	49·3	41·8	50·6	43·3	47·9	40·2
1984-85	49·7	42·3	50·9	43·7	48·7	41·1
1985-86	49·7	42·3	50·9	43·7	48·7	41·1

* Including income tax, NICs, and estimates of indirect tax payments. The latter were obtained from the 1983 Family Expenditure Survey using the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of any change in disposable income is saved.

Channel Fixed Link

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will instigate a programme of regional customs clearance warehouses to provide direct freight facilities in conjunction with the completion of the fixed Channel link.

Mr. Brooke: There is already a national network of inland customs clearance facilities. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in consultation with British Rail and other trade interests, is studying the question of how best to facilitate traffic generated by the Channel fixed link. The provision of further inland clearance facilities will be considered in this context.

Printing

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details, by value and by quantity, of the geographical distribution by the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom of all printing carried out by or on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: The value of printing including paper during the year ending 31 March 1985 is assessed at:

	£ million
England	114·4
Scotland	4·7
Wales	1·4
Northern Ireland	2·2
	122·7

I regret that information by quantity is not available.

Police Officers (Travel Warrants)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has made to the police negotiating board's request of 30 November 1985 that police officers serving in the Scottish outer islands should not be subject to income tax on the travel warrants they receive each year for travel to and from the mainland.

Mr. Moore: I replied to the chairman of the police negotiating board's letter on 14 December 1985 explaining why a taxable benefit arises and why in the Government's view it would not be appropriate to exempt these warrants from income tax.

Whitbread Poacher Bitter

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the original gravity of Whitbread Poacher bitter on which tax was levied when the beer was launched; what is the procedure for notifying changes in original gravity; and whether any such changes have been notified to his Department in respect of Poacher bitter.

Mr. Brooke: The original gravity of each brew is declared to customs and excise as the basis for calculating beer duty. I regret, however, that the Department cannot disclose such information relating to an individual taxpayer, which has been received in confidence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assembly

16. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

18. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) a few moments ago.

Security

17. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security position.

27. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

29. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security situation in the Province.

31. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in the Province.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) earlier today.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mr. Dorrell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of employees in employment in Northern Ireland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: At September 1985 there were 463,250 employees in employment in Northern Ireland. Although this level is 1,490 down on the corresponding September 1984 estimate, recent information points to a stabilisation after five years of decline.

Tourism

20. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the action he is taking to stimulate opportunities for tourism in the Province.

Dr. Boyson: The Government are supporting an expanded programme of marketing and promotional campaigns at home and abroad by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and also provides grant assistance to encourage the development of tourist amenities and accommodation in the Province.

Cross-border Co-operation

21. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to enhance cross-border co-operation in security matters since the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) earlier today.

Foreign Industrial Investment

22. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Labour Relations Agency report on the experience of foreign industrial investors in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) earlier today.

Divis Flats

23. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it is his policy to demolish the Divis flats and replace them with low-rise housing, in the light of a report submitted to him by the Town and Country Planning Association.

Mr. Needham: The Divis complex is structually sound. The Housing Executive has put forward proposals for extensive refurbishment starting with the rehabilitation as a pilot exercise of one block which would enable a full evaluation to be made. If the site were cleared, more than half of the residents could not be rehoused there in traditional houses.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

24. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in implementing the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) earlier today.

26. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further representations he has received concerning the operation of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) earlier today.

30. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there is any evidence to date that the Anglo-Irish agreement has had any effect on the number of terrorist offences in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: I am optimistic that our discussions with Irish Ministers at the intergovernmental conference, which have already set in train as a first step a programme of work between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana, will lead to an improvement in the co-ordination of security activities on both sides of the border so as to deal more effectively with the threat from cross-border terrorism.

Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body

25. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any further consideration has been given to the establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary body.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal, I refer the hon. Member to the answer he gave on 27 January at columns 638-39.

Baker Report

28. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to implement in full the recommendations of the Baker report on the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act.

Mr. Scott: A number of the recommendations in Sir George Baker's report have already been implemented, some by means of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Amendment) Order 1985 which came into force on 21 January 1986. It remains the intention of the Government to put legislative proposals before the House during the lifetime of this Parliament which would give effect to those recommendations which we have accepted and which would require the further amendment of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Building Regulations

33. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has plans to change the scope and format of building regulations.

Mr. Needham: Following a full review, I have decided that the present scope and format of the Northern Ireland building regulations should remain although ways of simplifying them will be explored. Their technical standards will continue to be in harmony with the rest of the United Kingdom while making allowance, whenever necessary, for local factors.

Belfast Rally

34. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the police estimate for the number of people attending the rally against the Anglo-Irish agreement in Belfast on 23 November 1985.

Mr. Scott: No official estimate of the number of people present was prepared.

Paramilitary Organisations

35. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has about the sources of funding of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The main sources of finance for paramilitary organisations from within Northern Ireland are the profits gained from paramilitary-controlled social clubs and gaming machines; extortion and protection rackets; and fraud, particularly in the construction industry. The Royal Ulster Constabulary has established a special unit to draw together all police activity against organised crime and the Government have also introduced legislation to help cut off these sources of finance. Further legislation is under consideration.

NORAID also raises money for PIRA in the United States of America and in some instances engages in gun-running on its behalf. It has been found by the United States' courts to be an "agent" of PIRA and leading NORAID figures have been implicated in gun-running.

Employment Opportunities

32. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effects of his Department's policies to promote fairness in employment in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The Government are fully committed to equality of employment opportunity in Northern Ireland. They practice this within the Northern Ireland Civil Service, and funds independent agencies charged with its promotion. The Fair Employment Agency promotes equality of opportunity and the elimination of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion. Tenders for Government contracts are accepted only from those who have been awarded the agency's certificate of fair employment.

Recently officials presented a comprehensive report on how our approach to equality of employment opportunity could be made more comprehensive, consistent and effective. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering that report in detail with a view to publishing proposals for discussion.

Pasture Reseeding

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions have been made to assist farmers in reseeding pastures damaged by the summer's wet weather.

Dr. Boyson: Grants for reseeding of grassland are available under the agriculture improvement scheme throughout the United Kingdom at the rates of 30 per cent. and 15 per cent. in the less favoured areas and lowland areas, respectively. Under the agricultural development programme for Northern Ireland, which applies in the original less favoured areas, the reseeding of pasture land is eligible for 45 per cent. grant: this programme is under review. The Grassland Scheme (Northern Ireland) 1985 made available a grant of 27·5 per cent. for grassland reseeding in the lowland area; while this scheme ends on 31 March 1986, my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is giving consideration to its extension as one of the measures funded under the special aid package for Northern Ireland in 1986.

Wet Weather Compensation

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in light of the loss of earnings due to last summer's wet weather, he will consider renewing the £4 million Government aid package that has now expired.

Dr. Boyson: No; the United Kingdom-wide package of measures designed specifically to provide some help for those livestock farmers who had been most seriously affected by bad weather in 1985 was not designed to meet all losses.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in what proportion the cost of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will be borne by the two Governments;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government will request the Government of the Irish Republic to report to the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on progress made towards the implementation by the Irish Government of its intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism as stated in paragraph 7 of the joint communiqué of the Anglo-Irish summit meeting at Hillsborough;

(3) how many United Kingdom civil servants, and how many Northern Ireland civil servants, are posted in the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference;

(4) if it is intended that Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers from time to time should attend the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been represented at official level;

(5) whether it is intended that the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference should sometimes meet in Dublin;

(6) if he will raise at the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference under article 7 of the Anglo-Irish agreement, direct cross-border contacts between the British and Irish armed forces;

(7) if he will list the proposals considered in respect of Northern Ireland by the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference which have been found to have application by the Irish Government in the terms of article 2 of the Anglo-Irish agreement; and what action followed;

(8) if he intends urgently to raise at the Anglo-irish Intergovernmental Conference extradition and extra-territorial jurisdiction in the terms of article 8 of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to my hon. friend as soon as possible.

Civil Servants

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the employment in the Province of officials not of the Northern Ireland public service.

Mr. Tom King: The Northern Ireland Office is a United Kingdom Department of state staffed by the Home Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. There is a close working relationship between the two services; officers are interchanged wherever appropriate, in the interests of increasing mutual understanding and of extending the range of skills and experience of individual officers.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the officials of, and seconded from, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office now serving in Northern Ireland, together with their duties.

Mr. Tom King: It has been regular practice to second to the Northern Ireland Office officials from other Government Departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, it is not our practice to name such officials and to indicate their parent Departments or the specific duties to which they have been assigned.

Mackies plc

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether financial assistance is being given to Mackies plc in moving from its Springfield road site to a factory in Woodvale.

Dr. Boyson: No application for assistance in respect of such a move has been received by the industrial development board.

Aid

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects United States and European Economic Community aid anticipated at the time of the Hillsborough agreement to reach Northern Ireland; in what form; and on what conditions.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Republic of Ireland (Ministerial Meeting)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to a reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) earlier today.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to seek to meet Mr. Peter Barry, Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic; and what he intends to discuss.

Mr. Tom King: For security reasons, dates of meetings are not normally released in advance. However, I expect the next meeting of the intergovernmental conference, jointly chaired by Mr. Barry and myself, to take place in February. It has not been our practice to release in advance the agenda for meetings of the conference. But the joint statement issued after our last meeting made it clear that at our next meeting we will consider a progress report from the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner on enhancing security co-operation.

Wages Councils

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to introduce changes in respect of the payment of wages, the operation of wages councils and rebates for employers under the contracts of Employment and Redundancy Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 1965.

Mr. Tom King: I intend to bring forward legislative proposals to simplify the wages council system, to modernise methods of paying wages and to give new rights to all workers concerning deductions from pay.

The proposed legislation, which will parallel proposals for Great Britain, will take those aged under 21 out of the wages council system and limit councils to setting a single minimum hourly rate and a single overtime rate. Provision will also be included to repeal the Truck Acts, in so far as they apply to Northern Ireland, and to introduce new controls to protect employees from unlawful deductions from their pay and to provide a mechanism for complaint to an industrial tribunal concerning unlawful deductions from wages.

I also propose to bring forward legislation to abolish the statutory redundancy rebate (now 35 per cent.) to employers other than those with fewer than 10 employees, in line with similar proposals in Great Britain.

SCOTLAND

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish local authorities not participating in youth training schemes.

Mr. Rifkind: There are five Scottish local authorities not participating in the present one year YTS. These are Gordon, Moray, Strathkelvin, Badenoch and Strathspey and Annandale and Eskdale District councils. The Manpower Services Commission is currently in negotiation with local authorities over participation in two-year YTS which begins on 1 April. Only Clydebank district council has notified the MSC that it will not be participating.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to seek to encourage Scottish local authorities to employ people in youth training schemes.

Mr. Rifkind: Local authorities in Scotland have been major participants in and have contributed greatly to the success of the existing one-year YTS. The arrangements governing the structure and funding of two-year YTS which begins on 1 April were arrived at after wide consultation with all the relevant national interests including those representing local authorities. Many local authorities have already decided to participate in the new YTS and I am confident that, following detailed discussions with the Manpower Services Commission, many others will do likewise.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what reasons are given by Scottish local authorities for not participating in youth training schemes.

Mr. Rifkind: Participation in the YTS by employers, local authorities and other sponsors is voluntary and is for these bodies alone to decide. I understand, however, that reasons for not participating can include such diverse considerations as adequacy of alternative provision and failure to secure trade union support. In relation to two-year YTS, Clydebank district council has indicated that the decision it has reached not to participate arises principally from concern about the new funding arrangements. However it will monitor developments and the decision does not preclude possible participation in YTS at a later date.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on youth training schemes in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Since YTS was launched in 1983 in partnership with employers, trade unions, local authorities and others, it has helped well over 100,000 young people in Scotland to make the transition from school to the world of work. On 1 April, the new two-year YTS will be introduced in which the Government will be investing over

£1 billion by 1987/88 — the highest investment ever made in youth training in this country. Reaction in Scotland to the new YTS has for the most part been very supportive and encouraging and I am confident that the necessary places will be secured.

Rates

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to take steps to reduce the level of rates currently falling on rugby football clubs in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: We have taken effective measures to reduce the burden of rates on those ratepayers most severely affected by the overspending of local authorities and by the 1985 rating revaluation, which may include rugby clubs. Rating authorities have discretion to reduce or remit the rates payable on premises occupied by clubs not established or conducted for profit and which are wholly or mainly used for purposes of recreation. The Secretary of State cannot intervene in authorities' exercise of this discretion, nor in the appeals against rateable values which some clubs have lodged with assessors. The Government's proposals for the reform of the whole system of local government finance are set out in the Green Paper (Cmnd 9714) published on 28 January.

Tranent Bypass

Mr. John Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Tranent bypass will be open to traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I propose to open the Tranent bypass to traffic on 27 March 1986.

Musselburgh Bypass

Mr. John Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of construction of the Musselburgh bypass.

Mr. Ancram: Work is on target to meet the completion date of November 1986.

Housing Action Area, Glasgow

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further information he required from Glasgow district council in respect of the draft housing action area for improvement, the Woodlands, Maryhill road No. 1; and when he requested this information.

Mr. Ancram: On 18 December, the Scottish Development Department requested that Glasgow district council provide an outline of its developing expenditure plans for 1986-87 in the light of the notified provisional non-housing revenue account allocation of £43 million. The council was asked to provide information regarding its prospective expenditure programme in as much detail as possible, although information was not requested in respect of individual draft housing action area resolutions.

Higher Education

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of students entering degree courses in each sector of higher education in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The numbers entering full-time first degree courses in Scotland are given in the following table. Information for 1985-86 is not yet available.

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Universities	11,825	12,233	11,881	11,399	11,483	11,736
Central Institutions	2,121	2,404	2,935	3,105	3,151	3,112
Local Authority Colleges	774	1,064	1,119	1,236	1,306	1,294
Colleges of Education	316	286	314	226	259	718
All Sectors	15,036	15,987	16,249	15,966	16,199	16,860

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any recent representations in favour of an independent review of teachers' salaries and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend and I continue to receive many letters making representations of various kinds about the teachers' dispute. As my right hon. and learned Friend said on 29 January at column 941, in reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, a resolution of this dispute can only be found through negotiation between teachers and employers on the basis of the resources already available.

EMPLOYMENT

Dairy Industry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently employed in the dairy industry; and what was the equivalent figure in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: In November 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were an estimated 41,000 employees in employment in the milk and milk products industry, (activity heading 4130 of the 1980 standard industrial classification) in Great Britain.

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General what arrangement has been provided by his Department for the formation of enterprise agencies in Hertfordshire; what areas are now covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The formation of local enterprise agencies is primarily a matter for local interests, including particularly representatives of the private sector; they can determine local needs and the level of potential support. The Government are anxious to see viable and effective local enterprise agencies established; our new grant scheme is designed to that end. There are currently four local enterprise agencies in Hertfordshire covering the areas of Letchworth, Stevenage, Watford and St. Albans.

Health and Safety

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* the number of premises registered under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and *(b)* the number of visits by inspectors for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Trippier: There are some 670,000 premises on the registers of the inspectorates of the Health and Safety Executive. This figure excludes an unknown number of sites subject to inspection by HSE inspectors, but not recorded on the registers — for example, construction sites, very small agricultural holdings and tips and landfill sites. Health and safety inspectors made some 240,000 visits in both 1983 and 1984. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General if he will give the average time between planned visits by Health and Safety Executive inspectors to various types of premises, distinguishing between high and low risk premises.

Mr. Trippier: Each inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive determines its own priorities for planned visits. The frequency of visits depends on a number of factors, including the degree of risk. The average number of visits to individual nuclear installations is between one and two a month. Figures for the other inspectorates are not readily available.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General how many convictions there were, and what was the average fine, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The information available on prosecutions brought by Health and Safety Executive inspectorates and agencies of the Health and Safety Commission is as follows:

Year	*Number of convictions*	*Average fine per conviction* £
1983	1,954	251
1984*	1,916	315

* Data for 1984 is provisional
Data for 1985 is not yet available

Information on prosecutions taken by local authorities could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General how many cases were taken on indictment under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, with the average fine per conviction.

Mr. Trippier: The following table gives information on prosecutions taken on indictment by inspectorates of the Health and Safety Executive and agencies of the Health and Safety Commission.

Year	*Number of convictions*	*Average fine per conviction* £
1983	4	2,125
1984*	9	3,522
1985†	14	1,314

* Data for 1984 is provisional
† Provisional data for HM Factory Inspectorate

Information on prosecutions taken by local authorities could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General if he will list *(a)* the number of persons sentenced to imprisonment under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, *(b)* the number and average level of fines against employers under the Act for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 and *(c)* the number and average fines against employees for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Trippier: One person was given a suspended prison sentence in 1985. No prison sentences were imposed in 1983 or 1984.

The available information on recorded convictions following prosecutions taken by inspectorates of the Health and Safety Executive and agencies of the Health and Safety Commission is as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Convictions against: Employers average fine* £	*Number*	*Employees average fine* £
1983	1,752	261	67	91
1984*	1,673	327	65	93

* Data for 1984 is provisional
Data for 1985 is not yet available

Information on prosecutions taken by local authorities could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General how many prosecutions and applications to tribunals, with the relevant section of the legislation, were taken under the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 for the years 1984 and 1985; and what were the results of these actions.

Mr. Trippier: No prosecutions under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 were taken by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive in 1984 and 1985.

During 1984 six applications to industrial tribunals were registered under regulation 11(1)*(a)* and four under regulation 11(1)*(b)*. The figures for 1985 were four and two, respectively. Information on the results of these applications could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Woodall asked the Paymaster General how many appeals were made to industrial tribunals against *(a)* improvement notices and *(b)* prohibition notices, with the results of these appeals, for the years 1974 to 1985 inclusive, issued under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Trippier: The table gives the available information for England and Wales.

Year notice issued	*Appeals against Notices**	*Number of these appeals upheld*
1975	30	0
1976	52	1
1977	77	8
1978	104	9

Year notice issued	Appeals against Notices*	Number of these appeals upheld
1979	100	6
1980	89	4
1981	196	8
1982	220	11
1983	117	n.a
1984	148	n.a
1985†	124	n.a

* Records of appeals obtained by HSE from the Central Office of Industrial Tribunals do not distinguish the different types of notice appealed against.

† Provisional.

n.a Results of appeals not available without incurring disproportionate costs.

Staff Training

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what percentage of his Department's annual budget is spent on staff training; and if he will give details for each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *360*]: In the Department of Employment Group, which includes the Manpower Services Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, we estimate that 1·4 per cent. of 1985-86 administrative expenditure will be spent on staff training. Comparable figures are not available for earlier years.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Balance

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current deficit in trade between *(a)* the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community and *(b)* the United Kingdom and the non-European Economic Community countries in (i) manufacturing, (ii) steel, (iii) motor vehicles and (iv) textiles; and if he will give equivalent figures for 1972 and 1979.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Distillers (Bid)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading on the Guinness bid for the Distillers Company; and if he will now refer this bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: The Director General's advice has not yet been received. A decision will be taken on whether the bid should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of that advice, as soon as practicable.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the list recently compiled by his Department's urban housing renewal unit of developers wishing to refurbish local authority housing stock for sale; which local authorities have been sent copies of it; and if he will explain on what basis such a list has been compiled.

Sir George Young: The Department's urban housing renewal unit can provide local authorities on request with a list of builders and developers interested in undertaking joint venture schemes in their areas. This list is provided for information and the unit does not endorse or recommend the services of these firms. The list has been compiled from firms who have indicated their interest to UHRU and it can be added to at any time.

The full list comprises:

Ackroyd and Abbot Ltd
Barratt Urban Renewal Ltd
Bellway plc
Costain Homes Ltd
Countryside Properties plc
Cruden Constuction Ltd
Fairclough Building Ltd
Foilgrange Ltd
P Hassall Ltd
Ideal Homes Holdings plc
William Irwin and Co Ltd
Laing Homes (London)
PROBE Ltd
Regalian Properties plc
Summit Homes Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Homes Ltd
Watkin Starbuck and Jones Ltd
William Davis Ltd
George Wimpey plc
Cecil M Yuill Ltd

At their request, the following authorities have received a list of developers named above who are interested in joint venture housing in their areas:

Birmingham
Bolton
Bradford
Gateshead
Harrow
Kingson-upon-Hull
Leeds
Manchester
Solihull
South Holland
Stafford
Wandsworth
Westminster

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to alter his Department's arrangements for the employment of the consultant to the urban housing renewal unit who also sits on the board of the firm PROBE; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No, the urban housing renewal unit does not offer its consultants' services to local authorities where any possible conflict of interest might exist. All the unit's consultants are bound by the terms of their appointment to declare any possible self-interest in any matters on which they might be asked for advice.

Housing Defects (Expenditure)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last reviewed the expenditure limit under the Housing Defects Act 1984 for the repair of defective homes; and when he expects the next review to take place.

Sir George Young: The current expenditure limit of £14,000 was prescribed by order when the Housing Defects Act 1984 came into operation on 1 December 1984, and was based on evidence on the cost of repairing Airey houses available at that time. The costs of repair methods for houses of various types designated under the Act are now being reviewed by my Department, to provide evidence for any revisions of the expenditure limit that may be needed.

Asbestos (Faslane)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the consultations with the Health and Safety Executive and Dumbarton district council referred to in the answer of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) of 2 July, *Official Report*, column 97, regarding asbestos removed from the construction site at Faslane have now been completed; if he continues to plan to decontaminate the site without removing the asbestos from it; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: These consultations have been completed and a contract has been let by the Property Services Agency to decontaminate the site without removing from it any of the asbestos waste, including that collected last year under the phase 1 contract. Work will start on 3 February. Separate consideration is still being given to action as necessary to deal with asbestos on the loch bed. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 6 June 1985 at column *207*.

GLC Property Disposals

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of the site at the rear of 8 Kellner road for which the Greater London council applied on 31 October 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 18 Wellington street, for which the Greater London council applied on 25 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on Tuesday 21 January 1986 at column *141*.

Local Authority Flats (Defects)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate known to his Department of the cost of making good structural defects in local authority flats.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's recent inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock in England showed that local authorities estimated that the flats they owned required expenditure of £613 million on structural repairs (that is to foundations and to load-bearing walls, frames, floors and roofs).

Housing Benefit

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers and percentage of local authority flat dwellers in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available figures are for November 1983, when it is estimated that housing benefits were being received by about 72 per cent. (1·1 million) of the tenants of local authority and new town flats in England and Wales.

Campaign for Fair Play

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Luton, North on Monday 27 January, regarding the campaign for fair play, what matters were discussed at the meeting; which member of the campaign attended the meeting; when the meeting took place; and whether any further meetings are planned.

Mr. Tracey: At their request, I met Messrs Derek Wyatt, John Goodbody, John Taylor, Patrick Cheney and Steven Hellman, representing the campaign for fair play, on 21 November 1985. We discussed matters relating to the Government's policy on sporting contacts with South Africa, particularly in relation to the then proposed British Lions tour of South Africa this year. I have no plans at present for a further meeting.

Sporting Organisations (Grants)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in pursuance to his reply to the hon. Member for Luton, North of 27 January, he will make it his policy that funds will be granted to sporting organisations on the Sports Council without recourse to him in any case.

Mr. Tracey: Decisions on the allocation of funds to sporting organisations are made by the Sports Council. Only funding in excess of £0·2 million is referred to the Secretary of State as required by the Council's financial memorandum. However, the Sports Council is required under article 3 of its royal charter to have regard to any statements of Government policy which the Secretary of State may issue.

Housing and Planning Bill

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has anything to add to the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Housing and Planning Bill.

Mr. John Patten: Part III of the Bill extends to Wales and the powers it contains will be available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I regret that the appropriate references to his Department were in error omitted from the explanatory and financial memorandum prefaced to the printed Bill. The relevant paragraphs in the memorandum should have read as follows:

Financial Effects of the Bill

Financial Assistance for Urban Regeneration

It is envisaged that in England and Wales Part III of the Bill will initially be used in a limited number of localities to assist programmes carried out by consortia and other private sector interests concerned with urban regeneration. It is estimated that in 1987-88 there will be voted expenditure in the range £10 million-£20 million by the Department of the Environment and £2 million by the Welsh Office. Some preliminary expenditure is likely to be incurred in 1986-87. The expenditure in these years will not require any increase in the planned total of public expenditure given in Cmnd. 9702. The level of expenditure in later years will depend on the success of the initial programmes and the public expenditure provision that can be made.

Effect of the Bill on Public Service Manpower
Financial Assistance for Urban Regeneration
It is estimated that as a result of part III of the Bill the equivalent of eight additional staff will be required in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has chosen to revise the other services block capital expenditure allocations to shire district councils for 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: Before determining the allocations for the Other Services block, my right hon. Friend invites recommendations from the local authority associations. As for previous years, his initial allocations for 1986-87 were in line with their recommendations. It has subsequently been drawn to his attention that the allocations for some shire district councils fell short of an earlier assurance that each authority would receive at least 70 per cent. of its allocation for 1984-85. The Secretary of State has accordingly revised the allocations to shire districts in such a way as to fulfil the assurance.

Derelict Land Reclamation

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources are being made available for derelict land reclamation in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The funds provided for derelict land reclamation in 1986-87 are £78·38 million compared with £76·36 million at the beginning of 1985-86 and only £23·5 million in 1979-80. These figures include resources for reclamation on Merseyside.

In December 1985 my Department issued a circular restating the priorities for reclamation and making a number of significant changes. This was widely welcomed. It set out the Government's agreement to consider three year rolling programmes in areas of extensive dereliction. These would enable local authorities to tackle dereliction on an area basis more effectively than could be achieved on a scheme by scheme basis under an annual bidding system. £24 million will be made available in 1986-87 to enable 13 rolling programmes to be supported in Cleveland, South Tyneside, Workington ironworks, Preston docks, Salford quays, Hyndburn-Rossendale, Wigan, Liverpool, Ellesmere Port, Wirral, Normanby park steelworks, Lower Don valley Sheffield and the black country.

Local authorities will be required to identify the after use for all reclamation proposals and the terms on which they will dispose of the reclaimed land. Priority will be given to schemes designed to reclaim urban, especially inner city land for a hard private sector end use, particularly housing. The scheme to be supported in 1986-87 fully reflect these priorities. Some £17 million will be made available to support the continuing reclamation of the former Consett and Corby steelworks, the reclamation of coal tips following the report, "Coal and the Environment" (1981) investigation and remedial work on limestone subsidence in the black country, reclaiming the sites for the Stoke and Gateshead garden festivals and good quality groundwork schemes to tackle dereliction on the urban fringes.

Money is also available for the private sector and nationlised industries to undertake reclamation on their own behalf without the involvement of the local authority. I am allocating about £5·5 million for such schemes next year of which about £2·6 million will be accounted for by projects which have already been approved.

Homelessness

Mr. Jeff Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what factors he attributes the rise in homeless households housed as secure tenants as a percentage of all new secure tenancies in England as set out in his answer of 18 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *58*.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 January 1986, c. *468*]: The main factors are as follows:

People become homeless for a variety of reasons. For those accepted as being in priority need under the provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, social factors which have become more significant in recent years are mortgage default and marital disputes. For example some 20 per cent. of those accepted as homeless last year became so as a result of marital disputes compared with only around 15 per cent. in 1978. A major factor has always been the unwillingness or inability of families and friends to continue to provide accommodation.

The percentage of new secure lettings held by such households depends on two separate figures — the number of homeless families housed in this way in any year and the number of new lettings. The number of homeless households housed in secure tenancies varies from local authority to local authority according to the policies of the particular authority, the number of households accepted as homeless in any given period, the particular needs of the households and the availability of suitable accommodation. But across the country as a whole the overall number of homeless households given such tenancies has risen, reflecting increases in the number of homeless for the reasons set out above. At the same time there has been a smaller annual number of new secure lettings. This is partly offset by the provision of non-secure lettings under schedule 3 to the Housing Act 1980. But such lettings are not taken into account in the percentages given in the earlier answer.

TRANSPORT

Grain Exports

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information Her Majesty's Goverment have as to how much grain has been exported to Libya from ports in East Anglia in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: The information available is as follows:

Exports of Grain (unmilled cereals) to Libya from East Anglia

	'000 tonnes
East Anglia	
1984	12·1
1985	*27·7

* Estimate.

No unmilled cereals were exported to Libya between 1980 and 1983. Complete data by port and commodity for 1985 are not yet available.

Fishermen (Deaths and Injuries)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of *(a)* deaths and *(b)* serious injuries to fishermen in each of the last 10 years (i) in total and (ii) per 1,000 employed in the fishing industry; and if he will give similar figures for deaths and injuries per 1,000 employed for the (A) mining, (B) construction and (C) farming industries for the same period.

Mr. Ridley: The number of deaths and accidents to fishermen on vessels of 24 m or more in length and the number of deaths on vessels under 24 m are published annually in the Department's booklet "Casualties to Vessels and Accidents to Men". Figures for accidents to fishermen on vessels under 24 m are not available. Since October 1985, however, serious accidents involving fishing vessels of 10 m or more in length have to be reported to my Department under the Fishing Vessels (Reporting of Accidents) Regulations 1985.

The following tables set out the information required for the years 1976 to 1984 (comparable figures for 1975 are not available and the figures for 1985 have not been finalised). The figures for the coal mining, construction and farming industries are based on information obtained from the Health and Safety Executive.

Table 1 Accidental deaths

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
*Fishing Vessels 24m and over**									
Number of deaths	14	9	27	4	7	3	3	2	1
per 1,000 at risk	(3·0)	(1·9)	(6·4)	(1·2)	(2·2)	(1·3)	(1·1)	(1·4)	(1·4)
*Fishing vessels under 24m**									
Number of deaths	16	19	18	35	21	22	14	19	11
per 1,000 at risk	(1·1)	(1·4)	(1·3)	(3·5)	(2·1)	(1·8)	(1·3)	(1·7)	(0·8)
Coal Mining									
Number of deaths	50	40	63	46	42	35	38	30	20
per 1,000 at risk	(0·2)	(0·2)	(0·3)	(0·2)	(0·2)	(0·2)	(0·2)	(0·2)	(0·1)
Construction									
Number of deaths	156	130	126	128	134	105	102	118	100
per 1,000 at risk	(0·2)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)
Farming									
Number of deaths	41	32	25	34	24	31	27	28	27
per 1,000 at risk	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)	(0·1)

Table 2 Non-fatal accidents †

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Fishing Vessels 24m and over									
Number of accidents	813	609	573	413	207	97	90	64	73
per 1,000 at risk	(173)	(135)	(135)	(121)	(65)	(42)	(35)	(43)	(51)
Fishing Vessels under 24m									
Number of accidents per 1,000 at risk	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Coal Mining‡									
Number of accidents	50,800	49,300	46,773	40,802	36,733	31,080	24,975	n.a.	n.a.
per 1,000 at risk	(200)	(195)	(189)	(168)	(151)	(134)	(115)	n.a.	n.a.
Construction‡‖									
Number of accidents	36,100	32,800	34,424	32,435	30,012	45,494	40,500	n.a.	n.a.
per 1,000 at risk	(30)	(28)	(28)	(26)	(25)	(42)	(40)	n.a.	n.a.
Farming‡									
Number of accidents	5,200	4,800	4,600	4,100	4,200	8,141	7,355	n.a.	n.a.
per 1,000 at risk	(18)	(16)	(15)	(14)	(14)	(23)	(21)	n.a.	n.a.

* Fishing deaths in table 1 include those recorded as missing at sea.
† "Accidents" in table 2 means the number of people injured.
‡ Accidents causing incapacity lasting for more than three days.
‖ Construction figures are for employees classified under MLH500 of the standard industrial classification.
n.a. =not available.

Addington Square, SE5 (Access)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has had any correspondence with the Greater London council about the closure of the south-east access to Addington square, SE5;

(2) if he has approved the Greater London council's proposal to close the south-east access to Addington square, SE5.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Greater London council applied for an order under section 209 Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to authorise it to stop up a length of Addington square. A public inquiry was held into the application in June 1985. Subsequently, the Department and the Greater London council have been in correspondence on the question of providing for the needs of cyclists. The Secretary of State's decision on the council's application will be announced shortly.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to seek to ensure that local authorities are made aware of, and are actively consulted on, all movement of all radioative materials through their areas.

Mr. Ridley: All movements of radioactive materials are governed by the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The required design of the packaging ensures safety both in normal transport conditions and in accidents. There is therefore no need to make special routeing arrangements, or to involve local authorities.

Motor Cycle Test

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the current average waiting time for a part II motor cycle test in each of the regional road traffic areas and comparable figures for the last two years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The waiting time for a part II motor cycle test is the same as for L-tests. The table gives average waiting times in weeks for each of the traffic area offices.

	30 December 1983	*28 December 1984*	*27 December 1985*
North Eastern (Newcastle)	7	8	10
North Eastern (Leeds)	6	19	17
North Western	8	11	12
West Midlands	11	15	15
Eastern (Nottingham)	10	13	13
Eastern (Cambridge)	12	15	16
South Wales	6	14	18
Western	8	14	14
South Eastern	9	15	17
Scottish	5	13	18
Metropolitan	17	22	16

SOCIAL SERVICES

Sick Dependent Relatives (Allowances)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men have been granted social security allowances in each of the last six years after giving up a job to care for an ill dependent relative.

Mr. Major: As regards invalid care allowance, the available information is as follows. I regret that information before April 1981 is not available.

Invalid care allowance—awards to men caring for a relative with attendance allowance

Year	*Number*
*1981	545
1982	1,697
1983	1,816
1984	2,105
1985	2,211

* From April.

As regards supplementary benefit, the available information relates to the number of men receiving benefit at any one time who were not required to be available for work because they were caring for a sick or disabled person, as follows. Information later than 1983 is not available.

Year	*Number (estimated)*
1978	8,000
1979	7,000
1980	7,000
1981	6,000
1982	6,000
1983	6,000

It is estimated that from 1982 about 1,000 of these men were also receiving invalid care allowance. Information is not available about the number of men receiving supplementary benefit who had given up work to care for a sick or disabled person, or the number caring for a dependent relative. The figures do not include male carers who were not required to be available for work for reasons other than caring.

Housing Benefits

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many unemployed and retired citizens in the Wolverhampton area have been in receipt of housing benefits assistance in each of the last six years.

Mr. Major: This information is not available centrally. However, on the basis of information supplied by the metropolitan borough council of Wolverhampton, it is estimated that the total numbers receiving rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates were as follows:

Year	*Rent rebates*	*Rent allowances*	*Rate rebates*
1980-81	7,100	850	20,550
1981-82	9,330	850	25,700
*1982-83	21,760	1,000	37,500
1983-84	26,670	5,060	44,770
1984-85	27,380	4,020	44,590
1985-86	28,600	5,000	47,900

* Includes from November 1982 for some and from April 1983 for all cases, assistance with rent and rates formerly met through supplementary benefit.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to extend his powers to pay housing benefit direct to the landlord to cover prevention of misappropriation by tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We are still considering the future arrangements for safeguarding the payment of benefit.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any proposals to seek the improvement of adjudication standards prior to the introduction of the income support scheme in 1988.

Mr. Major: There is a continuing programme to improve economy and efficiency in the administration of social security including adjudication standards.

In 1983 we introduced legislation which overhauled and improved the first two tiers of the social security adjudication system. The Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 created the post of Chief Adjudication Officer who has a statutory duty to keep under review the standards of adjudication. The Chief Adjudication Officer's first annual report was published recently (HMSO) and we are actively considering his recommendations. The HASSASSA Act also created the office of the president of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals to administer the tribunal system. The president is strongly committed to improving the standards of adjudication within his jurisdiction and, I understand, he has already embarked on an ambitious training programme for tribunal members and chairmen to enhance their legal and procedural skills.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what records are kept by the Mersey regional health authority detailing the cervical cancer smear tests being undertaken in that area; what records are kept of call-back arrangements for those so tested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally. He may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Mersey regional health authority.

Young People (Housing)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the housing problems confronting young people leaving care; and what proposals he has to deal with these problems.

Mr. Whitney: I am not aware that any specific representations on this subject have been received in the Department in the last 12 months. I accept that accommodation is an important need for a number of young people leaving care, as was identified by the second report of the Social Services Committee. The "Child Care Law Review", published last September as a consultative document by the Government, proposes (paragraph 10.9) that local authorities should have a revised power to make contributions, including loans, to the cost of accommodation of those who are in care or who have left care; the Government are currently considering responses to that document. Questions on housing matters are primarily the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the directions which the Attendance allowance board has given to delegated medical practitioners under paragraph 5 of schedule II to the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I am unable to assist the hon. Member. The Attendance Allowance Board is an independent body and I understand that the guidelines it issues to its delegated medical practitioners are not published.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide the latest estimate of the number of regular family income supplement payments in the north-west and show what proportion of the eligible population this represents.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 20 January at column *58*.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current rate of notional fuel element contained within family income supplement.

Mr. Newton: The prescribed amounts for family income supplement do not contain a separate element for fuel. They have been increased annually at least in line with increases in the retail prices index, which includes elements for heating and fuel costs.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants were awarded family income supplement in Scotland in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Major: The number of families in Scotland in receipt of family income supplement at the end of 1984 and the end of November 1985, the latest date for which information is available, was as follows.

December 1984	25,000
November 1985	24,000

Tranquillisers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of those local groups providing services for persons addicted to tranquillisers that have received financial assistance from his Department, and, in each case, the amount of aid given and the reason it was given.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Organisation and address	Service provided	Amount of allocation £
TRANX 17 Peel Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 7QX	To promote a self-help group approach to minor tranquilliser dependence	89,183
TRANX-Release 14 Moorfield Square, Southfields, Northampton NN3 5BD	To reduce dependency on prescribed drugs through education and self-help.	29,892
West Cumbria MIND (Copeland) 29a Duke Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria	To assess and reduce the size and scope of tranquilliser dependence, to reduce pressure on family practitioners and promote co-operation and communication between relevant services.	85,442
North East Council on Alcoholism (formerly Newcastle Association for Mental Health) 1 Mosley Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 1YE	To support and counsel patients withdrawing from tranquillisers and promote co-operation with general practitioners and other health workers.	96,213

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of legionnaire's disease have been reported in the United Kingdom in each year since that disease was identified; and how many and what proportion of such cases in each of those years occurred among patients in hospitals or other institutions to which Crown immunity against prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 applies.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not always possible to identify the source of infection, and information is therefore incomplete. The available details are as follows:

Year	Total number of reported cases	Number of reported cases contracted in NHS hospitals	Percentage of reported cases contracted in NHS hospitals
1979	129	4	3·1
1980	181	24	13·3
1981	143	7	4·9
1982	138	4	2·9
1983	160	9	5·6
1984	151	3	2·0
1985*	199	77	38·7

* Figures for 1985 are provisional.

Community Care

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria are used to prioritise applications for funding under the helping the community to care scheme.

Mr. Whitney: The Department explored with a variety of organisations the possibility of their participation in the management of the dozen different elements of this programme. The bodies with which agreement has been reached, indicated in my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 27 January at columns *397-98*, are those which seemed most likely to achieve the objectives we had in mind.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons he estimates provide care in the community on a full-time or semi-full-time basis to elderly or disabled persons; what is the breakdown of this group by sex, marital status, age, region, and income; what financial assistance they receive at present; and what would be the cost *(a)* of extending the invalid care allowance to all married women carers and *(b)* of providing all carers with an allowance at current (i) short-term and (ii) long-term benefit rate levels.

Mr. Newton: Information is not collected centrally on a regular basis to enable us to provide the information required, but in 1985 we estimated that to extend invalid care allowance to married women would cost an additional £85 million a year net of savings from other benefits.

Benefits (Draught-proofing)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on people in receipt of social security benefits being able to obtain free draught-proofing of their homes.

Mr. Newton: Under regulation 18 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations 1981 (SI 1981 No. 1528) supplementary benefit claimants may receive a lump sum payment of benefit to meet the cost of materials to carry out simple draught-proofing measures in their homes. So far as the future of these payments is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 19 December at column *315*.

NHS (Computer-related Posts)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service computer-related posts in the west midlands region have been unfilled during the last year; and what salaries were being offered for the posts.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not held centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the chairman of the west midlands regional health authority, who may be able to help her.

NHS (Computer Services)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to contract out National Health Service computer services to the private sector.

Mr. Whitney: The National Health Service already makes considerable use of the private sector in developing computer services and we expect this to continue where it is cost-effective to do so. It would not be practicable to contract out all the planning, development and operation of National Health Service computer services.

Primary Care

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish a Green Paper on primary health care.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Green Paper is expected to be published later this year.

Piroxicam (Member's Questions)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not yet replied to the four questions tabled by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe for answer on 20 January concerning the drug Piroxicam; if he will now do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I replied to my hon. Friend on 28 January.

Midwives

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what levels of pay have been awarded to midwives, ward sisters, nursing auxiliaries and staff nurses each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: The two main midwifery grades, midwifery sister and staff midwife, are paid on the same pay scales as ward sister and staff nurse, respectively. The table shows, therefore, for the period from April 1979 to February 1986, the minimum and maximum points of the pay scales for ward sister, staff nurse and nursing auxiliary.

Pay rates from April 1986 will be determined in the light of the recommendations of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine.

Nursing pay scales at:

	Nursing Sister II (Ward sister) £	*Staff Nurse* £	*Nursing Auxiliary* £
1 April 1979			
Minimum	3,888	3,150	2,507
Maximum	4,949	3,813	2,915
1 April 1980			
Minimum	5,309	4,198	2,965
Maximum	6,807	5,119	3,790
1 April 1981			
Minimum	5,628	4,450	3,143
Maximum	7,215	5,426	4,017
23 August 1982			
Minimum	6,321	4,998	3,530
Maximum	8,103	6,094	4,512
1 April 1984			
Minimum	6,827	5,398	3,777
Maximum	8,751	6,582	4,828
1 April 1985			
Minimum	7,220	5,708	3,950
Maximum	9,254	6,960	5,069
1 February 1986			
Minimum	7,480	6,000	3,950
Maximum	10,000	7,175	5,120

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many qualified midwives there have been, and what proportion of them practised, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information of this nature is collected by the United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and its predecessor the Central Midwives Board (CMB). However, the register of midwives, which records those who have obtained the midwifery qualification includes some midwives who have emigrated, returned abroad, retired, are not in the current employment field or required the qualification for another purpose. For example, a study by the Department's central management services in 1981 showed that 21 per cent. of those entering midwifery training did not intend to practise and a further 26 per cent. were uncertain about their intentions. A ratio of practising midwives to people with a midwifery qualification is not therefore meaningful.

Information as to the number of midwives on the CMB roll/UKCC register and the number declaring their intention to practice is given in the table.

Year ending 31 March	*Total Number on Midwives Roll/ Register*	*Number notifying intention to practice*
1979	102,998	21,413
1980	107,121	22,304
1981	110,887	23,117
1982	114,690	24,082
1983	n/a	n/a
1984	n/a	n/a
1985*	167,750	32,585

* The figures for 1985 relate to the United Kingdom and those for earlier years to England and Wales.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff midwife and staff midwifery tutor jobs are vacant at the present time.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Arthritis Drugs

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the numbers of deaths each year due to the effects of all anti-arthritic drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many adverse reactions, and how many deaths, have been reported to the Committee on Safety of Medicines concerning the drug Piroxicam since 1980; and what is his estimate, having regard to the acknowledged under-reporting of adverse reactions, of the total numbers of adverse reactions and deaths likely to have occurred over this period;

(2) if he will send a specific warning to doctors about the dangers to old people from the arthritis drug Piroxicam;

(3) if he intends to ban the use in the over 60s of the arthritis drug Piroxicam.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) on 28 January at columns *501-502*. I will decide whether any action is needed when I have considered the advice of the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

The adverse reaction reports to the committee referred to in the reply were all received since 1980; of that total, the reported deaths were 77. It is very important to bear in mind that a report does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship between a product and a reported reaction. I

am advised that the rate of under-reporting adverse reactions cannot be specified and therefore the estimate requested cannot be given.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the annual cost of making a weekly payment to all pensioners equal to half the difference between £10 and any additional component, guaranteed minimum pension, or graduated pension they may have.

Mr. Major: The estimated additional annual cost of this proposal to public expenditure is £2,250 million.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average level of state earnings-related pension scheme additional component and of the guaranteed minimum pension each year since 1978; and what has been the level at 1985-86 prices for each of these years and for each year to 1998 on the basis of the Government Actuary's current assumptions; what has been, and what will be, the number of pensioners involved for each of these years; and what has been, and what is forecast to be total public expenditure on both these criteria.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and what percentage this represents.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many, nationally and for each social security region, of *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds are in receipt of supplementary benefit for the latest available year and (i) how many live in their parents' household and (ii) live independently; and how many of them have (1) claimant parents and (2) non-claimant parents.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 December 1985, c. *434*]: Estimates of the number of 16 and 17-year-old claimants in each social security region at December 1983 are as follows:

(thousands)

Region	*16-year-olds*	*17-year-olds*
North Eastern	9	21
London North	10	14
London South	6	13
Wales and South West	7	14
Midlands	9	20
North Western	7	19
Scotland	7	18

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Information is not available about the number in each region who were householders; but, as I indicated in my earlier reply, nationally it is estimated that at the same date 1,000 16-year-olds and 7,000 17-year-olds receiving supplementary benefit were householders.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many fraud investigators his Department employs; and what is his estimate of the amount of public money they saved in 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *399*]: In the financial year 1984-85, the latest period for which information is available, the equivalent of 2,195 staff were employed full-time on fraud investigation and benefit saving was estimated to be £103 million.

Medicines (Adverse Reactions)

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the second report of the Committee on Safety of Medicines working party on adverse reactions.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes. The working party has reviewed the arrangements by which the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) obtains information on the adverse effects of medicinal products and has considered whether any changes are needed in these arrangements.

The working party recommends that for the foreseeable future the CSM should continue to operate its existing voluntary adverse effects reporting procedure, based on the yellow card report form. It also recommends that additional arrangements should be introduced for providing post-marketing surveillance studies on new medicines, particularly those intended for widespread long-term use. The working party has discussed this matter with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry which has advised that pharmaceutical companies would be prepared to agree with the CSM arrangements for mounting such studies. I understand that the committee and the association are to hold formal discussions on the arrangements governing the studies.

The working party concludes that the CSM may also need to commission studies on specific problems, for example, to obtain data to help in establishing the comparative risks of medicines within the same therapeutic group.

Among its other conclusions, the working party considers that none of the surveillance techniques so far developed offers immediate prospects of improvements in the monitoring of very rare or long-latency adverse drug effects. In the future, schemes which link patients' hospital discharge diagnoses with their prescribing histories might be of value, provided acceptable arrangements for the identification of patients can be developed. It recommends that current research into such record linkage schemes should be continued.

The report has been approved by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. Copies are available in the Library.

Health Bodies (Funding)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all statutory health bodies, indicating the funding available from his Department for each body for each of the past five years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *477*]: There is no precise definition of statutory health bodies. The table lists bodies engaged in providing or assisting the provision of health services (excluding voluntary organisations) for which funds have been

provided by the Department from Class XI, Vote 1, in the Appropriation Accounts, and the amounts made available in each case.

£'000

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Advances to health authorities (ie regional and district health authorities and special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals*	7,409,273	8,219,404	8,789,677	9,209,564	9,774,960
General Nursing Council	48,176	53,059	57,880	13,521	—
Joint Board of Clinical Nursing Studies	432	495	520	115	—
Council for the Education and Training of Health Visitors	443	476	510	138	—
United Kingdom Central Council and English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	206	803	1,972	51,649	67,064
Midwife Teachers Training College	50	49	32	33	35
Committee of Management of the School of Dental Therapists Ltd.	706	812	613	276	—
Council of Postgraduate Medical Education and Training	272	377	355	354	354
Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice	45	77	74	74	84
Public Health Laboratory Services Board	21,261	26,003	30,057	32,994	35,899
National Radiological Protection Board	2,840	3,379	3,653	3,612	3,846
National Biological Standards Board	2,383	2,984	3,185	3,922	6,853
Medical Practices Committee	228	242	255	257	235
Health Education Council	4,747	6,034	8,004	8,582	8,877
Prescription Pricing Authority	9,990	10,873	11,597	15,478	15,961
Dental Estimates Board	8,943	9,789	10,281	10,592	11,096
Central Blood Laboratories Authority	3,277	4,691	4,875	9,770	22,820
Mental Health Act Commission	—	—	—	305	878
National Health Service Training Authority	—	—	—	—	4,737
Rampton Hospital Review Board	—	—	—	60	66
Rural Dispensing Committee	—	—	—	57	69

* Details, including the expenditure of each authority, are shown in the Department's annual summaries of health authorities' accounts, copies of which are held in the Library.

NHS Employees

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number and rate per thousand of the population of whole-time equivalent *(a)* nurses *(b)* midwives *(c)* doctors *(d)* dentists and *(e)* health visitors employed in each year 1978-1985 (i) nationally (ii) in each authority and (iii) in each regional health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 December 1985, c. *321*]: The tables show whole-time equivalent staff in post at 30 September of each year 1978 to 1984, and their rates per thousand population, nationally and for each regional health authority. Figures for 1985 are not yet available at this level of detail. Corresponding figures for district health authorities could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

*NHS Nursing Staff**
Regional health authorities at 30 September of each year
Whole-time equivalent† and ratio per 1,000 population England

Regions	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio
England‡	330,970	7·096	338,080	7·240	349,820	7·477	370,620	7·916	376,420	8·044	374,850	8·002	374,690	7·980
Northern	21,750	6·938	22,580	7·214	23,880	7·633	24,890	7·985	25,050	8·062	25,450	8·209	25,260	8·168
Yorkshire	25,240	7·008	25,500	7·074	26,650	7·390	28,500	7·913	28,400	7·894	28,090	7·807	28,130	7·815
Trent	28,860	6·318	30,680	6·698	30,860	6·715	32,840	7·127	33,270	7·235	33,110	7·194	33,420	7·249
East Anglian	11,420	6·201	11,900	6·384	12,500	6·644	13,150	6·941	13,530	7·076	13,620	7·074	14,000	7·217
North West Thames	25,200	7·278	25,290	7·320	25,580	7·406	27,680	8·013	27,720	8·037	27,190	7·868	27,160	7·826
North East Thames	29,940	7·941	29,140	7·746	29,180	7·756	30,640	8·177	33,340	8·932	33,340	8·924	33,350	8·920
South East Thames	27,600	7·699	27,450	7·668	28,230	7·870	29,880	8·326	29,910	8·343	29,730	8·293	29,230	8·131
South West Thames	21,750	7·409	22,730	7·730	23,300	7·904	24,400	8·280	23,880	8·105	23,990	8·137	23,630	8·001
Wessex	17,220	6·339	18,550	6·796	19,020	6·919	20,050	7·242	20,410	7·348	20,670	7·377	20,920	7·409
Oxford	13,340	5·877	13,730	5·982	14,530	6·265	15,500	6·622	15,670	6·626	15,480	6·496	15,840	6·586
South Western	21,660	7·141	22,250	7·296	23,620	7·707	24,990	8·117	25,100	8·134	24,870	8·020	24,940	7·979
West Midlands	33,270	6·430	34,290	6·620	36,220	6·986	38,800	7·480	38,920	7·515	38,450	7·427	38,460	7·430
Mersey	19,780	7·985	19,830	8·026	20,310	8·248	21,170	8·627	21,340	8·738	21,140	8·684	20,670	8·514
North Western	29,440	7·237	30,190	7·443	31,760	7·854	33,800	8·378	34,950	8·699	34,790	8·685	35,010	8·760

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Non-Medical Manpower.

Notes:

* Includes all qualified, learners and unqualified nursing staff, health visitors, and agency nurses.

† Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10, and are not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980.

‡ Includes staff in London Post-graduate SHAs.

*NHS Midwifery Staff**
Regional health authorities at 30 September of each year
Whole-time equivalent† and ratio per 1,000 population England

Regions	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio
England‡	20,200	0·433	20,380	0·436	20,260	0·433	21,140	0·452	20,660	0·441	22,280	0·476	22,790	0·485
Northern	1,220	0·389	1,360	0·433	1,290	0·413	1,320	0·423	1,330	0·427	1,390	0·450	1,480	0·479
Yorkshire	1,460	0·404	1,480	0·409	1,500	0·415	1,700	0·472	1,580	0·439	1,750	0·486	1,800	0·500
Trent	1,660	0·363	1,830	0·399	1,890	0·410	2,090	0·454	2,080	0·453	2,120	0·461	2,120	0·460
East Anglian	880	0·479	930	0·497	800	0·426	890	0·468	880	0·460	930	0·483	970	0·500
North West Thames	1,470	0·426	1,500	0·435	1,490	0·431	1,520	0·440	1,430	0·414	1,460	0·423	1,490	0·429
North East Thames	1,970	0·522	1,790	0·475	1,680	0·445	1,760	0·469	1,730	0·465	1,900	0·510	1,910	0·512
South East Thames	1,650	0·461	1,590	0·443	1,640	0·457	1,720	0·479	1,660	0·464	1,790	0·499	1,830	0·509
South West Thames	1,070	0·364	1,110	0·376	1,170	0·396	1,210	0·410	1,170	0·398	1,190	0·404	1,230	0·415
Wessex	1,080	0·398	1,110	0·406	1,090	0·396	1,190	0·429	1,200	0·433	1,290	0·461	1,330	0·470
Oxford	1,000	0·440	1,000	0·436	1,010	0·437	1,050	0·447	1,020	0·431	1,110	0·467	1,150	0·478
South Western	1,340	0·441	1,370	0·450	1,180	0·383	1,080	0·349	1,050	0·339	1,220	0·392	1,220	0·391
West Midlands	2,180	0·421	2,060	0·398	2,050	0·395	2,110	0·407	2,140	0·413	2,370	0·459	2,540	0·491
Mersey	1,070	0·432	1,130	0·457	1,100	0·447	1,200	0·487	1,110	0·455	1,170	0·481	1,180	0·487
North Western	2,010	0·494	1,970	0·486	2,210	0·547	2,180	0·540	2,030	0·506	2,330	0·581	2,310	0·578

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Non-Medical Manpower
Notes:
* Includes midwifery staff in the hospital and community services, midwifery students and agency midwives.
† Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10, and are not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980.
‡ Includes staff in London Post-graduate SHAs.

*NHS Health Visitors**
Regional health authorities at 30 September of each year
Whole-time equivalent† and ratio per 1,000 population England

Regions	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio
England‡	8,670	0·186	9,010	0·193	8,890	0·190	9,240	0·197	9,500	0·203	9,710	0·207	9,300	0·198
Northern	550	0·176	560	0·179	580	0·186	620	0·198	620	0·200	650	0·210	630	0·204
Yorkshire	640	0·179	670	0·186	720	0·198	690	0·191	680	0·189	740	0·204	730	0·202
Trent	770	0·167	780	0·169	750	0·163	860	0·187	910	0·198	910	0·197	910	0·197
East Anglian	290	0·159	310	0·167	310	0·163	330	0·173	340	0·180	350	0·181	280	0·144
North West Thames	670	0·192	690	0·198	720	0·208	730	0·212	780	0·225	720	0·208	680	0·195
North East Thames	570	0·152	600	0·158	540	0·143	650	0·173	660	0·175	650	0·173	580	0·155
South East Thames	690	0·191	710	0·198	670	0·186	690	0·191	760	0·211	750	0·210	650	0·181
South West Thames	630	0·216	670	0·229	670	0·226	660	0·224	640	0·219	640	0·218	620	0·212
Wessex	500	0·183	530	0·192	490	0·177	550	0·200	570	0·204	580	0·205	570	0·200
Oxford	510	0·225	530	0·229	520	0·224	460	0·197	450	0·189	510	0·212	470	0·194
South Western	580	0·190	590	0·195	620	0·201	610	0·197	610	0·197	610	0·196	600	0·192
West Midlands	940	0·181	980	0·189	950	0·183	1,000	0·194	1,050	0·202	1,040	0·202	1,010	0·195
Mersey	470	0·190	490	0·197	490	0·197	490	0·198	500	0·203	500	0·205	490	0·202
North Western	880	0·215	920	0·226	890	0·220	910	0·225	920	0·229	1,050	0·262	1,090	0·274

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Non-Medical Manpower
Notes:
* Includes health visitors in both the community and school health services, HV field work teachers, HB visitors with HV certificates, dual/triple posts and bank health visitors. Excludes HV students and managerial staff.
† Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10, and are not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980.
‡ Includes staff in London Post-graduate SHAs.
‖ Due to a change in the method of data collecton, figures for the years prior to 1980 are not strictly comparable with those for 1980 onwards.

Hospital and Community Health Doctors: Analysis by Region showing Whole-time equivalent at 30 September of each year, and Ratio per £1,000 Population England*

Regions	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio
England†	35,250	0·756	36,390	0·779	37,570	0·803	38,320	0·819	38,780	0·829	39,590	0·845	39,690	0·845
Northern	2,270	0·723	2,350	0·750	2,430	0·777	2,480	0·797	2,490	0·803	2,590	0·835	2,600	0·842
Yorkshire	2,460	0·684	2,520	0·700	2,570	0·713	2,740	0·762	2,780	0·772	2,810	0·780	2,590	0·719
Trent	2,780	0·610	2,980	0·650	3,120	0·678	3,210	0·696	3,310	0·720	3,390	0·736	3,450	0·749
East Anglian	1,230	0·665	1,280	0·684	1,320	0·703	1,390	0·734	1,420	0·743	1,480	0·766	1,470	0·755
North West Thames	3,180	0·920	3,260	0·944	3,360	0·973	3,420	0·991	3,120	0·904	3,150	0·912	3,150	0·906
North East Thames	3,350	0·890	3,410	0·908	3,470	0·923	3,490	0·932	3,840	1·029	3,860	1·033	3,890	1·040
South East Thames	3,000	0·837	3,050	0·852	3,220	0·898	3,160	0·881	3,106	0·865	3,280	0·914	3,280	0·912
South West Thames	2,260	0·769	2,280	0·776	2,320	0·788	2,350	0·796	2,300	0·779	2,310	0·783	2,290	0·774
Wessex	1,730	0·639	1,820	0·666	1,800	0·654	1,850	0·667	1,920	0·691	1,890	0·673	2,000	0·707
Oxford	1,620	0·715	1,660	0·725	1,700	0·736	1,710	0·729	1,720	0·726	1,760	0·741	1,830	0·759
South Western	2,080	0·686	2,160	0·708	2,250	0·733	2,260	0·733	2,360	0·767	2,380	0·769	2,420	0·773
West Midlands	3,420	0·661	3,590	0·693	3,730	0·720	3,810	0·735	3,850	0·744	3,950	0·764	3,980	0·768
Mersey	1,820	0·733	1,850	0·749	1,940	0·786	1,970	0·803	2,010	0·822	2,070	0·851	2,060	0·849
North Western	3,150	0·774	3,260	0·804	3,370	0·834	3,530	0·875	3,600	0·897	3,690	0·922	3,700	0·925

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Medical Manpower
Notes Figures for WTE are independently rounded to the nearest 10.
* Including Hospital Practitioners, doctors holding appointments under paragraph 94 of the Terms and Conditions of Service and Locum staff.
† Including staff in London Post-Graduate Teaching Hospitals/Special Health Authorities, but excluding Special Hospitals.

*Hospital and Community Health Dentists**
Analysis by region showing whole-time equivalent at 30 September of each year and ratio per 1,000 population England

Regions	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio	WTE	Ratio
England†	2,570	0·055	2,600	0·056	2,590	0·055	2,630	0·056	2,680	0·057	2,670	0·057	2,640	0·056
Northern	180	0·058	180	0·058	180	0·059	180	0·058	190	0·062	190	0·060	180	0·058
Yorkshire	160	0·045	170	0·047	170	0·048	170	0·048	180	0·050	180	0·051	160	0·044
Trent	180	0·039	180	0·040	190	0·041	190	0·042	190	0·041	200	0·043	200	0·04
East Anglian	80	0·045	80	0·045	80	0·043	80	0·042	80	0·040	70	0·039	70	0·038
North West Thames	170	0·048	170	0·049	160	0·046	170	0·048	170	0·050	180	0·051	170	0·048
North East Thames	230	0·060	230	0·061	220	0·059	230	0·060	240	0·063	230	0·060	230	0·061
South East Thames	240	0·067	250	0·069	240	0·067	240	0·068	250	0·071	250	0·069	270	0·074
South West Thames	170	0·058	170	0·059	170	0·059	180	0·061	160	0·055	170	0·059	170	0·056
Wessex	150	0·056	160	0·057	160	0·056	160	0·057	160	0·058	160	0·057	160	0·055
Oxford	90	0·041	90	0·040	90	0·080	100	0·041	100	0·041	100	0·043	100	0·042
South Western	190	0·063	190	0·062	190	0·062	180	0·060	190	0·061	190	0·060	180	0·058
West Midlands	280	0·054	280	0·054	280	0·054	300	0·057	310	0·059	300	0·057	300	0·057
Mersey	140	0·056	150	0·059	140	0·058	140	0·058	150	0·063	150	0·061	150	0·064
North Western	230	0·058	230	0·057	240	0·059	240	0·059	240	0·060	240	0·059	240	0·060

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Medical Manpower
Note: Figures for WTE are independently rounded to the nearest 10
* Including Hospital Practitioners, dentists holding appointments under para. 107 of the Terms and Conditions of Service and Locum staff
† Including staff in London Post-graduate Teaching Hospitals/Special Health Authorities, but excluding special Hospitals

Complaints Procedure

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions in each of the last three years the Health Service Commissioner has criticised the whole or parts of the complaints procedure; and in which cases.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1986, c. *558*]: The Commissioner has made specific criticism of the complaints procedures set out in circular HC(81)5 on one occasion—case W4 and W158/1983-4, published in the report of the Health Service Commissioner — Selected Investigations completed October 1983—March 1984 (HC 476).

DEFENCE

Jet Provost Trainer

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Jet Provost T mk 3 and mk 5 will be withdrawn from Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We plan to withdraw the Jet Provost mk 3A and mk 5A aircraft from the pilot training role by 1990; mk 5 aircraft will continue to be used for navigator training until the mid-1990s.

Defence Review

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will undertake a complete defence review.

Mr. Younger: No. While, in the usual way, decisions on priorities will have to be taken in the coming months in order to match the forward programme to the available cash, I see no need for any fundamental change in our defence commitments or in the main roles undertaken by our armed forces.

United States Air Force

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the area of United States Air Force controlled air space and its orientation, about the following: Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Woodbridge and Bentwaters, Alconbury, Greenham common, Sculthorpe, Wethersfield, Kemble, Upper Heyford and Fairford.

Mr. Lee: Each of the airfields is contained within an aerodrome traffic zone subject to the provisions of rule 35 of the Rules of the Air and Air Traffic Control Regulations. Aerodrome traffic zones extend laterally for 1·5 nautical miles from the airfield boundary and vertically to 2,000 ft above ground level. With the exceptions of Lakenheath and Mildenhall, which lie within the Honington military control zone, the airfields are also contained within military aerodrome traffic zones whose regulations are mandatory for military aircraft but advisory for civil airspace users. Military aerodrome traffic zones extend to a radius of five nautical miles from the centre of the airfield's main runway with additional stubs in line with the runway and extending to 10 nautical miles from its centre. The area of a military aerodrome traffic zone is about 118 sq miles. Those at Sculthorpe, Wethersfield and Greenham common are activated only when the airfield is in use.

Upper Heyford is additionally contained within a radar advisory service zone which covers an area of some 400 sq miles. The service provided is mandatory for military air traffic only. Civil aircraft in the vicinity of Upper Heyford may request a radar advisory service from military air traffic controllers if they so wish. New arrangements with regard to this aerodrome are planned to come into effect on 10 April.

Type 23 Frigate

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to order the next batch of type 23 frigates.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 14 January at column 915.

Equipment Contracts

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the procedures adopted by his Department in order to ensure that competitive bids are received for his Department's equipment contracts.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry's procedures are designed to ensure that procurement staff secure competition for our

requirements whenever it is practicable and reasonable to do so. In addition, our main contractors are required to make the maximum use of competition in their subcontracting. For a fuller account of the procedures I would refer the hon. Member to chapter 5 of the SDE 1985.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the companies/consortia which have shown an interest in bidding for the refit and repair services at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards, detailing the amount of current contracts placed by his Department with such organisations or any subsidiaries;

(2) if he will list the personnel of the companies which have visited Her Majesty's dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport in order to acquaint themselves with facilities and services in which they might be interested in relation to the Dockyard Services Bill and the personnel of his Department whom they met on such visits.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give estimates of the total amount of capital expenditure authorised for Rosyth dockyard and the percentage of that expenditure which can specifically be allocated to the Trident programme.

Mr. Lee: Current plans for Rosyth dockyard envisage expenditure on capital works of £220 million, of which 20 per cent. is specifically allocated to the Trident programme, and expenditure on plant and machinery of £82 million, of which 22 per cent. is for the Trident programme.

Mr Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give estimates of capital expenditure at Rosyth dockyard which has been specifically allocated for dual refitting of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-powered fleet submarines.

Mr. Lee: Expenditure on capital works of £188 million, and on plant and machinery of £23 million has been allocated for dual refitting at Rosyth dockyard of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-powered fleet submarines.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give estimates of capital expenditure at Rosyth dockyard which has been allocated for conventional refit purposes.

Mr. Lee: No major capital works associated with refitting of conventionally propelled submarines and surface ships are currently planned. The sum of £59 million has been allocated for expenditure on plant and machinery associated with such refits.

FH-70 (155mm Shells)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current delay on the delivery of the 155mm shell ordered for British forces' use on the FH-70 and placed with Rheinmetall, Dusseldorf, West Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *450*]: Pilot lot deliveries from Rheinmetall of the L15 high explosive shells orderd by the United Kingdom have been made. First full production deliveries were due to start in October 1985. Due to the need to validate this new production source, United Kingdom and West German ammunition experts are only just completing their evaluation of the pilot lots, preparatory to releasing full production.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancy notices have been issued at each of the Royal ordnance factories since July 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *450*]: This is a matter for Royal ordnance plc. however, I understand that the information requested is as follows:

	Number of redundancy notices issued
Blackburn	8
Bridgwater	93

A further 12 redundancy notices were issued to headquarters staff employed by Royal Ordnance plc.

I also understand that the company has today announced redundancies at its factories at Chorley and Birtley. The maximum numbers will be:

	Number
Chorley	385
Birtley	446
TOTAL	831

SP-70 Shell

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the tripartite agreement to develop and manufacture the SP-70 shell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *448*]: There are no plans nor any tripartite agreement to develop a new shell specifically for the SP-70 gun. A range of 155mm ammunition, including shells already developed under the FH-70 programme and other shells which may then be on the market, would be procured for the SP-70 gun when it enters service.

Multi-launch Rocket Systems

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place orders for further multi-launch rocket systems.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *448*]: I anticipate that the pilot nation for European production, Germany, will place a contract with the European Production Group by about May of this year for the MLRS phase I system. This will include the United Kingdom requirement to equip three regiments with MLRS. No further orders are currently in prospect although our requirements are, of course, kept under review.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 31 January 1986

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone Faults

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal how many telephone complaints have been registered in the Palace of Westminster, and how many faults have been reported, in each year since 1969.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Select Committees

Mr. Greenway asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will detail visits, home and overseas, made by each Select Committee since 1979, indicating the number of members involved, the place and purpose of the visit and the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1986, c. *529*]: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Debt Collecting

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to seek to supersede the warrant sale method of debt collecting; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Government are aware of the criticisms levelled at the warrant sale procedure in recent years. Last November we presented to Parliament the Scottish Law Commission's report on diligence and debtor protection containing wide-ranging recommendations for reform of the law, including that relating to warrant sales. We are anxious to see the law reformed and, with a view to introducing legislation at the earliest possible opportunity, have issued a consultation paper inviting comments.

The commission stresses the need to look at its proposals as a whole and also emphasises the need for a system of debt enforcement to be effective as well as humane.

Since the consultation period lasts until mid-March 1986 and final policy decisions on implementation of the proposals have yet to be made, it would not be appropriate to make any further statement at this time.

Copies of the report and the consultation paper are available on the Libraries of both Houses.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General when he first approached the Prime Minister or her office with a request that a leak inquiry should be set up into the disclosure of extracts from the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine); what response he received; what subsequent discussions took place on the matter between him or his office on the one hand, and the Prime Minister and her office, on the other; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 30 January to a similar question from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). When I initially sought the views of the head of the Civil Service on 7 January, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described to the House on 27 January, the Prime Minister's office was informed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of neighbourhood watch schemes operating in the Metropolitan police district broken down by *(a)* boroughs and *(b)* police divisions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that at the end of 1985 there were 3,770 neighbourhood watch schemes operating in the Metropolitan police district. The breakdown of these schemes by police division is as follows:

Number of established Neighbourhood Watch schemes as at 31 December 1985

Metropolitan Police Division	*Number*
Barkingside	35
Chingford	17
Ilford	14
Leyton	6
Kings Cross	7
Holloway	14
Edmonton	8
Enfield	26
Hornsey	20
Tottenham	69
Hackney	15
Stoke Newington	10
Leman Street	3
Bethnal Green	6
Limehouse	6
Romford	69
Dagenham	28
East Ham	27
West Ham	14
Peckham	40
Southwark	9
Carter Street	44
Catford	146
Lewisham	111
Orpington	153
Bromley	150
Greenwich	34
Woolwich	33
Bexleyheath	43
Brixton	38
Kennington	9
Streatham	36
Clapham	18
Wimbledon	77
Croydon	190
Norbury	738
Epsom	365

Metropolitan Police Division	Number
Chiswick	18
Hounslow	19
Twickenham	48
Richmond	37
Battersea	45
Tooting	131
Wandsworth	199
Kingston	80
Chelsea	25
Kensington	31
Notting Hill	24
Hammersmith	12
Fulham	10
Shepherds Bush	16
Ealing	47
Southall	18
Ruislip	54
Hayes	10
Kentish Town	7
Hampstead	29
Holborn	3
Harrow	100
Wembley	33
Kilburn	6
Barnet	50
Golders Green	21
West Hendon	24
Gerald Road	5
Rochester Row	3
West End Central	1
Vine Street	2
Marylebone	2
Paddington	22
Harrow Road	10

The information required as regards London boroughs, which are not conterminous with police divisions, is not held centrally and could be obtained only with considerable difficulty and at significant cost. Moreover, a number of neighbourhood watch schemes will almost certainly cross borough boundaries.

Burglar Alarms

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many premises are fitted with audible intruder alarms and in respect of what proportion of these the police have been notified of at least two keyholders.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that this information is not available as there is no requirement to report the installation of alarms signalled by bells only. Where such notification is nevertheless received, it is force policy to require the alarm holder to notify the police of at least two keyholders.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the operation of the list of premises where false alarms regularly originate, maintained by the Metropolitan police; whether the police intend to make a charge for removal of such premises from the list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that no such list is maintained for alarms signalled by bells only. Records are, however, kept of alarm systems whose signals go to the police direct or via central stations maintained by alarm companies. The Metropolitan police, in common with other police forces in England and Wales, continues to operate a policy of withdrawal of direct police response to such alarms if they generate an unacceptable number of false calls. Police response is reinstated only after a specified period, and after inspection by the Metropolitan police burglar alarm inspectorate. There is currently no charge for this inspection, but the Commissioner is considering the introduction of one.

Police Rent Allowances

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to remove tax on police rent allowances.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Tax legislation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But under regulation 50 of the Police Regulations 1979, the tax paid on rent allowance is reimbursed by police authorities in the following financial year by means of compensatory grant. Rent allowance is thus effectively tax free.

Criminal Injuries

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in dealing with claims.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available on the average time taken to deal with applications to the board. As stated in the board's past annual report (Cmnd. 9684, paragraph 5), three quarters of cases resolved in the 1984-85 financial year were resolved within a year of application.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any investigations are carried out by inspectors, employed under the Cruelty to Animals Act, into the source of animals used in experimentation.

Mr. Mellor: No, this is not currently part of the duties of inspectors appointed under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill, the source of all animals used in scientific procedures will be controlled by means of conditions attached to the project licences, and to the certificates of designated breeding, supplying and scientific procedure establishments. One of the duties of the inspectors will be to visit designated establishments to ensure that conditions of licences and certificates are being complied with.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Home Office inspectors employed between 1980 and to date, under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, have previously performed experiments on animals in commercial, academic or Government laboratories.

Mr. Mellor: It is not the practice to provide information of this kind.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit the draize eye irritancy test.

Mr. Mellor: No. There is not yet any proven non-sentient alternative to this test. However, we intend to

issue guidance to researchers with the aim of ensuring that the test is used only where absolutely necessary and that any painful effects are reduced to a minimum.

Sussex Police Authority

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the authorised establishment of the Sussex police force; what is the present strength of the force; and what representations he has received from the Sussex police authority on the level of grant.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The authorised establishment of the Sussex police is 2,830. The strength of the force on 31 December 1985 was 2,790. My right hon. Friend has not received any representations recently from the Sussex police authority about the level of grant.

Mr. Claude Dixon

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policy implications of the report by Mr. Nigel Baker QC, on the incident at Fulbourn hospital, Cambridgeshire, involving Claude Dixon, a former patient at Broadmoor; if, in light of the report's findings, he is satisfied that it was in the public interest to discharge this person from Broadmoor; what arrangements he has made for the future safe custody of this person; and if he will review the criteria applied when considering the recommendations for release of psychotic killers from prison hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a copy of Mr. Baker's report and are studying it, as I understand is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

The committee of inquiry found no reason to criticise the decision to transfer Mr. Dixon to Fulbourn hospital, and we consider that it was reasonable in the light of the information which was available at the time. We already take full account of considerations of public safety when considering proposals for the transfer of mentally disordered offenders from special hospitals such as Broadmoor. Mr. Dixon is now being detained in Broadmoor hospital under a restriction order made for an indefinite period.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Morning Worship

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, column *710*, to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 17 January, what steps he proposes to take to monitor the level of compliance of local education authorities with the statutory requirements regarding morning worship in schools under the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has no plans to collect information centrally on this matter. Where complaints are made to him that the requirements of the Education Act 1944 on collective worship are not being met in a particular school, he obtains details of the circumstances of the individual case and carefully considers these in the light of his statutory functions.

Art Teachers

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many teachers employed specifically to teach art there are in each local education authority.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is not held centrally. Information for England as a whole is available from a staffing survey carried out by the Department in 1984 among a sample of maintained secondary schools. It is estimated from this survey that some 23,000 full-time and 3,000 part-time teachers had art as a subject forming part of a qualification above A-level. Some 16,000 full-time teachers were teaching art. Not all of them had the subject as part of a qualification above A-level, but those who did not were providing only about 5 per cent. of tuition in art. Some teachers of art were teaching others subjects as well.

EMPLOYMENT

Conference of Ministers of Labour

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the outcome of the third conference of European Ministers of Labour organised by the Council of Europe.

Mr. Alan Clark: At the conference there was a useful exchange of views on employment trends, youth unemployment and the impact of new technology on employment, which provided a good opportunity to explain United Kingdom Government policy on these issues. I shall be arranging for a copy of the final communiqué to be placed in the Library as soon as the definitive text is available.

Job Clubs

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General what consideration has been give to the encouragement of job clubs in Hertfordshire; how such organisations are run; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Manpower Services Commission currently operates 30 job clubs to help longer term unemployed people find jobs, and is evaluating their effectiveness. Should this confirm their early success, the commission has been asked to introduce a national network of 200 job clubs by the end of this year. These plans include a proposal for a job club at Stevenage jobcentre. Other sites have yet to be chosen.

Job clubs are organised by jobcentre staff. The job club leader runs a series of sessions over a two-week period designed to restore self-confidence and teach job-hunting techniques. The leader then encourages and supports members in their search for work. Initial evidence suggests that two thirds of all people passing through job clubs enter employment.

Self-Employment

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate, by trade and professional categories, of the number of self-employed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates from the labour force survey conducted in spring 1984 of the number of self-employed in the United Kingdom by occupational groupings are contained in the following table:

Self-employed persons by occupation, United Kingdom, 1984

	Classification of Occupations 1980 Occupation Order	*Thousands*
I	Professional and related supporting management; senior national and local government managers	143
II	Professional and related in education, welfare and health	150
III	Literary, artistic and sports	101
IV	Professional and related in science, engineering, technology and similar fields	76
V	Managerial	904
VI	Clerical and related	79
VII	Selling	146
VIII	Security and protective service	2
IX	Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal service	115
X	Farming, fishing and related	68
XI	Materials processing, making and repairing (excluding metal and electrical)	197
XII	Processing, making, repairing and related (metal and electrical)	226
XIII	Painting, repetitive assembling, product inspecting, packaging and related	93
XIV	Construction, mining and related	268
XV	Transport operating, materials moving and storing and related	120
XVI	Miscellaneous	6
	All occupations*	2,698

* Includes inadequately described occupations and occupation not stated.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General if he plans to introduce legislation to seek to increase the minimum amount of money given to people made redundant.

Mr. Trippier: There are no plans to change employees' statutory entitlements, although an order already approved increases to £155 the amount of weekly earnings reckonable for redundancy pay purposes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is *(a)* the level of output, *(b)* the number of jobs and *(c)* the percentage of the work force in the Northern Ireland manufacturing industry for each year since 1979.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Index of manufacturing output (1980=100) (annual average)*	*Employees in employment in manufacturing at June*	*Manufacturing as a per cent. of total employees in employment at June*
1979	106	144,950	28
1980	100	135,360	26
1981	95	121,240	25
1982	91	108,700	23
1983	94	102,510	22
1984	96	101,430	22
1985	*98	101,070	22

* 1985 figure is an averge of the first three quarters only.

Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs were created by the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board in 1985; and if the board met its target of new jobs for this year.

Dr. Boyson: In the calendar year 1985, the IDB promoted 3,966 new jobs in Northern Ireland. The target for new job promotions in the financial year 1985-86 is 5,750.

This has proved a difficult period for investment but at present it is not possible to say whether or not the target will be achieved.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the current year; in what circumstances; in what locations the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *408*]: During 1985 1,173 plastic baton rounds were fired in Northern Ireland. Eleven people were allegedly injured during that period. So far this year 10 plastic baton rounds were fired and there have been no reports of anyone having been injured.

I am writing to the hon. Member with the information he has requested about the circumstances and places in which the baton rounds were fired. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library.

Firearms

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many firearms, by type, namely, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in the latest calendar year and to date; and, for each type, how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the Regular Army.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *408-9*]: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available about weapons which have been recovered or stolen is given in the following table:

January 1985 to December 1985

	Pistols/revolvers	*Rifles*	*Machine guns/ sub-machine guns*	*Shotguns*
Firearms recovered by the Security Forces in Northern Ireland	76	47	6	44
Legally held firearms stolen in Northern Ireland—stolen from:				
Army	1	—	—	—
Ulster Defence Regiment	12	3	—	—
Royal Ulster Constabulary/Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve	6	—	—	—
Civilians	9	13	—	79

1 January to 19 January 1986

	Pistols/revolvers	*Rifles*	*Machine guns/ sub-machine guns*	*Shotguns*
Firearms recovered by the Security Forces in Northern Ireland	3	4	—	6
Legally held firearms stolen in Northern Ireland—stolen from:				
Army	—	—	—	—
Ulster Defence Regiment	—	—	—	—
Royal Ulster Constabulary/Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve	1	—	—	—
Civilians	—	—	—	2

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister if any disciplinary action is to be taken against any member of her staff over their conduct in the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

The Prime Minister: Breaches of discipline by officials are matters for Heads of Departments, but so far as I am aware there has been no breach of the disciplinary code in this matter.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the production of the Trident warheads will begin.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The production of warheads will fully support the Trident submarine in-service date of the mid-1990s.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the testing of the Trident D5 warheads.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Sir. A. Butler), in response to a question from the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 24 May 1985 at column *600*.

Royal Navy (Frigates)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report by Lord Hill-Norton into the choice of the new frigate for the Royal Navy; when he will be in a position to announce what action he proposes to take on it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I cannot comment on Lord Hill-Norton's report until it is received and I have had the opportunity to study it. Publication will, of course, be a matter for the author.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if officials of his Department have had any discussions with United Technologies concerning British participation in the strategic defence initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No such discussions have taken place.

Royal Naval Air Service, Yeovilton

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans further to privatise facilities provided at, or duties carried out by, established Ministry of Defence units at Royal Naval Air Service, Yeovilton.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence already makes extensive use of civilian flying services under contract to perform certain support and training tasks at RNAS Yeovilton and this will continue. Further privatisation of the maintenance of aircraft ground support equipment and ground radio installations is being considered. In addition, in line with other RN establishments, responsibility for grounds maintenance will be transferred to the PSA which will then put the task out to contract. For Yeovilton this is likely to occur by early 1987.

Nimrod

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Nimrod programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend on 14 January at column *914*.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for British Aerospace generally and its Woodford plant in particular of a possible cancellation of the Nimrod airborne early warning programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: British Aerospace work on the Nimrod AEW Mk 3 project is well advanced; but I can assure my hon. Friend that no decision on the future of the project would be taken without careful assessment of the industrial implications.

105 FD Ammunition

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to place an order for 105 FD ammunition; and which companies he proposes to order it from.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have this week placed an order for 105 FD ammunition with the RO factory at Chorley. We expect to place a further order for a smaller quantity later this year; it has not yet been decided with whom.

Marine Services Department (Audit Report)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the audit report into the Marine Services Department.

Mr. Lee: A copy of a consultative document detailing the audit's findings was placed in the Library when the report was issued to the trade unions last July.

Royal Dockyards (Related Establishments)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of the related establishments to Rosyth and Devonport royal dockyards, as referred to in the Dockyard Services Bill.

Mr. Lee: Those "related establishments" for which Rosyth and Devonport dockyards currently provide support and which may, under the terms of the Dockyard Services Bill, continue to receive such support from commercially managed dockyards, include:

HMS Drake
HMS Raleigh
HMS Fisgard
HMS Cambridge
HMS Seahawk
HMS Cochrane (including Caledonia Training Centre)
HMS Gannet
HMS Neptune
Clyde submarine base
Principal supplies and transport officer (Navy), Devonport Naval base
Principal supplies and transport officer (Navy) Rosyth Naval base
Royal Naval armament depot, Crombie
Royal Naval armament depot, Ernesettle
Royal Naval armament depot, Bull Point
Royal Naval stores depot, Wrangaton
Royal Naval stores depot, Exeter
Royal Naval stores depot, Lathalmond
Royal Elizabeth yard, Kirkliston
Royal William yard
Thanckes oil fuel depot
Keyham oil fuel depot
Maritime headquarters, Mount Rise
Maritime headquarters, Pitreavie
Royal Naval hospital, Stonehouse
Britannia Royal Naval college, Dartmouth
Admiralty research establishment, Rosyth
Royal Marines Arbroath
Royal Marines Lympstone
Royal Marines Stonehouse
Royal Marines Seaton barracks
Royal Marines Bickleigh
Royal Marines Coypool
Royal Marines Instow
Royal Marines Citadel
Royal Naval engineering college Manadon
Royal Naval air station Culdrose
Captain Fleet maintenance
Royal Maritime auxiliary service Turnchapel
Clyde Marine Services, Greenock
Royal Naval Reserve and Cadet training, Corps units
Wireless and telegraph stations
Royal Naval Auxiliary service stations
Royal Naval air workshop, Almondbank

Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to put the work of Admiralty surface weapons establishment, Portsmouth, out to private contractors.

Mr. Lee: The former Admiralty surface weapons establishment was merged on 1 April 1984 with other units to form the Admiralty research establishment (ARE). So far as ARE sites in the Portsmouth area are concerned, there are currently no firm plans to contractorise operations but a number of possibilities are being examined, including the operation and maintenance of facilities at Haslar and at the experimental diving unit and physiological laboratory at Portsmouth and Alverstoke, respectively.

"Damage to Ship Containing Chemical Weapons"

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the closed document in the Public Record Office, entitled "Damage to Ship Containing Chemical Weapons" (AN2—13585) will be released;

(2) whether the closed document in the Public Record Office, entitled "Damage to Ship Containing Chemical Weapons" (AN2—13585) refers to the SS John Henry in Bari harbour in December 1943; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The document in question is not closed, but is open to inspection by members of the public.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the personnel of the companies which have visited Her Majesty's dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport in order to acquaint themselves with facilities and services in which they might be interested in relation to the Dockyard Services Bill and the personnel of his Department whom they met on such visits.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 January 1986, c. *629*]: About 40 representatives of companies which have expressed an interest in tendering for the contracts to operate the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth have visited the dockyards in pursuit of that interest. It would be a matter for the companies concerned to give the names

of their representatives who have visited the dockyards. Detailed records of the many dockyard and naval base staff in my Department whom the representatives met do not exist, and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the companies-consortia which have shown an interest in bidding for the refit and repair services at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards, detailing the amount of current contracts placed by his Department with such organisations or any subsidiaries.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 January 1986, c. *629*]: The following companies and consortia have shown an interest in tendering for the contracts to operate the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth:

A & P Appledore/Plessey/Trafalgar House
Babcock International/Thorn EMI.
Balfour Beatty/Weir Group.
British Aerospace.
Costain.
Devonport Dockyard Ltd.
Flight Refuelling.
Foster Wheeler.
GEC.
Hawker Siddeley.
Northern Engineering Industries.
Press Offshore.
RCA Services.
Seaforth Welding.
STC.
Taylor Woodrow.
Tyne Ship Repair.

Some of these have subsequently withdrawn their interest.

The information requested about current contracts placed by my Department with such organisations or any subsidiaries could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Approved Stockists

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied the British Standards Institute Register of approved stockists for his Department's purposes can ensure that products supplied against Ministry of Defence requirements have direct traceability to, and have been supplied by, his Department's approved sources of manufacture.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *448*]: Yes.

Westland Helicopters

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what rates of exchange were used to cost the various options open to his Department for the purchase of helicopters; and what effect there would be if the costings were all adjusted to current rates of exchange.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 January 1986, c. *533*]: Whenever purchases involving foreign exchange are being considered, the appropriate current rate of exchange is used. However, none of the three collaborative projects—EH101, NH90 and light battlefield helicopter—has yet reached the point where production orders are about to be placed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations were made to the Governments of France, Italy and Germany before 29 November last to persuade them to take a shareholding directly or indirectly in Westland helicopters in return for a commitment by the United Kingdom to buy a continental helicopter.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 January 1986, c. *533*]: There were discussions with the Governments of France, Italy and Germany about ways and means of meeting helicopter requirements on a number of occasions. The possibility of a United Kingdom commitment to buy a continental helicopter in the context of a possible shareholding in Westland did not arise.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Palestine Refugees

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how much was subscribed in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 by each Government who contributed to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east.

Mr. Renton: I am arranging for the relevant extracts from reports by the Commissioner General of United Nations Relief and Works Agency to be placed in the Library of the House.

Five Continents Peace Initiative

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the latest proposals and role in arms negotiations of the five continents peace initiative.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 3 December 1985, at column *202*.

Hong Kong

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had in the European Economic Community and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade about the international trading status of Hong Kong after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

Hong Kong's future position in the GATT is one of the subjects under discussion with the Chinese Government in the Sino-British joint liaison group.

Dependent Territories (Philatelic Policy)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review current philatelic policy in respect of the remaining British dependent territories, in consultation with those territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. The current policy provides an effective safeguard for the best interests of the dependent territories while having due regard to the royal prerogative in the field of postage stamp policy.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given by Her Majesty's Government to the proposal by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for on-site inspection for verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: For a number of years the Russians have claimed a willingness to consider on-site inspections, but they are now making prior acceptance of a moratorium a pre-condition for such consideration. We welcome this willingness to the extent that it implies recognition of legitimate Western concerns on verification. But the demand for prior acceptance of a moratorium is unacceptable.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of any recent representations he has received from the Governments of signatory nations of the non-proliferation treaty regarding progress on the agreement of a comprehensive test ban.

Mr. Renton: Since the review conference of the NPT last September, the only substantive approach we have had was contained in the 15 January proposals by Mr. Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the problems of verifying a comprehensive test ban treaty which Her Majesty's Government believe are still outstanding.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) on 11 December 1985 at column *636*.

Disarmament

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Western proposals at the conference on disarmament include provision for the verification of chemical production by limited companies as well as by state-run concerns.

Mr. Renton: Yes. United Kingdom proposals to this end were tabled at the conference on disarmament in Geneva on 6 March 1985 with full Western support. These provide for controls based on routine, random inspection or data exchange to be applied to all industry, both privately and publicly owned, which manufactures particular chemicals potentially subject to misuse.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to Mr. Gorbachev's most recent proposals on nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Gorbachev sent a message to the Prime Minister on 15 January setting out the latest Soviet arms control proposals. We are giving these careful consideration in consultation with our allies.

Nepal

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his forthcoming visit to Nepal, he will raise with the Government of Nepal allegations of persecution of Nepalese Christians.

Mr. Eggar: No. Allegations about the treatment of Nepalese citizens in Nepal are an internal matter for the Government of that country. We have no locus standi to intervene. Her Majesty's embassy at Kathmandu is in regular contact with Christian leaders and missionary societies in Nepal.

We have no hesitation about making our views on human rights clear to other Governments when necessary. His Majesty King Birendra and the Nepalese Foreign Minister—who is himself a Christian—are aware of our position. I understand that the Foreign Minister has undertaken to investigate any specific allegations of persecution of Nepalese Christians. In the circumstances, I do not consider it would be appropriate for us to make representations.

I understand that the delegation which the hon. Member recently accompanied to Nepal received the full and open co-operation of the Nepalese Government.

THE ARTS

Arts Council

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister for the Arts what has been the funding for the Arts Council in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: Grant-in-aid for the Arts Council in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	80·5
1982-83	91·3
1983-84	94·6
1984-85	100·0
1985-86	105·0

On 14 November 1985 I announced that the Arts Council's grant for 1986-87 would be £135·6 million, including £25 million "abolition funding".

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the share of total personal incomes taken in direct and indirect taxation and social security contributions in each financial year from 1978-79 to 1985-86; and what comparable figures are available to him for the United States, France, West Germany and Japan, respectively.

Mr. Moore: The latest available estimates are for calendar years as follows. No comparable estimates are readily available for indirect taxation on households in countries other than the United Kingdom.

	Percentage of total personal income					
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
United Kingdom						
Direct taxes on households	14·1	12·9	13·0	13·3	13·4	13·1
Social security contributions	2·9	2·8	2·9	3·3	3·7	4·0
Indirect taxes on consumers' expenditure	11·4	12·4	12·8	13·6	13·7	13·7
United States of America						
Direct taxes on households	13·0	13·5	13·5	13·8	13·5	12·6
Social security contributions	3·3	3·5	3·5	3·6	3·6	3·7
France						
Direct taxes on households	6·6	6·6	7·0	6·9	7·0	7·5
Social security contributions	5·9	6·7	7·2	6·9	7·2	7·5
German Federal Republic						
Direct taxes on households	12·7	12·2	12·4	11·8	11·7	11·8
Social security contributions	9·2	9·2	9·2	9·5	9·8	9·7
Japan						
Direct taxes on households	5·5	6·4	6·9	7·3	7·4	7·6
Social security contributions	3·6	4·1	4·0	4·2	4·5	4·4

Sources:
(i) Based on OECD "National Accounts 1971-1983" for direct taxes and social security contributions and total personal income.
(ii) CSO: "United Kingdom National Accounts" 1985 edition for consumers' expenditure

The figures should be used with caution since the international comparisons are subject to limitations because of the differences between countries in their economic and financial structures and the degree of Government involvement in the provision of services. Also, "households" include unincorporated businesses for all countries referred to, except for the German Federal Republic.

European Monetary System

Mr. Best asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the light of recent exchange rate movements, the United Kingdom is to become a member of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement in the debate on 29 January.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide for value added tax paid on standard rated clothing and shoes purchased for use by children aged under 16 years to be fully refundable to the purchaser.

Mr. Brooke: No. The scope and operation of the present relief for young children's clothing and footwear was thoroughly reviewed in 1980. It was concluded that changes of the kind suggested would increase the cost of administering and cotrolling the relief, and increase the risk of its misapplication to persons for whom it was never intended.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the estimated cost of providing mortgage interest tax relief in 1985-86 and 1986-87, at 1985-86 prices, showing separately the estimated cost of mortgages previously under the option mortgage scheme.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the latest years now available, identifiable public expenditure by programme in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as a percentage of total United Kingdom public expenditure, *(c)* as an amount per capita and *(d)* as an amount per capita expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom amount per capita.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 20 December 1985 at column 360. I will arrange for more recent data to be published in the *Official Report* as soon as it becomes available.

SCOTLAND

National Health Service

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report on the National Health Service staffing review of Scotland will be available.

Mr. John MacKay: The review, which is being undertaken with the full co-operation of the Scottish joint consultants committee, relates to medical staffing and is taking place on a specialty by specialty basis. A report is not expected before the summer of 1987.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposal to strengthen central manpower control in the National Health Service by making use of the regulatory mechanism already in existence by the Advisory Committee on Medical Establishment and to give additional powers to the Advisory Committee on Medical Establishment to redistribute hospital doctors to protect patient services.

Mr. John MacKay: The remit of the Advisory Committee on Medical Establishments has, with the agreement of the profession, been extended to include *(a)* a requirement to approve paragraph 94 (clinical assistant)

appointments where the post involves six or more sessions per week and *(b)* the authority to transfer junior posts from the better endowed centres when it considers a request for an additional post in another centre is justified.

No further proposals to extend the remit of the advisory committee have been put to the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect on patient care in Scotland of the Greater Glasgow health board's decisions not to replace junior posts as doctors' contracts expire and to offer early retirement to acute sector consultants.

Mr. John MacKay: I am advised by the health board that it has taken no general decision not to replace junior doctors' posts as contracts expire, but that—in the light of its assessment of priorities against the resources available to it — it is considering various proposals relating to medical staffing, including an early retirement scheme for consultants, in conjunction with the BMA and the area medical committee. In the meantime, the board proposes to review carefully the need for immediate replacement of posts which fall vacant. In every case I expect the board to give full consideration to the implications for services to patients.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether in the light of population trends more recent than those upon which the Scottish Health Services Allocation of Resources in the Eighties formula was based, he is satisfied that the Greater Glasgow health board is not being under-funded.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation formula (SHARE) provides for annual uprating of weighted population figures. The figures used in the calculation of allocations for a given year are an average of *(a)* the figures for the years three and four years prior to that year (the most recent years for which firm data are available) and *(b)* the Registrar General's estimates for the immediately preceding year. The weighted population of the Greater Glasgow health board's area has declined steadily since the SHARE formula was introduced. The board was overfunded in SHARE terms when the formula was introduced and remains so.

Road Expenditure

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show 1984-85 outturn expenditure, 1985-86 estimated expenditure and 1986-87 planned expenditure on (i) trunk roads *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* routine maintenance, (ii) local authority roads *(a)* new construction and improvement and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public transport administration, (iv) local authority car parks *(a)* capital and *(b)* current (net) and (v) road safety in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

£ million cash

	*1984-85 Outturn**	*1985-86 Estimate*	*1986-87 Planned*
(i) Motorways and Trunk Roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	84·7	88·8	†77·2
(b) Structural maintenance	12·5	15·3	18·0
(c) Routine and winter maintenance	16·8	15·8	17·0
(ii) Local Authority Roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	103·7	120·9	124·7
(b) Maintenance	150·3	154·0	158·8
(iii) Public Transport Administration‡	23·1	24·7	25·6
(iv) Local Authority Car Parks			
(a) Capital	1·6	1·9	1·9
(b) Current (net)	—	—	—
(v) Road Safety in Scotland	1·3	1·4	1·5

* Local authority outturn figures are provisional only.

† Reflects in part a transfer of £6 million to local authority roads and transport capital to assist with the Edinburgh City Bypass, and the transfer of additional funds to structural maintenance.

‡ Local authority expenditure on administration of roads and transport services.

§ Excludes expenditure by the Department of Transport on national road safety publicity. Expenditure on new construction and improvements and on maintenance also contributes to road safety.

ENVIRONMENT

GLC Property Disposals

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 6 Fortress road, NW5, for which the Greater London council applied on 25 November 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 41-45, Shorts gardens for which the Greater London council applied on 1 November 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 8 Kellner road, for which the Greater London council applied on 31 October 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of the Peacock public house for which the Greater London council applied on 21 October 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Consent has been given to these applications.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of the Avon trading centre for which the Greater London council applied on 7 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I am not aware of any application from the Greater London council for consent under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 or the Local Government Act 1985 to the disposal of the Avon trading centre. However, consent has been given to an application dated 7 November 1985 from the council for the refurbishment of the Avon trading estate phase IV.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of The Ivories public house for which the Greater London council applied on 17 December 1985;

(2) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of land fronting Northumbria street for which the Greater London council applied on 11 December 1985;

(3) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 38 Southall high street for which the Greater London council applied on 11 December 1985;

(4) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of 155 and 165 Lower road for which the Greater London council applied on 5 December 1985;

(5) why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of property in Barnsbury street for which the Greater London council applied on 25 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Tuesday 21 January at column *141*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal of Rishmore Crescent, E.5, for which the Greater London council applied on 16 December 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I am not aware of any such application. Consent has been given to the letting of a contract by the Greater London council for works at Rushmore Crescent, E5, pursuant to an application dated 16 December 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet given his consent to the disposal North East Regional Stores for which the Greater London council applied on 29 November 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I am not aware of any such application. Consent has been given to the acquisition by the Greater London council of North East Regional Stores pursuant to an application dated 25 November 1985.

Town and Country Planning Order 1972

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received with regard to the proposed review of the Town and Country Planning Order 1972.

Mr. Tracey: By 30 January my Department had received 116 written representations on the subject of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1972 in response to the proposals of a sub-group of the property advisory group, which were published on 2 December 1985.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Hancock asked the Sectetary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him with regard to the possible listing as an historic buiding of the central barrack block at the Royal Marines barracks, Eastney, Portsmouth; if he intends to list this building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My Department was approached in October with a request to consider the central barrack block for listing. We are now seeking the advice of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission on the case. I shall write to the hon. Member when a decision has been made.

Invincible (Wreck)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the wreck of the Invincible off Southsea.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has received a request from Invincible Conservations (1744-1758) Limited to call in planning applications by the Southern water authority for works in connection with a proposed long sea sewage outfall. The trust considers that the discharge from the outfall will harm the wreck and interfere with the work of divers.

My right hon. Friend has been advised by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport that the advisory committee on protected wrecks is concerned that the wreck of the Invincible may be at risk.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what applications have been made to him by the Invincible Conservation Trust in connection with its work on the wreck; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Invincible Conservations (1744-1758) Limited have requested my right hon. Friend to call in Southern water authority's applications to Portsmouth city council for the construction of a jetty and the temporary use of land in connection with a proposed long sea sewage outfall.

My right hon. Friend decided not to call in these applications but he will take account of the trust's representations if and when he is required to consider an application by the Southern water authority for consent to discharge.

Sellafield (Radioactive Waste)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he was advised in advance of the discharge of radioactive material from Sellafield into the Irish sea on Friday 24 January; if he authorised this discharge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department was informed in advance of the discharge of radioactive material from Sellafield into the Irish sea on Thursday 23 January. The amount discharged was well within the limits specified in the authorisation for disposal of radioactive waste issued jointly by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. My officials have nevertheless asked British Nuclear Fuels Limited for an explanation of why they chose to discharge this material in preference to any other options that may have been open to them.

"Paying for Local Government"

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications of his proposals contained in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" for the rate concession to firms which locate in an enterprise zone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our proposals will have no effect on the rate holiday for businesses locating in enterprise zones.

Housing Capital Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the gross provision for housing capital expenditure by local authorities in England for 1986-87 relates to receipts accumulated and unspent by the Greater London council or to the non-prescribed proportion of receipts which have accrued to the Greater London council or which will accrue to the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: The gross provision for housing capital expenditure by local authorities in England is determined at the national level, and neither this figure nor the estimate made of the aggregate spending power available to local authorities from accumulated receipts, is broken down into figures for individual authorities or regions.

Housing (Renovation Programme)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an assurance that the existing renovation programme covering ex-Greater London council housing stock will be completed on schedule by 1992.

Sir George Young: I cannot give such an assurance. After the abolition of the GLC, the boroughs will receive the resources which would otherwise have been given to the GLC for this purpose; but it will be for the boroughs to decide how to employ those resources according to their own priorities.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much of the housing investment programme has been allocated to the London borough of Lambeth for 1986-87 in respect of the ex-Greater London council housing stock in that borough;

(2) how the liabilities inherited by the London boroughs from the Greater London council have been taken into account in the determination of the housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The allocations to boroughs took full account of the boroughs' bids and of estimates made by the GLC of liabilities for 1986-87 and the balance of the renovation programme.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the share of national housing resources which will be available to London local authorities in 1986-87 from housing investment programme and capital receipts; and how this compares with the resources available in 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86;

(2) whether he will give the housing investment programme allocations for each of the years 1979-80 to 1986-87 *(a)* for London, *(b)* for inner London boroughs, *(c)* for London as a proportion of the national housing investment programme, *(d)* for inner London boroughs as a proportion of the national investment programme and the prescribed proportion of housing capital receipts for each of those years (i) in London, (ii) in inner London boroughs, (iii) in London, as a proportion of national housing capital receipts and (iv) in inner London, as a proportion of national housing capital receipts.

Sir George Young: The HIP allocations were as follows:

	(a) London £ million	*(b)* Inner London £ million	*(c)* London per cent	*(d)* Inner London per cent
1979-80	887	458	34·9	18·0
1980-81	769	417	34·9	18·9
1981-82	552	308	30·8	17·2
1982-83	632	389	28·8	17·7
1983-84	596	350	26·7	15·7
1984-85	560	331	30·2	17·9
1985-86*	483	286	30·3	18·0
1986-87*	430	305	30·5	21·6

* Figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are initial allocations

The prescribed proportions of housing capital receipts reported by authorities were as follows:

	(i) London	*(ii)* Inner London	*(iii)* London per cent	*(iv)* Inner London per cent
1979-80	0	0	—	—
1980-81	0	0	—	—
1981-82	133	51	26	10
1982-83	215	80	23	9
1983-84	183	51	20	6
1984-85	215	88	28	12
1985-86	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1986-87	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Authorities may increase the spending power of allocations each year by the prescribed proportion of accumulated unused and current year capital receipts. Detailed estimates of accumulated receipts are not at present available.

Hillingdon

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the London borough of Hillingdon will receive any housing capital receipts from the London Residuary Body as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what liabilities the London borough of Hillingdon will inherit as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council in relation to housing stock transferred to the borough from the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: According to Hillingdon council and housing associations working in its area, some £600,000 in respect of transferred stock and housing association stock.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *426*, if he will name the bodies or individuals who made representations to him about the interim budget issued by the London Residuary Body; if he will place the submissions in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. It is for those making representations to make them available if they wish.

Housing Capital Receipts

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to use his powers under

section 77 of the Local Government Act 1985 to direct the London Residuary Body how and when to distribute housing capital receipts to the London boroughs.

Sir George Young: Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the timing of the notification of the distribution of housing capital receipts by the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has received representations from the London boroughs and has drawn them to the attention of the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to notify the London boroughs of the amounts they will be able to spend as a result of the distribution by the London Residuary Body of housing capital receipts.

Sir George Young: The timing of the distribution is a matter for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he will take account of the outstanding repair work on housing stock transferred from the Greater London council in the distribution to the London boroughs of the capital receipts accruing to the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: The capital receipts will be distributed in proportion to HIP allocations, which are themselves a measure of need for repair and other capital work in the boroughs.

North Southwark District Plan

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to approve the north Southwark district plan; and why he has not already given his decision.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has decided that he should call in the north Southwark local plan for his own decision. A letter conveying that decision was sent to the London borough of Southwark on 28 January.

Cash Limits

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes. The level of receipts from disposals of the new town property has been running at a higher level than expected. Accordingly, the non-voted cash net limit (DOE/NT1) for this year has been reduced by £15·88 million from minus £99·6 million to minus £115·53 million. The net cash limit is negative because, with the new towns programme nearing completion, disposal receipts now exceed the amount of gross new investment.

£1·63 million of the additional receipts arises from a further disposal of properties from the Central Lancashire Development Corporation to various housing associations.

To permit the acquisition, the non-voted net cash limit DOE/HC1 has been increased accordingly, from £698·4 million to £700·03 million.

The overall effect of the changes is a reduction of £14·25 million in the Department's public expenditure provision.

TRANSPORT

Channel Fixed Link

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to provide increased funding to British Rail to move to a programme of modernisation based on electrification and electric multiple units, instead of the current plans based on diesel multiple units in preparation for the completion of the fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for BR to bring forward investment proposals including proposals resulting from a Channel fixed link. BR proposed the current investment in diesel multiple units which are predominantly for local services and I approved it on financial grounds.

British Rail

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the implications for revenues from freight traffic of the current shortage of locomotive power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The availability of locomotives is a matter for the management of British Rail.

Road Traffic Act 1980

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends bringing in legislation to amend the Road Traffic Act 1980 in line with the recommendations of the Rayner scrutiny published a year ago concerning revision of certain parts of the Act in relation to a levy to charge against a driver of any vehicle involved in injuring a person needing hospital attention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Rayner scrutiny recommendations concerns section 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 which provides for the collection of prescribed fees from drivers for emergency treatment of road accident victims. The Government intend to introduce legislation to abolish the emergency treatment fee payable to health authorities at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Airline Seats (Fireproofing)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding fireproofing of aircraft seats; if he will have discussions at international level to seek to produce improved international safety standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Aviation safety and standards are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has kept me informed of its new regulations regarding the fire-resistance of aircraft seats and has confirmed that these regulations apply to the seat cushions and seat backs taken as a whole, rather than to the seat coverings. Equivalent requirements are being applied in the United States and most European countries and are expected to be adopted in other countries.

Motorways (Interchange)

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Transport why no provision has been made for vehicles

using the M25 motorway in both directions to turn on to the M26 motorway in order to join the M20 motorway south-east of London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are direct connections between the M26 motorway and the M25 motorway to the west. No provision has been made for connections between the M26 and the M25 to the north because the volume of traffic predicted to use them was not expected to be sufficient to justify the cost; there is a full interchange and additional links between the M25 and M20 motorways at Swanley.

We will review the need for additional facilities on the M26 later in the year after traffic patterns have been established following the opening of the Swanley-Sevenoaks section of M25.

Airports (Libyan Student Engineers)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Libyan student engineers are in training at *(a)* Heathrow *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* any other airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. *387*]: My Department does not keep a detailed record of the numbers of Libyan students being trained at United Kingdom airports; the arrangements whereby foreign nationals are admitted to and remain in this country are a matter for the Home Secretary. I understand that 180 Libyan engineering apprentices are being trained by British Airways at Heathrow, 22 are being trained by British Caledonian at Gatwick and about 50 are being trained at other United Kingdom airports. My Department has issued guidelines to British Airways and British Caledonian on the special security arrangements to which these apprentices should be subject.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Productivity

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the average annual increase in agricultural labour productivity from 1983 to the latest available date.

Mrs. Fenner: Labour productivity, as defined in table 24 of the annual review of agriculture 1986 White Paper (Cmnd. 9708) is estimated to have increased by an annual average of 7 per cent. between 1983 and 1985.

ADAS Laboratory, Bangor

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations his Department has received concerning the proposed closures of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service laboratory at Bangor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My Department has to date received three representations specifically about the proposed closure of the ADAS agricultural science laboratory at Bangor which I announced, together with the closure of three other laboratories, on 11 October 1985. A copy of that announcement was printed in the *Official Report* for 21 November 1985 at column 298-99. I stated there that the arrangements for maintaining the essential services needed in the areas concerned would be announced later. Analytical services for the whole of Wales will be concentrated at the ADAS laboratory at Trawscoed, near Aberystwyth. Other advisory services will continue to be available in north and south Wales from offices at Caernarfon and Cardiff. Every effort is being made to find alternative jobs for the staff affected by these laboratory closures. The veterinary investigation centre at Bangor is not affected by these proposals, and will continue to operate there.

Hens (Battery Cages)

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent progress there has been in reaching a Community-wide agreement on the size of battery cages for hens.

Mrs. Fenner: The draft directive on minimum welfare standards for battery hens has not been discussed since the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 9 and 10 December, about which my right hon. Friend made a statement on 11 December 1985 at column 922.

Sellafield (Radioactive Waste)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications of the discharge of radioactive material from Sellafield on 24 January for the fish stock in the Irish sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: On 23 January, BNFL discharged 440kgs of uranium into the Irish sea from its Sellafield plant after a minor fault had developed in an evaporator. This discharge, which was well within the authorised limits, is not expected to have any measurable effect on fish or other marine life. My officials have, however, asked BNFL to provide a full statement of the circumstances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state, for each industry in public ownership in 1979, the latest annual payment paid to former owners; and, in respect of any such industry which has been privatised, if there is any contribution from public funds for compensation payments to former owners.

Mr. Butcher: Compensation from public funds to former owners of nationalised industries sponsored by my Department has been paid in full and amounted to:

	£ million
Steel industry	834
Aerospace industry	158·75
Shipbuilding industry	75·54

The Post Office has never been in private ownership.

National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total of capital and revenue expenditure so far incurred in the move of the national weights and measures laboratory from Chapter street to

Teddington; and how much more money he expects to spend to complete this move and to equip and man this new facility.

Mr. Howard: Total expenditure so far incurred in the move of the national weights and measures laboratory from Chapter street to Teddington is £584,000. It is expected to cost a further £3,470,000 to complete the move.

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the governmental agencies to which his Department gives grant aid which in turn provide financial support for voluntary bodies and organisations, and the size of the grant so given in the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: There are no such agencies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* those voluntary bodies and organisations assisted by his Department with grant aid in the last financial year for which figures are available and the size of the grant so given.

Mr. Butcher: In 1984-85, the voluntary bodies assisted by my Department were the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the National Federation of Consumer Groups and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Their respective grants-in-aid in 1984-85 were £6,393,217, £700,000, £11,000 and £63,000.

CR6 Taxi

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has received from the company concerned regarding the reasons for the delay in bringing the CR6 taxi cab into production; whether, in the light of these delays, the Government are reconsidering their policy towards financial support for the project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Various reasons for the delay in putting the CR6 into production have been put to my Department by the company but these are commercially confidential. As my hon. Friend will be aware from press reports, however, the company has now decided not to proceed with the Range Rover CR6 but is proposing to introduce a new taxi, capable of carrying a wheelchair-bound passenger based upon the existing FX4. My Department is discussing the future of the project with LTI and will then consider any implications for its financial support.

Trade Balance

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current deficit in trade between *(a)* the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community and *(b)* the United Kingdom and the non-European Economic Community countries in (i) manufacturing, (ii) steel, (iii) motor vehicles and (iv) textiles; and if he will give equivalent figures for 1972 and 1979.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 January 1986, c. *605*]: The balances for manufactures derived from figures on the balance of payments (BOP) basis, with both exports and imports valued exclusive of freight and insurance charges, are:

£ million

	1972	1979	1985
European Community	−50	−2,555	−8,218
Rest of World	+2,195	+5,253	+5,140

For the other commodities, figures are available only on the *Overseas Trade Statistics* (OTS) basis with imports, but not exports, valued inclusive of freight and insurance charges. The relevant figures, together with those for manufactures on the same basis for comparison are in the following table:

United Kingdom crude balance of trade

£ million

	1972	1979	1985
Manufactures			
European Community*	+21	−3,081	−8,981
Rest of World	+2,082	+4,262	+3,207
Steel			
European Community*	31	−261	−352
Rest of World	+157	+339	+495
Motor Vehicles			
European Community*	86	−1,584	−3,465
Rest of World	+1,115	+789	+573
Textiles			
European Community*	12	203	1,274
Rest of World	+13	+592	980

* Excluding Spain and Portugal
† January to November
Source: United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics*

Cosmetics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to ban cosmetics that require experimentation on animals.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1986, c. *534*]: No. But when the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill becomes law, applications for licences to test cosmetics on animals will have to be considered by the independent animal procedures committee. The intention behind this provision is that they will only be granted if the information needed to produce safe cosmetics cannot be obtained without such tests.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Primary Care

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what criteria he selected district health authorities to be eligible for financial support under the £9 million primary care package.

Mr. Hayhoe: Additional funds from the primary care package were made available to regional health authorities for use in those districts which cover local authorities already designated under the Government's inner cities policy as "inner city partnership" or "urban programme"

areas, or are within the London Dockland Corporation. A few other districts were included which have been recognised as having similar problems to those areas.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the transmission of legionnaire's disease by whirlpool baths and the enhanced vulnerability of elderly people to this disease, he will take steps to secure the removal of such baths from hospitals, and other institutions catering at public expense for the elderly and infirm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I have no plans to do so. Such baths have a therapeutic function, and, provided an adequate water treatment regime is followed, they can be used safely. I understand that the Swimming Pools and Allied Trades Association has published helpful guidelines on the necessary treatment.

Patient Appointments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the specialties in rank order according to the length of the waiting time for *(a)* out-patient appointments and *(b)* in-patient treatment.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the right hon. Member all the information he seeks. Information on the waiting time for outpatient consultation is not held centrally. The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to a National Health Service hospital in England, ranked by specialty, is given in the table for the latest year for which information is available centrally.

NHS hospitals in England, non-psychiatric and non-maternity departments

Specialty in rank order	*Estimated median waiting time (in weeks) of waiting list cases in 1983*
Oral surgery	14
Ear, nose and throat	13
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	13
Ophthalmology	11
Plastic surgery	11
Orthodontics	10
Urology	8
General Practitioner (dental)	7
Cardiology	6
General Practitioner (other medical)	6
Gynaecology	6
All other specialist units	5
General surgery	5
Infectious diseases	*5
Neurosurgery	5
Units for younger disabled	*5
Genito-urinary medicine	*4
Paediatrics	3
Rehabilitation	3
Rheumatology	3
Thoracic surgery	3
Dermatology	2
General medicine	2
Neurology	2
Radiotherapy	2
Diseases of the chest	1
Geriatric medicine	less than 1
All specialties	7

* These estimates were based on a small sample number and should be treated with caution.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of providing the basic retirement pension at a level one third of national average earnings in industry for a single person, and one half for a married couple.

Mr. Major: The estimated additional cost of raising the basic retirement pension to one third of national male average earnings for a single person and one half for a married couple would be £10,250 million in a full year on current benefit rates.

Marriage Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the average length of a marriage in the United Kingdom; and what has been the trend in this figure since 1955.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the precise form requested but some material relating to marriages in England and Wales is contained in an article published in "Population Trends No 27" (Spring 1982) on "The Proportion of Marriages Ending in Divorce", a copy of which is in the Library.

National Association of Health Authorities in England

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the annual budget of the National Association of Health Authorities in England; and what is the source of its funding;

(2) what is the annual budget of the National Association of Health Authorities in Wales; and what is its source of funding.

Mr. Whitney: The National Association for Health Authorities in England and Wales is an independent body wholly funded by subscriptions from its constituent member bodies. Membership is open to all regional and district health authorities in England and Wales the majority of whom are, I understand, members. The hon. Member may therefore like to seek the information he requires from the association itself.

Bracken Health Risks

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in preparing his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *347*, about bracken health risks, he had given consideration to the studies in this area by the university of Wales.

Mr. Whitney: No. I am not aware of the studies mentioned by the hon. Member.

Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the membership of the committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment and the frequency of its meetings.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) on 24 October 1985 at columns 227-28. It is anticipated that this committee will meet four times each year.

Hospital Beds (Occupancy Rate)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the occupancy rate for hospital beds at the Stone House, Bishop's Castle, for the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how this figure compares with each of the other National Health Service hospitals in Shropshire.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1986, c. 399]: The latest available information is given in the table. The figures are based on a midnight count of beds and therefore do not take into account the occupation of beds by patients who do not stay overnight.

Shropshire District Health Authority—NHS hospitals 1984

Hospitals	*Occupied beds as a percentage of available beds*
Stone House	92·9
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital	78·3
Wrekin Hospital	72·6
Cross Houses Hospital	79·8
Oswestry and District Hospital	77·5
Wellington Cottage Hospital	81·0
Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital	43·1
Whitchurch Cottage Hospital	73·4
East Hamlet Hospital	85·0
Market Drayton Cottage Hospital	90·6
Ellesmere Cottage Hospital	68·5
Deermoss Hospital	87·9
Monkmoor Hospital	87·9
The Beeches Hospital	93·0
Shelton Hospital	73·1
Newport Cottage Hospital	71·1
Bridgnorth and South Shropshire Hospital	60·7
Broseley Hospital	87·3
Much Wenlock Cottage	78·3
Shifnal and District Hospital	89·4
The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic	76·9

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 90**

SESSION 1985-86

20th—31st January 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Aberdeen
Woodend Hospital 238w

Aberystwyth Harbour Bill 1985/86
2R order read (28.01.86) 777, (30.01.86) 1076

Abolition of Crown Immunity Bill 1985/86
1R (29.01.86) 976-8

Abortion
Hospitals 504-5w
Private health services 504-5w

Abse, Mr Leo
Questions
Re-chem, Government assistance to industry 20w

Access to buildings
House of Commons divisions 641

Accident & emergency departments 31w, 308w, 388w

Accidents
Agricultural workers 324-5w
Fisheries 609-10w
Industrial health & safety 178
Medical treatments 31w
Patients 554w, 555w

Accommodation & Administration Sub Committee (29.01.86) 1047-69

Accountability
Crime 433-4, 435-6, 441
Parish councils 294-5

Accountants
Commission for Racial Equality 182w, 217-8w
Racial discrimination 182w, 217-8w

Accounting
Companies 450w

Acheson Committee see Public Health Inquiry

Acute beds 646-7w

Adams, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (29.01.86) 935
Questions
Debt collection, Scotland 629w
Glasgow Airport 437w
Rates & rating, Rugby 599w
Regional planning & development, Scotland 544-5w
Speed limits 384w

Addington Square 611w
Roads 611w

Adjournment debates (24.01.86) 621-6
Speakers rulings & statements (27.01.86) 425, (23.01.86) 550, 551

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 31
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 675
Questions
Barry, Peter, Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 597w
Israel, Arms embargoes 367-8w
Members interests, Members staff 639-40
Planning authorities, Planning 302-3
Railway electrification, Dorset 472-3w
Rates & rating, Dorset 292
Road accidents, M4 56w
Unfair competition, Airbuses 182-3w, 379w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 89w

Administration of justice
Northern Ireland 310w

Administrative costs
Community programme 474w
Pickup 70-2w

Administrative delays
Armed forces pensions 333w
Cervical cancer 541w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 632w
Entry clearances 247-8w
Immigration applications 246w
Immigration controls 247w,
Inland Revenue 83w
Regional development grants 107w

Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment
Privatisation 640w

Advance factory programme
Wales 198w

Advertising
Dental charges 500w
Ministry of Defence 236w, 448w
Tourist industry 44w

Advertising codes of practice
Tobacco industry 785, 786

Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments 482-3w
Animal experiments 482-3w
Laboratories 482w
Public appointments 483w

Advisory Committee on Irradiated & Novel Foods 553w
Irradiated food 553w

Advisory Committee on Medical Establishments 646w

Advisory services
Chinese community 51w
Scotland 940
Supplementary benefits 64w
Unemployment 123-4w, 126w, 634w

Aerospace industry
Market share 18-9w
Western Europe 19w

Affiliation
Departmental coordination 143w
Fingerprints 11w
Immigration controls 11w

African National Congress 144w

Age
Crime victims 262w
Employment discrimination (21.01.86) 212-4
Higher education 573w
Offenders 262w

Agricultural advisory services 103w
Scotland 103w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 655-6w
Bangor 655-6w

Agricultural improvement scheme 400-1w
Cumbria 400-1w

Agricultural land
Bracken 340w, 405w
Rates & rating 937-8
Wales 320w

Agricultural policy
Opposition days (29.01.86) 1010-45

Agricultural production
Cereals 209w

Agricultural products
Export rebates 435w
Transport (31.01.86) 1249

Agricultural research
Civil service redundancies 641-2
Research finance 940
Scotland 940
Soils 642

Agricultural subsidies
Lime subsidy 536w

Agricultural surpluses
Cereals 209w
Export rebates 435w

Agricultural workers
Accidents 324-5w
Family income supplements 233w
Manpower 209w, 341w
Part-time employment 425w
Pay 342w, 425w
Professional qualifications 208-9w
Redundancy 48-50w

Agriculture
Census of production 207-8w
Northern Ireland 1083
Productivity 655w
Scotland 321w, 546w
Scottish Islands 547w
Scottish National Farmers Union 546w
Student grants 321w
Zambia 526w

Agriculture & Horticulture Grant (Variation) Scheme 1986 (30.01.86) 1114

AIDS 64-5w, 170w, 244w, 305w, 551-2w, 792-3
Departmental publications 305w
Disclosure of information 64-5w
Drug abuse 551-2w
Educational publications 244w
Health education 792-3
Prisoners 170w
Screening 64-5w

Aids for handicapped
Educational finance 164-5w
ORLAU walking aid 129w, 130w
Wheelchairs 786-7

Air accidents
Air traffic control 210w
Phantom aircraft 449w

Air conditioning
Environmental health 548w

Air force
Armed forces discharges 444w
Armed forces retirement 531w
Germany 531w

Air force bases
Airspace 625-6w
USA 625-6w

Air pollution
Polkemmet Bing 634-5

Air pollution control 224w

Air safety
Air traffic control 210w
Fire resistant materials 654w

Air traffic control
Air accidents 210w
Air safety 210w

Air transport
Competition 518-9w
Security 301w

Air travel
British Airways 471-2w

Airbuses
Government assistance to industry 379w
Government loans 379w
Unfair competition 182-3w, 379w

Airguns
Arms trade 437
Crime 436, 437
Young people 436

Airlines
USA 182-3w, 379w

Airport security
Gatwick 384w
Heathrow 280-1w
Overseas workers 582w

Airports
Engineering education 385w, 655w
Passport control channels 577-8w

Airports Bill 1985/86
2R (27.01.86) 691-768
Money res* (27.01.86) 768-9

Airspace 333w, 625-6w
Air force bases 625-6w
Light aircraft 333w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 27

Alcoholic drinks duties
Whitbread poacher bitter 591w

Alcoholism
Scotland 545w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Questions
Civil service redundancies 407w
Coal mining, Productivity 376w
Crime prevention 253-4w
National income, Tax yields 528w
Tax thresholds, Civil service manpower 299w
Unemployment, EC countries 179

Alexander Howden Group 146w

Aliens
Childbirth 233-4w
Heathrow 484w
Turkey 484w

All London Teachers Against Racism & Fascism 51w, 295w

Alternative energy
Energy research 374w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1049, 1058-61
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1042
Questions
Air pollution control 224w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1078
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1085
British residents abroad, Torture 249w
Burton Manor College, College closures 361-2w
Business statement 465
Cervical cancer, Screening 613w
Free ports 441-2w
Housing cooperatives, Inner city areas 300-1
Human rights 249w
Nepal, Christianity 644w
Police, Ethnic minorities 442
Political refugees 276w
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 494w
Torture 366w
Torture, EC action 249w
Torture, Equipment 380w
Unemployment, Liverpool 113w
USSR, Human rights 367w

Amateur radio
Broadcasting licences 531w

Ambulance services
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 552w
Industrial relations 496w
Pay settlements 552w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 367, 368
Questions
Basildon Hospital, Babies 486w
Courts, Basildon 266w
District heating 377w
Employment, Basildon 123-4w

Ammunition
Defence contracts 639w
Defence procurement 136w
FH70 Howitzers 136w
SP70 guns 446w

Anaesthetics
LD50 toxicity test 524w

Ancram, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under Secretary Scottish Office
Debates etc
Rate Support grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 405, 406, 414, 417-8
Questions
A1, East Lothian 103w
Bridge of Allan, Flood control 322w
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 932-3
Council house sales, District councils 103-5w, 105-6w
Crofting, Road contruction 369w
Glasgow Airport 437w
Housing action areas, Glasgow 238w, 600w
Inverclyde District Council, Housing revenue accounts 438w
Musselburgh bypass 600w
Rates & rating, Rugby 599w
Rates & rating, Scotland 543w, 544w
Road traffic, A1 11-2w
Roads, Scotland 647-8w
Tranent bypass 599w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
South Yemen (21.01.86) 186
Questions
British embassies, USA 246w
Rugby, South Africa 513w
South Africa, Military attaches 365w
Sporting tours, South Africa 466w

Anglesey
A5 457w
Bypasses 8, 529-30w

Anglo-Irish Agreement 167w, 310w, 311-2w, 313w, 326w, 592w, 593w, 594w, 596w, 638-9, 1077, 1078-9, 1085, 1088-9
Demonstrations 594w
Extradition 596w
House of Commons select committees 639
Northern Ireland Government 1077-8, 1085, 1087-8
Terrorism 593w
Ulster Unionists 1084, 1087-8

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 167w, 406w, 595-6w, 597w, 1079-80, 1083-4
Barry, Peter 597w
Civil service manpower 596w
Extradition 596w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 596w
Northern Ireland Government 1083-4

Anglo-Irish talks 310w, 311-2w, 597w
Northern Ireland Constitution 593w, 638, 639
Northern Ireland Government 326w

Animal cruelty
LD50 toxicity test 524w

Animal experiments 173w, 482w, 632w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments 482-3w
Animal welfare 215w, 483w
Cosmetics 523w, 658w
Cosmetics industry 532w
Dogs 524-5w
Draize test 632-3w
Forensic science 525w
Laboratories 482w
LD50 toxicity test 525w
Licensing 483w, 523-4w
Porton Down 449w
Public appointments 483w
Tumours 173w
Veterinary services 483w

Animal feed
Intervention stocks 585w

Animal housing 656w
Battery hens 656w

Animal welfare 251w
Animal experiments 215w, 483w
Battery hens 287w

Animals 268w

Animals (Scientifc Procedures) Bill (HL) 1985/86 251w, 483w, 523-4w

Anniversaries
Radio broadcasing licences 484-5w

Antarctic Treaty
UN resolutions 32-3w

Anthracite
South Wales 631-2

Anti Apartheid Movement 423w

Antibiotics
Fish 1-2w

Antismoking compaign
Government grants 503w
Pupils 58w

Apprentices 123w
Costs 334w
Devonport Dockyard 91-2w, 334w
Dockyards 334w
Portsmouth Dockyard 92w
Privatisation 334w
Rosyth Dockyard 91-2w, 93-4w, 334w

Arable land
Farms 425w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 1079-80
Divis flats, Housing improvement 593w
Government grants, Northern Ireland 1083

Archer, Jeffrey 16w, 88w, 94w
Westland helicopters 16w, 88w, 94w

Archibald, Alexander 144w

Area health authorities
Health services finance 7

Areas of deprivation 388w

Arfon
Rate support grants 22w

Armagh Prison 314w
Body searches

Armed forces
Crime 184-5w
Iraq 236w
Northern Ireland 184-5w, 185-6

Armed forces civilians 330w

Armed forces dependents
Housing 331w
USA 331w

Armed forces deployment
Defence School of Music 93-4w
Red alerts 413w, 449w
Ulster Defence Regiment 351w
USA 413w, 449w

Armed forces discharges
Air Force 444w
Army 444w
9 Signal Regiment 444w, 445w

Armed forces education allowances
Boarding schools 331w

Armed forces housing
Listed buildings 649w
Maidenhead 297w
Portsmouth 649w

Armed forces pensions 332w, 333w
Administrative delays 333w
Interest charges 332w
Marines 332w
Navy 332w

Armed forces retirement
Air force 531w

Armed forces strength
Army in Northern Ireland 353w
Ulster Defence Regiment 352w, 353w, 445-6w

Armed forces training
El Salvador 146w, 445w
Iraq 427w

Armistice Day ceremonies
Members correspondence 373w

Armoured fighting vehicles
Defence contracts 95w
Defence procurement 331-2w

Arms control
Chemical weapons 643w
Nuclear test ban 642w
Nuclear weapons 643w
Nuclear weapons tests 643w

Tactical nuclear weapons 90w
USSR 643w

Arms embargoes
Israel 367-8w

Arms trade
Airguns 437
Firearms 437

Army (30.01.86) 1115-85
Armed forces discharges 444w

Army bases
USA 330w

Army in Northern Ireland
Armed forces strength 353w

Art education
Manpower 634w

Art exhibitions
Japan 358w
National Museum of Wales 359w

Art finance
Northern Arts 46w

Art works
Capital transfer tax 207w
Export licensing 206-8w, 386w
Exports 386w
Objects in lieu of tax 207w

Arthritis
Drug hazards 618w

Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 306w, 391-2w, 786-7
Management 787
Trade unions 391-2w

Arts Council
Finance 644w

Arts Council grants
South Bank 17

Arts finance
Charitable donations 15, 16
Eastern Arts Association 18
Economic regions 16
Local government reform 17-8

Arts sponsorship
Local authorities 15-6

Asbestos
Faslane 605w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 695
Questions
European Court of Human Rights, Isle of Man 9w

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1126, 1136-9, 1150-1, 1177
Business question intervention (30.01.86) 1104
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1108-9
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 48, 49, 54
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1016, 1021
Questions
Brunei, Prime Minister visits abroad 280w
Building industry, Employment 117w
Hinkley Point B, Nuclear power stations 97-8w
Hong Kong, Government 33w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear safety 375w
Military police, RAF Greenham Common 445w
Ministry of Defence Police, Military Police 445w
Nuclear accidents, Information 243w
Nuclear safety, House of Commons questions 563w
Radiation hazards, Hinkley Point B 99-100w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 446
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 486w
RNAS Yeovilton, Privatisation 638w
Visiting Forces Act 1952 265w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 196
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Arthritis, Drug hazards 618w
Business statement 463
Civil Liability & Compensation for Personal Injury Royal Commission 556w
Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 4w
Criminal injuries compensation, Rape 440
Deaf, Children 430w
Deaf, Communication 429w
Deaf, EC countries 431w
Deaf, Pupil-teacher ratios 430w
Deaf, Research 427-9w
Deaf, School population 429w
Deaf, Schools 429w
Deaf, Special education 429-30w, 431w
Deaf, Special educational needs 430-1w
Deaf, Teacher training 429w
Doctors, NHS complaints 556w
Doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Drug hazards, Piroxicam 618-9w
Enterprise allowance scheme 282w
European Court of Human Rights 365-6w
Family doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Handicapped students, Blind 164-5w
Helping the community to care, Government grants 395-6w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, School discipline 363w
Hospital catering, Crown immunity 503w
Hospital catering, Food hygiene 502w
Hospital doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Hospital waiting lists, Medical treatments 659w
Industrial health & safety, Crown immunity 126w
Jet Provost aircraft, Military aircraft 625w
Kings College Hospital, Hospital catering 503w
Life insurance, Social security reform 231w
Maternity benefits 305w
NHS, Crown immunity 493w
NHS complaints, Health Service Commissioner 556w
Patients, Accidents 554w, 555w
Regional health authorities, Crown immunity 502-3w
School teachers, Crimes of violence 372w
Social Fund 231w
Speech therapy, Manpower 501w, 502w
Speech therapy, Manpower 501-2w
Stanley Royd Hospital, Inquiries 63w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional circumstances additions 232-3w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (27.01.86) 636
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 457
Questions
Ministers 573w

Asian Development Bank (Extension of Limit on Guarantees) Order 1985 (23.01.86) 546

Assisted places scheme
Educational finance 80w
Personal income 101w
Scotland 101w
Wales 463-5w

Associated British Foods
IRA 1079, 1086

Association for the Conservation of Energy 633

Association of Chief Police Officers 173-4w
Public expenditure 173-4w

Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 496w, 552w
Ambulance services 552w
Trade union recognition 496w

Asthma
Industrial diseases 234w
Medical records 230w

Asulox
Pesticides 340-1w
Wales 320w
Weedkillers 341w

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 116, 1129
Oral question time point of order (27.01.86) 636
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 665
Questions
Airguns, Arms trade 437
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, Trade union recognition 496w
Defence contracts, Shells 448w
FH70 Howitzers, Shells 627-8w
Short Brothers, Religious discrimination 1089

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
European Museum of the Year 386w
Police, Manpower 270w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 290
Tourist industry, Government grants 126w
UK contributions, UNESCO 412w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Questions
Criminal investigation, Tottenham 176w
Employment, Statistics 112w

Atlantic fisheries 34w
South Atlantic 34w

Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL) 1985/86
2R (21.01.86) 215-40
Money res* (21.01.86) 240

Attendance allowance
Doctors 614w

Attendance Allowance Board 614w

Auckland Castle 12

Audiology
Hospitals 551w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 551w

Ault & Wiborg 325w
Industrial health & safety 325w

Australian bicentenary 246w
British Australian Bicentennial Committee 246w

Availability for work
Self-employed 202w

Average earnings 172-3
Food industry 43w
Manufacturing industries 43w

A1 11-2w, 103w
East Lothian 103w
Road traffic 11-2w

A5 457w, 529-30w
Anglesey 457w
Bypass 457w, 529-30w

Babies
Basildon Hospital 486w

Bagier, Mr Gordon A T
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 24

Baker Report 594w
Northern Ireland 594w

Baker Review see Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 Independent Review

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for the Environment

Debates etc
Housing & Planning Bill, 1R (23.01.86) 467
Paying for local government, Ministerial statements (28.01.86) 797-813
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 38-50, 55
Questions
Council housing, Housing revenue accounts 53-4w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 653w
Derelict land grants 224w
Enterprise zones 219-20w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of the Environment 229-30w
Local government expenditure 297w, 514-6w
Private sector housing, South East region 221w
Public relations, Dept of the Environment 295w
Rate support grants, Birmingham 222w
Rates & rating 221w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 290-1
Sites of special scientific interest 299
Sites of special scientific interest, Environment protection 298-9
Water pollution, Bracken 338w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1137, 1138, 1149-52, 1156
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1199, 1213-4
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1034

Balance of trade 603w
Overseas trade 657-8w
UK trade with EC 657-8w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1078
Business statement 465-6, 1103-4
Child care 780
Civil defence, Publicity 249w
Gas safety, Upper Waiting Hall 44w
Immigration controls, Merchant seamen 7-8w
Parish councils, Cherwell District Council 46w
Pay settlements, Manufacturing industries 173
Training 118-9w

Baltic wharf (31.01.86) 1195
Public petitions (31.01.86) 1195

Bangladesh
Entry clearances 11w
Foreign tourists 11w
Immigration applications 35w
Immigration controls 10-1w, 35-6w, 36-7w

Bangor
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 655-6w

Bank loans
Nicaragua 20w

Bankruptcy
Wales 382-3w

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 452-3w

Banks
Debt collection 85w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Business statement 464

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1146-9, 1152
Calling of Members, Backbenchers (28.01.86) 922-3
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 319, 321-3, 327, 328, 330-1, 334-5, 337-8, 343-5, 366, 367
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 901, 903, 905, 913, 915, 919, 920
Oral question time intervention (22.01.86) 296
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 39, 46, 47, 48, 49, 56, 61, 72, 77-81, 85-6, 108
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 896-7
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 460
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 448w
Airport security, Heathrow 280-1w
Arts Council grants, South Bank 17
Building repairs, London boroughs 653w
Business statement 1098-9
Chief constables, Political impartiality 252w
Civil defence, Local authorities 251w
Civil defence, Local authorities in Scotland 238w
Commuters, Greater London 385w
Council housing, Greater London Council 651w
Empty property, Rates & rating 339w
Government grants to local authorities, London boroughs 339w, 471w
Greater London Council, Local government property 648-9w
Greater London Council, Property transfer 471w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Companies 422w
Greater London Enterprise Board, General consents 422w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Local government reform 339w
House of Fraser, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 453w
Housing finance, Capital investment 650-1w
Housing investment programmes, Local government reform 651w
Housing investment programmes, London boroughs 651-2w
Housing stock, Hillingdon 652w
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 141w, 295w, 339w, 340w
Local government expenditure, Local government reform 51w, 52w, 649w
Local government expenditure, London boroughs 653w
Local government finance, Capital investment 296w
Local government reform, Costs 53w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 51w, 53w, 424w, 605w
Local government revenue, Hillingdon 652w
Local government revenue, London boroughs 652-3w
London Residuary Body 141w, 222w
London Residuary Body, Finance 424w, 470w, 652w
Mergers, House of Fraser 380w
Metropolitan Police, Councillors 526w
Metropolitan Police, Management 10w, 525-6w
Military exercises, Heathrow 281w
Official receptions, 10 Downing Street 413w
Owner occupied housing, Newham 300
Parking, Local government reform 56w
Prime Minister, Public appointments 281w
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 245w
Public relations, Dept of Employment 282-4w
Public relations, Dept of Energy 243w
Public relations, Dept of the Environment 295w
Public relations, Dept of Trade and Industry 278-9w, 383w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 302-3w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 248w
Public relations, Home Office 275-6w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 286-7w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 333-4w
Public relations, Northern Ireland Office 314-6w
Public relations, Treasury 299-300w
Public relations, Welsh Office 240-1w
Social security claims, Newham 60w
Television programmes, Red Herrings 522w
10 Downing Street, Official hospitality 144w
Urban programme, Local government expenditure 339w, 416w
Waste disposal, Local government reform 51w, 52w

Barinov, Valeri 367w
Human rights 367w

Barking & Dagenham
Intervention stocks 342w

Barnsley
Poverty (30.01.86) 1186-94
Unemployment (30.01.86) 1186-94

Barnstaple
Coastal protection 401w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 561

Barry, Peter
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 597w

Basildon
Courts 266w
Employment 123-4w
Employment opportunities 123-4

Basildon Hospital 486w
Babies 486w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Questions
Children, Injuries 232w
Educational finance, School governors 193w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Employment opportunities 637
Prison staff, Rudgate Prison 443
Road accidents, Fees & charges 388w

Baton rounds
Northern Ireland 406w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 213-4w, 406w, 636w

Battery hens
Animal housing 656w
Animal welfare 287w

Battlebridge basin 52w
General consents 52w

BBC 253w

BBC Advertising & Sponsorship Review 253w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 32-3
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 982-3, 987
Local government finance (28.01.86) 810
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 40, 46-7
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1049, 1052, 1053, 1065
Stanley Royd Hospital (20.01.86) 197

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 860, 875-8
Questions
Board & lodging charges 500w
Housing benefits 390w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 62w
Social Fund 497w
Social security benefits uprating, Board & lodging charges 783

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Business expansion scheme 85w
Social security benefits rules 782

Beef & veal
EC Agricultural Council 209-10w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 330, 335, 345, 348, 350, 383
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1021
South Yemen (21.01.86) 188

Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 356
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Constitution 639
Crown Agents, Pensions 377w
George Brown Collection, Newcastle University 386w
Members pay 179-82w
NHS administration, Nurses 493w
Slums, Northern region 227w
Unemployment, Regional aid 123w
Violence on television, Complaints 266w

Belfast
Road construction 543w

Belgium
Sunday trading 218w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 267-9
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 674
Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 355
Questions
Baker Report, Northern Ireland 594w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 542w
Cervical cancer, Northern Ireland 541w
Cleaning services, Northern Ireland 1087
Criminal proceedings, Disclosure of information 355w
Disclosure of information, Immunity from prosecution 356w
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 412w
Government grants, Northern Ireland 454w
Grazing land, Northern Ireland 595w
Housing finance, Northern Ireland 541-2w
Housing standards, Northern Ireland 541w
Manufacturing industries, Northern Ireland 635w
Ministers correspondence, Solicitor-General 355w
Ministers correspondence, Westland helicopters 382w, 411-2w
Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board, Employment opportunities 635-6w
Opencast mining, Lough Neagh 542-3w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 406w
Road construction, Belfast 543w
Severe weather payments, Northern Ireland 595w
Short Brothers, Manpower 543w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 355w, 412w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 94
Questions
Local enterprise agencies, Kings Lynn 172
Northern Ireland Assembly, Costs 1081
Small businesses 110w

Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 323-4w, 354-5w, 367w, 373w, 558w
Entry clearances 323-4w
Libyan Peoples Bureau 367w, 373w
Prosecutions 354-5w
Social security recipients 397w
Supplementary benefits 558w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
CR6 taxis, Production 657w
Takeovers, Taxis 532w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
Parliamentary privilege (21.01.86) 313-4
Parliamentary privilege, Select committee evidence (21.01.86) 206-7
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 311
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 676-9, 685
Questions
Coal mining, Privatisation 628

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 830
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 891-4
Questions
Air force bases, USA 625-6w
Armed forces education allowances, Boarding schools 331w
Assisted places scheme, Educational finance 80w
Cabinet committees, Economic policy 86w
Charities, Educational finance 196w
Charities, Private education 196w
Discretionary student grants, Student grants 71-2w
Education, Public expenditure 566-70w
Educational finance, Expenditure 69-70w
Educational finance, Schools 187-8w
Employment schemes 40w
Engineering qualifications, Higher education 153-5w
Family Courts Review 436w
Free school meals, Pupils 70w
Further education, Local education authorities 75-7w
Gas safety, Prosecutions 577w
Higher education, Age 573w
Higher education, Foreign students 73-4w
Higher education, Tuition fees 191-2w
Higher education admission, Oxford University 153w
Higher education teachers, Manpower 76w
Higher education teachers, Redundancy 78w
Industrial training schemes, Manpower Services Commission 201-2w
Mandatory student grants, Student grants 72w
Nursery schools, School population 77w
Open University, Costs 73-5w
Open University, Student numbers 189-90w, 190-2w
Open University, Summer schools 74w
Pickup, Educational finance 70-2w
Police training, Firearms 443-4
Pre-school education 435w
Public footpaths 466w
Public footpaths, Costs 466w
Public footpaths, Wales 457w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Local education authorities 538-42w
School buildings, Construction 78-9w
School population 428w
School population, Wales 197w
School teachers, Natural wastage 68-9w
School teachers, Private education 78w
Student grants 192-4w
Student grants, Parental contributions 71-3w
Student grants, Postgraduate students 157-8w
Student numbers 151-2w
Student numbers, Further education 157-64w
Student numbers, Open University 155-6w
Student numbers, Overseas students 155-6w
Students, Further education 536-8w
Technical & Vocational Education Initiative 43w
Travelling expenses, School transport 69w
Universities, Finance 149-52w
University finance, University Grants Committee 365w
University teachers, Expenditure 153-4w
Vocational training, EC countries 78w
Womens employment 40-2w
Youth unemployment 38-9w

Benn, Tony (21.01.86) 207

Bentley, Barbara 553w
Members correspondence 553w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 72, 106-7

Benzodiazepines
Committee on Safety of Medicines 131-3w
Hallucinogens 177-8w

Berkshire Bill (HL) 1984/85 (29.01.86) 931
Order for consideration read (21.01.86) 167
Rep* (23.01.86) 431

Berlei 4

Berlin Brigade 95w, 96w, 331-2w, 335-6w
Defence contracts 95w, 96w
Defence expenditure 335-6w
Defence procurement 96w, 331-2w
Germany 335-6w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 608, 612
Questions
Derelict land 420-1w
Family Courts Review 436w
Housing insulation, Government grants 633
Land reclamation, Expenditure 420-1w
Magistrates courts, Sentencing 481w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 275w

Best, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1123
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 969-70
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report 1986-87 (20.01.86) 137, 144
Questions
Advisory Committee on Irradiated & Novel Foods, Irradiated food 553w
A5, Anglesey 457w
Bypasses, Anglesey 8, 529-30w
European Monetary System 645w
Family income supplements, Social security reform 552w
Five Continents Peace Initative 642w
Frigates, Navy 637-8w
Maternity benefits, Young people 551w
NHS finance, Scotland 574w
NHS finance, Wales 6
Public expenditure, Wales 23-32w
Social security adjudications, Social security reform 613w
Sunday trading 14
Wales Tourist Board 530w

Bevan, Mr David Gilroy
Questions
Tourism, "Pleasure Leisure & Jobs" 169

Bexley Health Authority 388w, (27.01.86) 770-6
Hospitals (27.01.86) 770-6
NHS finance 388w

Bexley London Borough Council Bill
2R order read (30.01.86) 1076

Bexley London Borough Council Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Questions
Death, Singh Toor, Tarsem 790

Biffen, Rt Hon John, *Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 210
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1047-50, 1051, 1067-8
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 307
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 683-6
Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 356
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 638-9
Anglo-Irish Agreement, House of Commons Select Committees 639
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Constitution 638, 639
Bus lanes, Millbank 178w
Business statement 462-6, 1095-105
House of Commons divisions, Access to buildings 641
House of Commons Select Committees, Members visits abroad 288-90w, 369-70w, 526-7w, 629w
House of Commons Select Committees, Select Committee evidence 287w

House of Commons Select Committees. Select Committee reports 289-93w
House of Commons Select Committees. Specialist advisers 287-8w
House of Commons souvenirs. Prices 640-1
House of Commons souvenirs. Profits 640
Members allowances. Private Members bills 4w
Members interests. Members staff 639-40
Members pay 179-80w, 437w
Palace of Westminster. Telephones 629w
Palace of Westminster. Theft 317-8w
Scottish Grand Committee. Costs 369w
Select Committees. Temporary staff 178w

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Debates etc
Westland helicopters. Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 669
Questions
Administration of Justice. Northern Ireland 310w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 638-9
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 167w, 595-6w, 597w, 1083-4
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. Civil service manpower 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. Extradition 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. Foreign & Commonwealth Office 596w
Car parks. Northern Ireland 167w
Civil servants. Northern Ireland 596w
Coal reserves. Northern Ireland 3w
Crime. Punishment 270w
EC grants & loans. Northern Ireland 212w
Enterprise zones. Northern Ireland 166-7w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Northern Ireland 596w
Overseas aid. Northern Ireland 597w
Royal Ulster Constabulary. Police stations 167w
Ulster Defence Regiment 235w

Bilateral aid 19-20w

Birds
Pest control 1w

Birmingham
Bombings 582-3w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 59w
Exceptional needs payments 59w
Rate support grants 222w

Bishops
Social problems 13

Blackburn, Dr John G
Debates etc
South Yemen (21.01.86) 187

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 983, 988-92, 995
Questions
Banks. Debt collection 85w
Community care 777-8
Gas levy 441w
Nationalised industries. Finance 442w
Nationalised industries. Public sector assets 438-40w
North Sea oil. Income 442-3w
Privatisation. Public expenditure 441w
Public expenditure. National income 442w
Public sector assets. Income 439-40w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
RAF Greenham Common. Espionage 181

Blind
Children 430w
Communication 429w
EC countries 431w
Handicapped students 164-5w
Pupil-teacher ratios 430w
Research 427-9w
School population 429w
Schools 429w
Special education 364w, 429-30w, 431w
Special educational needs 430-1w
Teacher training 429w

Block grant 422w
Leicestershire 337w
Local authorities 337-8w

Blood
Surgery 780-1

Blood alcohol levels 472w, 481-2w
Drinking & driving 472w, 481-2w

Blood donors
Canterbury 780-1

Blood tests 10-1w, 35-6w, 36-7w, 143w
British citizenship 35-6w, 36-7w
Children 10-1w

Bloomsbury Health Authority 496w
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore 496w

Board & lodging charges 60w, 398w, 485-6w, 499w, 500w, 502w, 553-4w, 781, 782
Residential care 60w, 485w, 781-2
Social security benefits uprating 783
Supplementary benefits 398w, 553-4w, 781-3

Boarding school allowances 331w

Boarding schools
Armed forces education allowances 331w

Body, Sir Richard
Questions
Agriculture. Census of production 207-8w
Water supply. EC law 140w
Water supply. Nitrates 138-40w

Body searches 314w
Armagh Prison 314w

Bolton Health Authority 549-50w

Bombings
Birmingham 582-3w
Inquiries 582-3w
Judgments 521w

Books
Cultural relations 13-4w

Bootle Job Centre
Ministers domestic visits 126w

Border security in Ireland
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1088-9
Terrorism 1078-9

Bottomley, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Drinking & driving. Blood alcohol levels 472w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council. EC action 128-30w
Factory Inspectorate. North west region 123w
Gas safety. Upper Waiting Hall 44w
Industrial accidents 119w
Industrial health & safety. Crown immunity 126w
Motorcycles. Driving tests 611w
Motorways. Interchanges 654-5w
Political levy. Publicity 38w
Roads. Addington Square 611w
Small businesses. Bureaucracy 44w
Speed limits 384w
Vocational guidance. Vacancies 203w
Wages councils 125w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill. 2R (31.01.86) 1210-3, 1215
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill. 2R (24.01.86) 570-2
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill. 2R (31.01.86) 1241
Questions
Security. Northern Ireland 592w
Social workers training. Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 789
Youth training scheme 121w

Bourne Hall Clinic (24.01.86) 555

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Social Security Bill. 2R (28.01.86) 827, 838, 864-6
Questions
Social security benefits uprating 489w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Local Government Bill. Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 367
Questions
Civil defence. Pay 250w
Council house sales. Southwark 136-7w, 137-8w, 467w
Criminal injuries Compensation Board. Administrative delays 632w
National Union of Teachers. Industrial disputes 791
Tourism. Northern Ireland 1081-2
Vocational training. Further education 125w

Bowe, Collette 515w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 25-6
Local Government Bill. Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 362, 370-2, 379-80, 383-4
Questions
Employment 113w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. Government grants 643-4
Police. Recruitment 442
Rate support grant penalties. District councils 295
Social security recipients. Tyne & Wear 398w
Social workers training. Finance 489-90w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, Minister of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Cleaning services. Northern Ireland 1087
Coal reserves. Northern Ireland 3w, 1086-7
De Lorean. Factories 454w
EC grants & loans. Northern Ireland 212w
Employment. Northern Ireland 592w
Employment discrimination. Northern Ireland 213w, 595w
Foreign investment in UK. Northern Ireland 593w, 1087
Government assistance to industry. Tourism 1082
Government grants. Northern Ireland 454w, 1083
Grazing land. Northern Ireland 595w
Industrial diseases. Northern Ireland 407w
Lotus cars. Prosecutions 1082-3
Mackies. Government assistance to industry 597w
Manufacturing industries. Northern Ireland 635w
Northern Ireland. Investment 1082
Northern Ireland. USA 1083
Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board. Employment opportunities 635-6w
Opencast mining. Lough Neagh 542-3w
Public expenditure. Northern Ireland 311w
Severe weather payments. Northern Ireland 595w
Short Brothers. Manpower 543w
Short Brothers. Religious discrimination 1089
Short Brothers. Sikorsky helicopters 543w
Tourism. Northern Ireland 592w, 1081-2
Unemployment. Northern Ireland 212-3w, 1088

BP Shipping (22.01.86) 423-9

Bracken
Agricultural land 340w, 405w
Health hazards 345w, 660w
Pest control 340-1w, 405w
Pesticides 341w
Plant power 349-50w, 377w
Wales 320w, 322-3w
Water pollution 338w, 345w

Bradford
Family income supplements 397w

Bradford City Football Club 143w, 181
Government assistance 143w
Government grants 181

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 558, 561
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 54, 81-4

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 835, 859-61
Questions
Dept of Employment, Departmental leaflets 199w
Racial attacks, Crime prevention 265w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 936

Breach of contract
Doctors 555w

Breast cancer
Screening 64w, 138w
Statistics 64w
X rays 133w

Breathalysers 472w
Civil liberties 945-6
Scotland 945-6

Brent
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 234-6w

Bridge of Allan 322w
Flood control 322w

Bridges
Dornoch Firth 933

Bridges, Lord 366w

Bright, Mr Graham
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 714, 715-6, 728-32
Questions
Local government finance, Non-metropolitan districts 607w

Brinton, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 558-9, 570-1, 588, 596

Britannia
North Yemen 180

British Aerospace
Early warning systems 639w
Nimrod aircraft 639w
Westland helicopters 15-6w, 89w, 135-6w, 183w

British Airports Authority
Cleaning services 384w
Privatisation (27.01.86) 691-768

British Airways
Air travel 471-2w

British Amateur Rugby League Association 295
Rugby 296

British American Tobacco 172
Local enterprises agencies 172

British Antarctic Survey
Government grants 81w
RRS John Biscoe 81w

British Australian Bicentennial Committee 246w
Australian Bicentenary 246w

British citizenship
Blood tests 35-6w, 36-7w
Immigration applications 35w

British Council 529w
Overseas aid 286w

British Council of British Shipping
Channel Crossing 210-1w

British Deaf Association 362w
Raise the Standard 362w

British dependent territories
Postage stamps 642w

British embassies
USA 246w

British Legion
VAT 300w

British Lions 466w
Sporting tours 466w

British overseas citizenship
Right of abode 246w

British Overseas Trade Board
Public appointment 148w

British Rail
Channel crossing 472w
Locomotives 385w, 517w

British Rail Engineering 385w, 932-3
Privatisation 385w
Redundancy 932-3
Springburn 932-3

British Rail Southern Region 472w

British Railways (No 2) Bill 1985/86
2R order read (30.01.86) 1076

British Railways (Stansted) Bill 1985/86
2R order read (28.01.86) 777, (30.01.86) 1076

British Refugee Council 396w

British residents abroad
North Yemen 180
Safety 793
South Yemen (21.01.86) 185-9
Torture 249w
Uganda 793

British Standards Institution
Companies 378w
Defence procurement 446w, 641w

British Steel Corporation
Factory closures 935

British Telecom
Government shareholding 16-8w
Shareholders 16-8w

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry (until 24 Jan 1986)
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 671
Questions
British Aerospace, Westland helicopters 183w
British Overseas Trade Board, Public appointments 148w
Foreign loans, Iraq 13w
Plessey, Takeovers 279-80w
Unfair competition, Airbuses 182-3w
Westland helicopters, Archer, Jeffrey 16w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 15-6w
Westland helicopters, Fiat 16w

Brittan, Leon 413w, 574-5w, 584w
Ministers 413w

Broadcasting
Civil defence 438-9
Members 88w

Broadcasting controls
Violence on television 439-40
Westland helicopters 87w, 88w

Broadcasting licences
Amateur radio 531w
Mobile radios 277w

Broadmoor Hospital 633w

Brook Hospital 230w
Neurology 230w

Brooke, Mr Peter, Minister of State at the Treasury
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Whitbread poacher bitter 591w
Cash limits, Customs & Excise 319w
Civil service redundancies 407w
Customs, Channel crossing 591w
EC budget, Intergovernmental Agreement, 1984 527w
EC budget, UK contributions 109w, 195-6w, 408w, 527w
EC Finance Council 301w
Ethnic minorities, Treasury 197w
Free ports 441-2w
Gaming machines, Tax yields 299w
Gaming machines, VAT 299w
Printing industry, HMSO 591w
UK contributions to EC budget, European Court of Justice 443-4w
VAT, British Legion 300w
VAT, EC countries 300w
VAT, Tax collection 409w
VAT, Tax thresholds 408-9w
VAT, repayment, Children 645w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
Exceptional needs payments 308w
Exceptional needs payments, Expenditure 308w
Family credit 308w
Family income supplements, Social security reform 398w
Free school meals, Social security reform 307w
Furniture grants, Expenditure 307w
Heating allowances, Expenditure 308w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 343w
Italy, Westland helicopters 34w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 307w
Ministers correspondence, Disclosure of information 87w
Regional aid, Expenditure 279w
Regional development grants 383w
Social security, Orders & regulations 308w
Social security, benefits, Social security reform 307-8w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 16w
Westland helicopters, Broadcasting controls 88w
Westland helicopters, Cabinet committees 87w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 87w, 88w, 281-2w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 805
Questions
Business statement 1099-1100

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 360-1
Questions
Health hazards, Skoal bandits 304-5w
Licensing laws 263w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Political parties 592w
Wages councils, Northern Ireland 597-8w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 809
Questions
Residential care, Mentally ill 498w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 693, 723, 732-4
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 29

Brown, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 958
Questions

Police discipline, Prosecutions 519w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 932
Teachers, Scotland 599w
Thailand, Prisoners 144w
Unemployment, Scotland 544w

Browne, Mr John
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1121-2, 1124
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 988, 1001-2
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1048
Questions
Business statement 1104-5
Fletcher, Yvonne, Death 437
Monetary agreements, Exchange rates 1091

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 940
Association for the Conservation of Energy 633
Council house sales, District councils 103-5w, 105-6w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 642
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 120w

Brunivels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1107, 1113
South Yemen (21.01.86) 189
Questions
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Entry clearances 323-4w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Libyan Peoples Bureau 367w, 373w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Social security recipients 397w
Business statement 466, 1105
Church Commissioners, Public appointments 399w
Combined heat & power, Leicester 643
Council house sales, Leicester 301
Employment opportunities, Parliamentary constituencies 41-3w
House of Commons divisions, Access to buildings 641
Immigration controls, Libyan Arab Republic 582w
Joint passports 580-1w
Libyan Peoples Bureau, Deportation 324w
Metrication, Industry 380w
Metropolitan Police, Recruitment 522w
Overseas workers, Libyan Arab Republic 582w
Parking offences, Diplomatic immunity 372w
Police, Recruitment 522w
Police civilians 273w
Police stations, Northern Ireland 1086
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 280w, 411w, 435-6w, 574w
Prisons, Repairs & maintenance 265w
Prosecutions, Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 354-5w
Rate support grants, Race relations 222w
Residential care, Licensing 485w
Residential care, Private sector 305-6w
School meals, Free school meals 434w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 436w
Small businesses, Training 110w
Sunday trading, Church Commissioners 13-4
Teachers, Pay 571-4w

Brunei
Prime Minister visits abroad 280w

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Local goverment finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 954
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 557, 569, 571, 572-7, 590, 592, 593, 594, 601, 611
Questions
South Bank Theatre Board, Costs 17
Youth training scheme, Paisley 945

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, *Minister of State for Energy*
Questions
Energy research, Research finance 374w
Gas pipelines, Western Europe 630
Natural gas, Imports 629-30
Natural gas, Self-sufficiency 630
Petroleum exploration, Land drilling 376w
Petroleum exploration, Wells 376w
Petroleum production 376w

Buck, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1126, 1132-5
South Yemen (21.01.86) 187

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Business question intervention (30.01.86) 1096
Questions
Business statement 1097, 1100

Building industry
Building repairs 415w
Employment 117w
Labour only subcontracting 117w, 168-9
Northern Ireland 542w
Redundancy 542w

Building regulations
Northern Ireland 594w

Building repairs
Building industry 415w
Council housing 288
Council housing finance 414w
Coventry 287
Housing finance 415w
Local government reform 651w
London boroughs 653w
Police stations 1086
Prisons 5w
Public sector housing 414w

Building societies 443w

Bureaucracy
Consumer Credit Act 1974 452w
Small businesses 44w, 110w
Tourist industry 127w

Burglar alarms
Crime prevention 254w
Hoaxes & false alarms 631-2w
Metropolitan Police 631-2w

Burglary
Metropolitan Police 217w
Wolverhampton 581w

Burton Manor College 361-2w
College closures 361-2w

Bus lanes
Millbank 178w

Bus services
London Regional Transport 55w

Buses
Road accidents 56w

Business
Bye laws 482w
Computer piracy 582w
Metrication 380w

Business expansion scheme
Bed & breakfast accommodation 85w

Business questions
Speakers rulings & statements (30.01.86) 1104

Business sponsorship incentive scheme 15-6

Business statement 462-6, 1095-105

Business statements
Speakers rulings & statements (23.01.86) 464

Butcher, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Amateur radio, Broadcasting licences 531w
Balance of trade 603w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 657-8w
Broadcasting licences, Mobile radios 277w
Company finance, Private sector 451w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Training 381w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Trade & Industry 183w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Dept of Trade & Industry 657w
Mergers, House of Fraser 380w
Nationalised industries, Compensation 656w
Public relations, Dept of Trade & Industry 278-9w, 383w
Takeovers, Taxis 532w
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 532w

Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1079

Butter
Food surpluses 536w
Intervention stocks 533w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
Prime Minister, Israel 179
Tourism, Heathrow 169
Tourist industry, Government grants 127w

Bye laws
Business 482w
Dogs 10w

Bypasses
Anglesey 8, 529-30w
A5 457w, 529-30w

Cabinet committees
Economic policy 86w
Westland helicopters 87w

Cabinet Office
Ethnic minorities 188w
Resignations 575-6w

Cabinet papers
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 306-12

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
Crime victims 255-6w
NATO, Nuclear weapons 90w
Rate support grants 222-3w
Tactical nuclear weapons, NATO 90-1w
Unemployment 111w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 176

Caernarfon
Unemployment 20-1w

Caesarian sections 386-7w
Maternal mortality 386-7w

Caithness
Forestry 547w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 668

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Poverty, West Midlands (28.01.86) 928
Questions
Employment 114w

Calling of Members
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 153-5, (22.01.86) 293 (28.01.86) 813, 922-3, (29.01.86) 943

Cambridge science park
Ministers domestic visits 569w

Cambridge University 153w
Higher education admission 153w

Camden
Neighbourhood watch schemes 297w
Wheel clamps 56w

Campaign for fair play 606w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N

Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 208, 210
Local government finance (28.01.86) 811
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 597
Oral question time point of order (28.01.86) 794
Parliamentary papers (23.01.86) 461
Private bills, Members interests (29.01.86) 962
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 307-8, 309, 310, 311
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 664, 665
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 458-9
Westland helicopters, Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 35-6
Questions
Associated British Foods, IRA 1079, 1086
Business statement 1103
Civil servants, Immunity from prosecution 409-10w
Crimes 433-5
District health authorities, North West region 495w
Employment, Cumbria 175
House of Fraser, Ministers correspondence 149w
Mergers, House of Fraser 17w
Ministers 575w
Northern Regional Health Authority, Privatisation 495w
Paramilitary forces, Northern Ireland 594w
Phantom aircraft, Air accidents 449w
Prime Minister official engagements 411w
Rate support grants 222-3w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 320-1w
Takeovers, House of Fraser 17-8w
Unemployment 114w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 515w

Camping sites
Licensing 47w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 398, 409
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 597w
Crown immunity, Scotland 205w
Crown Office for Scotland, Crown immunity 946-7
Economic policy, Scotland 545w
South Africa, Foreign policy 528w
Teachers, Scotland 942
Unemployment 115w
University Grants Committee 566w

Cancer 233w
Drugs 525w

Cancer hazards
Radio frequencies 437w
Radiography 133w
X Rays 133w

Canterbury
Blood donors 780-1

Capital allowances 407w

Capital investment
Council housing 223-4w
Housing construction 303-4
Housing finance 650-1w
Local authorities in England & Wales 198-9w
Local government finance 296w
London University 67-8w
NHS finance 789
Railway network 385w
Rosyth Dockyard 627w

Capital punishment
Referenda 9w
South Africa 528w

Capital transfer tax
Art works 207w

Car parks
Northern Ireland 167w

Caravan sites
Licensing 47w

Caravans
Gypsies 46w

Cardiff
Crime victims 216w
Police 216-7w
Robbery 262w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 242, 244, 250, 253-6, 263, 279
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986-87 (20.01.86) 141, 147-9
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1032, 1039, 1041
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 671
Questions
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 791-2
Drug crimes, Heroin 432
Hospital consultants, Wales 3
Police training, Human rights 323w
Security guards, Licensing 10w
Styal Prison 273-4w
Womens prisons, Penal reform 372w

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 695
Questions
Peas, Plant diseases 403-4w, 404-5w, 585w
Sporting tours, South Africa 423w, 606w
Sports, Finance 606w
Sports Council, Finance 296
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 223w, 423w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 593w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 632-3
Employment opportunities 124w
Forestry, Caithness 547w
Multiple occupation, Housing standards 222w
Self-employed 168
Sites of special scientific interest 299

Cars
Manufactured exports 451-2w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Questions
Air safety, Fire resistant materials 654w

Cartiss, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 92-6, 131

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 26
Local government finance (28.01.86) 802
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 62-6
Questions
Brook Hospital, Neurology 230w
Drug abuse, Video recordings 345w
Educational institutions, Fire Precautions Act 1971 434w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Costs 433w
Inland Revenue, Administrative delays 83w
Italy, Westland helicopters 34w
London University, Capital investment 67-8w
Paracetamol, Death 61-2w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 290
Teacher training, Cruelty to children 433w
Teachers, Contracts of employment 433w
Transient people, Greater London 46w
Woolwich Arsenal, Land use 136w
Woolwich Ferry, Local government reform 54w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 736, 738, 739
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1112
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 557, 569, 574, 583, 600, 610, 616-7
Public petitions (24.01.86) 555
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 672
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1085
Business statement 1101
Civil defence, Local authorities 250w
Violence on television 441

Cash limits
Customs & Excise 319w
Dept of the Environment 653w

Castle, A 467w

Casualties
Nuclear war 269w

Census of production
Agriculture 207-8w

Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work 789
Social workers training 397w, 789

Centre for World Development Education 285-6w
Government grants 285-6w

Cereals
Agricultural production 209w
Agricultural surpluses 209w
Intervention stocks 533w
Libyan Arab Republic 608-9w

Cervical cancer
Administrative delays 541w
Health education 233w
Merseyside 613w
Northern Ireland 541w
Screening 541w, 613w

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council, Ministerial statements (30.01.86) 1106-14
Questions
African National Congress 144w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Libyan Peoples Bureau 367w
British embassies, USA 246w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 486w
EC reform, Intergovernmental Conference 144-5w
Gibraltar, Pensions 449-50w
Israel, Arms embargoes 367-8w
Nicaragua, Inter-American Development Bank 449w
South Africa, Foreign policy 528w
South Africa, Military attaches 365w
South Africa, Prisoners 528w
South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation Shareholders 367w
Terrorism, International cooperation 426w
Torture 366w
Torture, UN Convention on Torture 366w
Uganda, Civil war 529w
United Nations, Economic sanctions 427w
USSR, Human rights 367w

Change of use 136w
Planning permission 136w

Channel crossing
British Council of British Shipping 210-1w
British Rail 472w
Customs 591w
Freight transport 591w
International cooperation 434w
Ministers correspondence 210-1w
Railway transport 329-30w, 472w

Channel Islands
Defence 174-5w
Diplomatic service 174-5w

Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 19-34, 517w
Container terminals 516-7w
Drugs & crime 432
Employment opportunities 183-4, 448
Foot & mouth disease 401-2w

Home Office 252w
Ministerial statements (20.01.86) 19-34
Northern region 183-4
Private investment 448
Rabies 401-2w
Railway electrification 517-8w, 654w
Railway network 518w

Channel Tunnel Group (20.01.86) 19-34

***Channon, Rt Hon Paul**, Minister of State for Trade*
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 15-6
Export credit guarantee 379w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 279w
Multifibre arrangement 277-8w
Torture, Equipment 380w
USA, Export controls 146w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Airguns, Crime 436
Bilateral aid 19-20w
Building regulations, Northern Ireland 594w
Business statement 1102
Energy efficiency 375-6w
Immigrants overstaying 272w
Local radio, Greater London 276w
NHS finance, Expenditure 789
Overseas aid 20w
Urban planning, Private investment 227w

Charitable donations 15
Arts finance 15, 16
Taxation 15, 16

Charities
Educational finance 196w
Private education 196w

Cheese
Milk Marketing Board 208w

Chemical Defence Establishment 449w

Chemical weapons
Arms control 643w

Cherwell District Council 46w
Parish councils 46w

Chest medicine
Wythenshawe Hospital 57w

Chief constables
Political impartiality 252w

Child care 779-80
Research 490w
School meals 244-5w
Social workers training 344w

Childbirth
Aliens 233-4w

Children
Blind 430w
Blood tests 10-1w
Deaf 430w
Hormone treatments 346-7w
Human growth hormones 346-7w
Injuries 232w
Mentally handicapped 492-3w
Nutrition & health 330w
Pornography (24.01.86) 556-619
Sports 224w
Tobacco 177w, 519w, (31.01.86) 1235-46
Toxocara canis 345w
VAT repayment 645w

Children in care (31.01.86) 1196-226
Detention centres 521w
Education of children at home 363w

Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
2R (31.01.86) 1196-226

Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 519w
Prosecutions 519w

Chile
Democracy 145w
Human rights 145w

Chinese community 51w
Advisory services 51w

Chinese immigrants 216w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 361-2, 364
Questions
Police, Finance 263w

Christianity
Nepal 644w

Church buildings
Listed buildings 511-2w

Church Commissioners
Durham, Bishop 12
Public appointments 399w
Shareholders 14
Sunday trading 13-4
Westland helicopters 14

Church of Scientology 523w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 556-64, 566, 568, 573, 575-6, 584, 586, 593, 600, 602, 617
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 647-8
Questions
Sakharov, Andrei, Political prisoners 445-6

Civil Aviation Authority (27.01.86) 691-768

Civil defence 251w
Broadcasting 438-9
Communication 250-1w
Emergency planning 250w
Expenditure 578w
Handbooks 250w
Local authorities 250w, 251w
Local authorities in Scotland 238w
Local radio 438-9
Pay 250w
Publicity 249w

Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 238w, 251w

Civil disorder
Tottenham 438

Civil Liability & Compensation for Personal Injury Royal Commission 556w

Civil liberties
Breathalysers 945-6

Civil proceedings
Legal aid 511-2w

Civil servants
Immunity from prosecution 320-1w, 409-10w
Northern Ireland 596w
Select committees 575w
Training 381w
University Grants Committee 318w

Civil servants secondment
Local enterprise agencies 172
Northern Ireland 596w

Civil service dispersal
National Weights & Measures Laboratory 656-7w

Civil service manpower
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 596w
Dept of Employment 358w
Ethnic minorities 181w, 183w, 197w, 203-4w, 205w, 212w, 219w, 229-30w, 354w
Health & Safety Executive 178
Local government reform 140w, 141w, 175w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory 381w, 532-3w
Northern Ireland Office 313w
Publicity 240-1w, 243w, 245w, 248w, 282-4w, 286-7w, 295w, 333-4w, 383w
Social security abuse 358w, 397w
Tax thresholds 299w
Training 358w

Civil service redundancies 407w
Agricultural research 641-2
Soil Survey of England & Wales 642

Civil war
Uganda 529w

***Clark, Mr Alan**, Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Poverty, West Midlands (28.01.86) 926-30
Questions
Average earnings 172-3
Building industry, Employment 117w
Building industry, Labour only subcontracting 117w, 168-9
Community programme 118w
Community programme, Conditions of employment 118w
Community programme, Employment schemes 188w
Community programme, Men 118w
Community programme, Part-time employment 121-2w
Community programme, Vacancies 356w
Dairy farming, Manpower 599-600w
Electrical technology, Vacancies 45w
Employment 113-4w, 167-8
Employment, Basildon 123-4w
Employment, Council of Europe 634w
Employment, Cumbria 175
Employment, Part-time employment 168
Employment, Statistics 112w
Employment, Tyne & Wear 116-7w
Employment opportunities 124w
Employment opportunities, Parliamentary constituencies 41-3w
Employment schemes 40w, 123w
Engineers, Vacancies 45w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Employment 203-4w
Food industry, Average earnings 43w
Industrial accidents, Industry 203w
Industrial disputes 117w
Industrial health & safety, Companies 202w
Industrial training schemes, Manpower Services Commission 201-2w
Job centres, Vacancies 115w
Job clubs, Hertfordshire 634w
Job start scheme 282w
Job start scheme, Income tax assessment 475w
Jobclubs, Northern region 174-5
Jobclubs, Training 175
Labour mobility 125w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 126w
Ministers domestic visits, Bootle Job Centre 126w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Manpower Services Commission 128w
Part-time employment 168
Pay settlements, Manufacturing industries 173
Pay settlements, Top Salaries Review Body 173
Retail price index, Mortgage interest rates 475w
Self-employed 118w, 168
Self-employed, Availability for work 202w
Self-employed, Occupations 634-6w
Social security abuse, Civil service manpower 358w
Unemployment 111w, 112w, 114-5w, 119w
Unemployment, Advisory services 123-4w, 126w
Unemployment, Employment opportunities 175-6
Unemployment, Ethnic minorities 325w, 475w
Unemployment, Gravesham 202w
Unemployment, Knowsley 112w
Unemployment, Liverpool 113w
Unemployment, Merseyside 112-3w
Unemployment, Older workers 113w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 357w
Unemployment, Pay 126w
Unemployment, Portsmouth 115w

Unemployment, Regional aid 123w
Unemployment, Staffordshire 114w
Unemployment, Training 124w
Unemployment, West Bromwich 115w
Unemployment benefits, Electoral register 325w
Womens employment 40-2w
Youth employment, Industries 39-40w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits disqualification 127-8w
Youth unemployment 38-9w, 111-2w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Domestic wastes, Oil 294

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Baltic wharf, Public petitions (31.01.86) 1195
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 82
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 629
Cross channel electricity link 375w

Clark, Sir William
Debates etc
Industrial Training Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 620
Local government finance (28.01.86) 807
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 48, 49, 54
Questions
Business statement 1098
Pensions, Investment 445

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Paymaster General
Debates etc
Wages Bill, 1R (30.01.86) 1114
Questions
Community programme, Administrative costs 474w
Community programme, Manpower Services Commission 473-4w
Dept of Employment, Civil service manpower 358w
Dept of Employment, Training 603w
Industrial health & safety, Accidents 178
Public relations, Dept of Employment 282-4w
Small businesses, Bureaucracy 110w
Trade union elections 109w
Trade unions, Government grants 474w
Trade unions, Strike ballots 109w
Truck Acts 116w
Unemployment, EC countries 179
Unemployment, Economic policy 178-9
Unemployment, Job centres 171
Unemployment, Statistics 170-1, 171-2
Unemployment, Unemployment benefits 170
Wages councils, Employment opportunities 174
Wages councils, Young people 173-4
Youth training scheme, Derbyshire County Council 283w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 957
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 399-400
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 605w
Hospital closures, Woodilee Hospital 947
Iron & Steel Trades Confederation 935
Printing industry, HMSO 591w
Training 118-9w

Clay, Mr Bob
Questions
Northern Regional Health Authority, Health services 788-9

Cleaning services
British Airports Authority 384w
Northern Ireland 1087

Clearing banks 443w

Clelland, David
Questions
Inner city partnerships 225w
Manpower Services Commission, Training 119w
Sheltered employment, Handicapped workers 65w

Cleminson, James 148w

Clinical judgments 555w, 556w

Clinical judgments
NHS complaints 555w, 556w

Clinical psychologists 130-1w
Manpower 130-1w

Clinical wastes 51w, 52w
Waste disposal 51w, 52w

Clothing
VAT repayment 645w

Clwyd
Community hospitals 2

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 972
Private bills, Members interests (29.01.86) 961, 963
Protection of Minimum Retirement Age Bill, 1R (21.01.86) 212-4
Questions
Anthracite, South Wales 631-2
Armed forces, Iraq 236w
Channel tunnel, Container terminals 516-7w
Crimes of violence, Women 433-4
Foreign loans, Iraq 13w
Iraq, Armed forces training 427w
National Museum of Wales, Art exhibitions 359w
National Museum of Wales, Exhibitions 358w
NHS finance, Wales 6
Prime Minister official engagements 573-4w
Public opinion, Conservative Party 447
Rates & rating 221w
Residential care, Elderly 781
Strategic defence initiative, United Technologies 638w
United Nations, Economic sanctions 427w

Coal
Exports 98w, 628
Imports 629, 643

Coal fired power stations
Coal stocks 631-2

Coal liquefaction
Point of Ayr 638

Coal mine closures
South Wales 5
Wales 5-6, 10

Coal mining
Costs 628
Dismissal 321w, 375w
Employment 637
Employment opportunities 635
Energy Efficiency Year 643
Government assistance to industry 627-8
Greater Manchester (20.01.86) 161-6
Industrial relations 636-7
Margam Mine 628-9
Nottinghamshire 629
Privatisation 628
Productivity 376w, 627-8, 629
Redundancy 5, 10, 637-8
Scotland 375w, 544w, 635-6
South Wales 629
Subsidence 98w
Unfair dismissal 635-6, 637
Wales 5

Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 4w, 98w

Coal prices
Energy costs 631

Coal reserves
Northern Ireland 3w, 1086-7

Coal stocks
Coal fired power stations 631-2

Coastal areas
Public footpaths 140w

Coastal protection
Barnstable 401w

Coastguard
HMS Daedalus 446w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 809

Cocks, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 564-5
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Whitbread poacher bitter 591w
Secondary education, School population 245w

Codes of practice
Merton 298w
NHS & private practice 346w
Sites of special scientific interest 421w
Wines 380-1w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Calling of Members, Backbenchers (28.01.86) 923
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 919
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 581, 585
Questions
Agricultural products, Export rebates 435w
Animal experiments 173w
Animal experiments, Animal welfare 215w
Animal experiments, Tumours 173w
Armed forces civilians 330w
Armed forces dependents, USA 331w
Armed forces deployments, USA 413w, 449w
Asthma, Medical records 230w
Burglar alarms, Hoaxes & false alarms 631-2w
Burglar alarms, Metropolitan Police 631w
Deportation 168w
Dept of Health & Social Security special investigators, Social security abuse 620w
Diplomatic service, Terrorism 37w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Disclosure of information 327w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Electoral register 328w
Electoral register, Inland Revenue 407-8w
Exclusion orders 172w
Groce, Cherry, Complaints against police 521w
Housing problems, Young people 613-4w
Immigration, Electoral register 480w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 246w
Judiciary, Conflict of interests 241w
Metropolitan Police, Surveillance 171w
Police raids, Lloyd, Angela 171w
Police records 171w
Police records, Lothian 204w
Police records, Merseyside 170-1w
Prime Ministers Office, Public relations 409-10w, 410-1w
Publishing, USSR 13-4w
Racial attacks, Greater London 265w
Rates & rating, Electricity area boards 466w
Refugees 172-3w
Social security abuse, Civil service manpower 358w, 397w
Social security abuse, Electoral register 553w
Social workers training 490w
Specialist claims control units, Social security abuse 550w
Television licences, Electoral register 521w
Television licences, Personal records 576-7w

Unemployment benefits, Electoral register 325w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Questions
Coal mining, Wales 5
Metal Box, Neath 9

Collective worship 633w

College closures
Burton Manor College 361-2w
Science education 361w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 454
Questions
Air transport, Competition 518-9w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 595w
Local enterprise agencies, Personnel 172
"Managing Waste" the Duty of Care," Waste management 293-4
Ordination of women 13
Prime Minister 792
Town & country planning, Departmental circulars 46-7w

Colwell, L 467w

Combined heat and power
Leicester 643

Commercial management 639-40w, 640-1w
Rosyth Dockyard 639-40w, 640-1w

Commercial secrets
Public corporations 56-7w

Commission for Racial Equality 174w
Accountants 182w, 217-8w
Inquiries 85-6w
Racial discrimination 217w

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 178w

Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 538w

Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment 660-1w
Public appointments 660-1w

Committee on Safety of Medicines
Benzodiazepines 131-3w
Drug side effects 620w

Commonwealth Games
Wales 513w

Communication
Blind 429w
Civil defence 250-1w
Deaf 429w
Electromagnetic interference 250-1w

Community care 777-8
Dependents 779
Handicapped children 492-3w
Hospital discharges 778
Invalid care allowance 616w
Local government social services 778-9
Mental patients 496-7w
Voluntary organisations 778-9

Community charge (28.01.86) 797-813, (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75

Community development
Urban programme 416w

Community health services
Wales 200-1w

Community hospitals 2
Clwyd 2
Health services finance 3
Wales 3

Community policing 251w
Police community liaison committees 251-2w

Community programme 118w
Administrative costs 474w
Conditions of employment 118w
Employment schemes 118w
Manpower Services Commission 473-4w
Men 118w
North West region 473-5w
Part-time employment 121-2w
Pay 121-2w
Vacancies 356w
Women 118w

Commuters
Greater London 385w

Companies 219-20w
Accounting 450w
British Standards Institution 378w
Data Protection Act 1984 372w
Dockyards 627w
Greater London Enterprise Board 422w
Industrial health & safety 202w
Prosthetics 392w
Quality control 378w
Retail trade 450-1w
Vacancies 203w

Companies Acts 450w

Company accounts
Hepker, Michael 183-4w

Company finance
Private sector 451w
Westland helicopters 34-5w, 641-2w

Company investigations
Sumrie Clothes 146w

Company liquidations
Wales 382-3w

Company registrations
Wales 108w

Compensation
False imprisonment 237-8w
Nationalised industries 656w
Northern Ireland 311w
Patients 491-2w, 554w, 555w
Public expenditure 656w
Subsidence 4w

Competition
Air transport 518-9w

Complaints
Dentistry 495w
Mental Health Act Commission 786
Tranquillisers 131-3w
Violence on television 266w

Complaints against police 322-3w
Cumbria 433-5
Groce, Cherry 521w
Plastic bullets 406w
Special Branch 437-8

Compulsory purchase
London Docklands Development Corporation 220w, 221w

Computer applications
Electoral register 325w, 328w, 407-8w, 480w, 553w

Computer piracy
Business 582w

Computer staff
NHS 616w

Computers
NHS 389w, 616w

Concannon, Rt Hon J D
Questions
Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 98w

Concessionary television licences 266w

Conditions of employment
Community programme 118w
Higher education teachers 362-3w
Merchant seamen (22.01.86) 423-9
News International 444

Conferences
Young people 163-4w

Confiscation orders (21.01.86) 241-80

Conflict of interests 241w
Judiciary 241w
Specific cases 604w
Urban housing renewal unit 604w

Conservation
Wrecks 650w

Conservative Party
Public opinion 447

Construction
Dartford tunnel 184
Factories 7-8
Prisons 5w, 215w, 442-3
School buildings 78-9w
Universities 432w

Construction costs
Roads 543w

Consultation papers 126w, 466w, 565w, 616w
Primary health care 616w

Consumer Credit Act 1974 452w
Bureaucracy 452w

Container terminals
Channel tunnel 516-7w
Ports 516-7w

Contingency reserve
Overseas aid 284w

Contraceptives
Northern Ireland 558w
Young people 494w, 558w

Contracts
Diesel multiple units 329w
NHS 130w
Prisons 5w
Railway transport 329w

Contracts for services
Prosthetics 392w
Scottish health boards 947

Contracts of employment
Teachers 433w

Contracts of Employment & Redundancy Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 1965 597-8w

Convictions
Industrial health & safety 501-2w
Norton, Alan 174w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1121, 1148, 1158-9, 1162-6
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 116-7
Questions
Aids for handicapped, ORLAU walking aid 130w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 727-8, (28.01.86) 899-900
Questions
Business statement 1101
Surgery, Blood 781

Coombs, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 224-7
Questions
Retirement pensions, Costs 660w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 243, 246-51
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 578-9, 597-603
Questions
Counterfeit manufacturing 18w
Narcotics, Young people 504w
Prison staff, Winson Green Prison 443

Corby
Derelict land grants 229w
Urban programme 228-9w
Youth training scheme 202w

Corby District Council 47-8w, 228-9w
Council house sales 47-8w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Calling of Members, Backbenchers (28.01.86) 923
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 915
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 592
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 847
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 894-5
Questions
Community programme, Men 118w
Crime victims 254-5w
El Salvador, Human rights 529w
Export licensing, Defence equipment 532w
Immigration controls 583w
Immigration controls, Indian subcontinent 583w
Temporary immigrants, Tamils 583w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1065
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Arts finance, Charitable donations 16
Durham, Bishop 12

Corporal punishment
Referenda 9w

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
Examinations, Scotland 101-2w

Corruption
Freemasonry 433-4

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 523w, 658w

Cosmetics industry
Animal experiments 532w

Cost benefit analysis
Road construction 301-2w

Cost effectiveness 85-6w, 182w, 550w

Cost per pupil
Wales 198w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1127, 1143-6
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 32
Local government finance (28.01.86) 804
Questions
Enterprise zones, Government grants to local authorities 650w
Northern Ireland, USA 1083

Council house sales 223w, 465w
Corby District Council 47-8w
Council house waiting lists 304
District councils 103-5w, 105-6w
Empty housing 300
Flats 467w
House prices 105-6w
Housing improvement 336w
Leicester 301
Sitting tenants 47-8w, 103-5w
Southwark 136-7w, 137-8w, 467w
Wales 107w
Wandsworth 304

Council house waiting lists
Council house sales 304

Council housing
Building repairs 288
Capital investment 223-4w
Coventry City Council 288
Empty housing 468w
Flats 605w
Greater London Council 651w
Housing improvement 603-4w
Housing revenue accounts 53-4w
Local government reform 652w
Management 287-8
Market value 512w
Urban housing renewal unit 302

Council housing finance
Building repairs 414w
Housing construction 414w
Local authorities in Scotland 438w
Local government expenditure 414w
Wales 459-62w, 462-4w

Council of Europe
Employment 634w
Young people 163-4w

Council tenants
Local government staff 468w

Councillors
Metropolitan Police 526w

Counterfeit manufacturing 18w

Country review programmes 285w

County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing) Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931, (30.01.86) 1076

Courts
Basildon 266w

Courts Martial
Gray, MJJ 93w

Coventry
Building repairs 287

Coventry City Council 287
Council housing 288
Housing investment programmes 287

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Jarrett, Cynthia, Death 85w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 54w, 55w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 959
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 397
Questions
Air traffic control, Air accidents 210w
Economic situation, Scotland 546w
Housing action areas, Glasgow 238w, 600w
Rates & rating, Scotland 934
Unemployment 114w
Youth training scheme, Glasgow 205w

Cranborne, Viscount
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 218

Credit
Iraq 13w

Crime
Accountability 433-4, 435-6, 441
Airguns 436, 437
Armed forces 184-5w
Firearms 255w, 322w
Greater London 433-4
Household surveys 440-1
Punishment 270w
Ulster Defence Regiment 185-6w, 351w
Unemployment 440-1

Crime prevention 253-4w
Burglar alarms 254w
Expenditure 171-2w
Metropolitan Police 254w
Motor industry 476w
Motor vehicle theft 435
Racial attacks 265w
West Midlands 581w

Crime victims 254-5w, 255-6w
Age 262w
Cardiff 216w
Crimes of violence 252w
Injuries 260w
Rape 440
Research 252w

Crimes 433-5

Crimes of violence
Crime victims 252w
Crimes against the person 256w
Cruelty to children 5w
Detection rates 259-60w
Pupils 372w
School teachers 372w
Sentencing 435
Violence on television 439
Women 5w, 170w, 256-60w, 433-4
Womens National Commission 268w

Criminal injuries compensation 6-7w
Northern Ireland 310-1w
Rape 440
USA 440

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Administrative delays 632w

Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 310-1w

Criminal investigation
De Lorean 354w
Detection rates 256w
Drug crimes (21.01.86) 241-80
Hepker, Michael 187w
Manpower 441
Tottenham 176w
Ulster Defence Regiment 1080

Criminal Justice Act 1961 371w

Criminal proceedings
Disclosure of information 355w
Legal aid 512w

Critchley, Mr Julian
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 586

Crofting
Road construction 369w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland 592w, 593w, 596w
Border security in Ireland 1088-9

Cross channel electricity link 375w

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 25
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Theatres, Greater London Council 469-70w

Crown Agents
Pensions 377w

Crown immunity 126w, (21.01.86) 190-202, 205w, 345w, 493w, 502-3w, 516w, 557w, 615w, 946-7, (29.01.86) 976-8
Crown Office for Scotland 946-7
Departmental coordination 947
Hospital catering 503w
Hospitals 557w, 615w, 946-7, (29.01.86) 976-8
Industrial health & safety 126w
Ministers correspondence 516w
NHS 493w
Public buildings (29.01.86) 976-8
Regional health authorities 502-3w
Scotland 205w

Crown lands & estates
Industrial health & safety 516w

Crown Office for Scotland
Crown immunity 946-7

Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 632w

Cruelty to Animals Inspectorate 523w

Cruelty to children
Crimes of violence 5w
Disclosure of information 59w
Incest 233w
Teacher training 433w

CR6 taxis 532w, 657w

Production 657w

Cultural relations
Books 13-4w

Cumbria
Agricultural improvement scheme 400-1w
Complaints against police 433-5
Employment 175
Rate support grants 175

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Debates etc
Opencast mining, Greater Manchester (20.01.86) 161-4

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 799-800, 805
Oral question time point of order (22.01.86) 293
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 41, 48, 49, 50-9, 127
Questions
Council housing, Housing revenue accounts 53-4w
Fish, Mercury pollution 2w
Greenbelt, Property development 297
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, Local government reform 2w
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, Local government expenditure 2w
Local government expenditure 297w, 514-6w

Curriculum
Educational standards 319w
Schools 319w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 810
Questions
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Sick pay 549w
Residential care, Elderly 781

Custodial treatment
Statistics 261-2w
Young offenders 275w

Customs
Channel crossing 591w

Customs & Excise
Cash limits 319w

Dagenham Docks
Wheat 585w

Daily Telegraph 581w

Dairy Crest 425w
Touche Ross 425w

Dairy farming
Manpower 599-600w
Northern Ireland 399-400w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (29.01.86) 943
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 306
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 654, 655, 656
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Civil service redundancies, Agricultural research 641-2
Defence procurement, Helicopters 334w
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 793
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 142-3w, 144w
Official secrets, Keays, Sara 253w
Play facilities, Scotland 204w
Plessey, Takeovers 279-80w
Polkemmet Bing, Air pollution 634-5
Short Brothers, Sikorsky helicopters 543w
Smith, David, Sheriffs 321w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 629-30w
Special Branch, Students 525w
Strategic defence initiative 279-80w
Teachers, Scotland 941
Teaching hospitals, Pay differentials 230-1w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 15w
Westland helicopters, Exports 334w
Westland helicopters, Foreign relations 528-9w

Dalzell
Ravenscraig Steelworks 936

"Damage to Ship Containing Chemical Weapons" 640w

Dartford tunnel 184
Construction 184

Data Protection Act 1984 372w, 582w
Companies 372w

Data Protection Registrar 582w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1125-32, 1150

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 966, 969, 970
Private bills, Members interests (29.01.86) 963
Questions
Agricultural land, Wales 320w
Agricultural workers, Part-time employment 425w
Asulox, Weedkillers 341w
Bracken, Plant power 349-50w, 377w
Bracken, Wales 320w, 322-3w
Dairy farming, Manpower 599-600w
Energy Efficiency Year, Coal mining 643
Farms, Arable land 425w
Health hazards, Bracken 345w, 660w
Health services, Mid Glamorgan 7
Housing benefits, Mid Glamorgan 499w
Lie detectors, 10 Downing Street 792
Nature Conservancy Council, Forestry 544w
Pest control, Bracken 340-1w, 405w
Pesticides, Scotland 103w
Productivity, Agriculture 655w
Unemployment, Wales 11
Water pollution, Bracken 338w
Youth unemployment 111-2w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 804
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 459

Day nurseries 779-80

De Lorean
Criminal investigation 354w
Factories 454w
Lotus cars 354w, 413w, 1082-3

Deaf
Children 430w
Communication 429w
EC countries 431w
Pupil-teacher ratios 430w
Research 427-9w
School population 429w
Schools 429w
Special education 362w, 364w, 429-30w, 431w
Special educational needs 430-1w
Teacher training 429w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Questions
African National congress 144w
Agricultural workers, Accidents 324-5w
EC budget, Intergovernmental Agreement, 1984 527w
Coal, Exports 98w
Educational qualifications, Waltham Forest 537-8w
Greater London Council Research Library 228w
Hong Kong, GATT 642w
Marriage 660w
Members pay 437w
National income, OECD countries 108-9w
Nationalised industries, Compensation 656w
NHS administration 231w
North Sea oil, Oil prices 473w
Police, Rent allowances 632w
Primary health care, District health authorities 658-9w
Robbery, Metropolitan Police 217w
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 532w

Death
Economic regions 392-4w
Elderly 392-4w
Fletcher, Yvonne 437
Food poisoning 66w
Hypothermia 548-50w
Jarrett, Cynthia 85w
Paracetamol 61-2w
Police vehicles 6w, 932
Reckless driving 519-20w
Schwarz, Isabel 786
Singh Toor, Tarsem 790
Wallenberg, Raoul 246-7w

Death rate
Social class 346w

Debt collection
Banks 85w
Scotland 629w
Social security recipients 63w

Declarations of interest 241w, 346w
Doctors 346w

Deeds of covenant 196w
Educational finance 196w

Defective housing 293-4w, 604-5w, 605w
Flats 605w
Housing finance 604-5w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 293-4w

Defence 625w
Channel Islands 174-5w

Defence contracts
Ammunition 639w
Armoured fighting vehicles 95w
Berlin Brigade 95w, 96w
India 201w
Scott Lithgow 446-7w
Shells 448w
Tenders 335w
Training aircraft 94w
Weapons 446w
105 FD ammunition 639w

Defence equipment
El Salvador 532w
Export licensing 532w
Ulster Defence Regiment 352-3w

Defence expenditure
Berlin Brigade 335-6w
Nimrod aircraft 446w
Trident 627w

Defence industries
European fighter aircraft 445

Defence procurement 448w
Ammunition 136w
Armoured fighting vehicles 331-2w
Berlin Brigade 96w, 331-2w
British Standards Institution 446w, 641w
Departmental coordination 413w
Exchange rates 641w
Guided weapons 628w
Helicopters 134-5w, 334w, 641w
Helmets 135w
Shells 627-8w
Shipbuilding 447w
Tenders 447-8w, 626w
Type 23 Frigates 626w

Defence research 432w
Research 91w
Research finance 82w
SP70 guns 628w

Defence research establishments
Privatisation 640w

Defence School of Music 93-4w
Armed forces deployment 93-4w
Costs 93-4w

Defence Select Committee evidence 1090-1, 1092
Dept of Trade & Industry 1090-1, 1092-3
Westland helicopters 1090-1, 1092-3

Deficiency diseases
Scotland 368w

Degrees
Open University 73-5w

Delyn Borough Council 9-10

Delyn enterprise zone 9-10
Industrial development 9-10
Land use 9-10

Democracy
Chile 145w

Democratic Unionist Party 1085

Demolition
Divis flats 593w
Housing 458-60w

Demonstrations
Anglo-Irish Agreement 594w

Denmark
Sunday trading 218w

Dental charges
Advertising 500w

Dentistry 500w
Complaints 495w
Private health services 500w

Dept of Education & Science
Public relations 245w

Dept of Employment
Civil service manpower 358w
Departmental leaflets 119w
Ethnic minorities 203-4w
Public relations 282-4w
Training 603w

Dept of Energy
Ethnic minorities 205w
Public relations 243w

Dept of Health & Social Security
Industrial disputes 497w
Scottish Office 947

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Birmingham 59w
Brent 234-5w
Greater London 310w, 560-2w
Labour turnover 560-2w
Leeds 394w

Dept of Health & Social Security special investigators
Social security abuse 397w, 620w

Dept of the Environment
Cash limits 653w
Departmental circulars 46-7w
Ethnic minorities 229-30w
Local government reform 140w
Public relations 295w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Defence Select Committee Evidence 1090-1, 1092-3
Departmental records 15-6w, 87w, 88w
Ethnic minorities 183w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 657w
Northern Ireland Office 413w
Press releases 383w
Public relations 278-9w, 383w
Training 381w

Dept of Transport
Ethnic minorities 212w
Local government reform 141w
Public relations 302-3w

Departmental circulars 421w
Dept of the Environment 46-7w
Home helps 493w
Local authorities 565w
Nature conservation 421w
Town & country planning 46-7w
Welsh Office 565w
X rays 133w

Departmental coordination
Affiliation 143w
Crown immunity 947
Defence procurement 413w
Law centres 515w

Departmental correspondence 89w, 396w

Departmental forms
Management & Personnel Office 143w

Departmental forms, Specific cases 298-9w

Departmental leaflets
Dept of Employment 119w
Plain English 119w

Departmental publications
AIDS 305w
Languages 558-9w, 559-60w
Legal aid 584w
Mental patients rights 558-9w, 559-60w

Departmental records 15-6w, 48-50w, 87w, 88w, 94w, 232w, 575w
Dept of Trade & Industry 15-6w, 87w, 88w
Westland helicopters 88w

Dependents
Community care 779
Social security recipients 779

Deportation 168w
Costs 167-8w
Indian subcontinent 480-1w
Libyan Peoples Bureau 323-4w

Deposited papers
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 50, (21.01.86) 205, (22.01.86) 313, 314

Derbyshire County Council
Youth training scheme 283w

Derelict land 420-1w
Land reclamation 607-8w

Derelict land grants 224w, 229w, 607-8w
Corby 229w
Government grants 607-8w

Detection rates
Crimes of violence 259-60w
Criminal investigation 256w
Motor vehicle theft 476w

Detention centres 521w
Children in care 521w
Suicide 522w

Developing countries
Export rebates 435w

Development of Tourism Act 1969 127w

Devon
Public footpaths 140w

Devonport dockyard 91-2w, 334w, 639-40w, 640-1w
Apprentices 91-2w, 334w
Manpower 91w
Privatisation 639-40w, 640-1w
Teachers 91w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 949-51
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 403-8, 409-10
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 933
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 936

Dial-a-ride 52w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 568, 585, 595-7
Oral question time point of order (28.01.86) 794
Questions
Jobclubs, Training 175
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 782-3

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 698, 716, 724-7
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 78-9, 82, 109

Diesel multiple units 329w
Contracts 329w

Diets
Pupils 575w

Dim-dip headlights 55-6w
Motor vehicle safety 55-6w

Diplomatic immunity
Parking offences 372w

Diplomatic relations
Guatemala 145-6w

Diplomatic service
Channel Islands 174-5w
Terrorism 37w

Dir 80/778/EEC 138-40w, 530w
Welsh Water Authority 530w

Direct labour departments 297w, 511w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985/86
Money res* (27.01.86) 769

Disallowed questions
Speakers rulings & statements (30.01.86) 1092

Disciplinary proceedings 406w

Disclosure of information
AIDS 64-5w
Criminal proceedings 355w
Cruelty to children 59w
Driver & vehicle licensing centre 327w
Falkland Islands 144w
Immigration 581w
Immunity from prosecution 355w, 356w, 409-10w, 412w
Local government (31.01.86) 1247-8
Ministers correspondence 87w, (23.01.86) 449-60, 467, (27.01.86) 646-90
Public Record Office 640w
Social security recipients 63w
Speakers rulings & statements (28.01.86) 794
Westland helicopters 87w, 88w, 281-2w, 330w, 355-6w, 382w, 411w, 412w, 515w, 574w, 575w, 584w, 585w, 629-30w, 637w, 791-2, 793-4

Discretionary student grants
Student grants 71-2w

Discrimination
Local government services 336w

Dismissal
Coal mining 321w, 375w

Distance learning 110w
Management techniques 110w

Distillers Company 603w
Takeovers 603w

District councils 103-5w, 105-6w, 294-5
Council house sales 103-5w, 105-6w
Rate support grant penalties 295

District general hospitals
Wales 3

District health authorities
Industrial health & safety 502-3w
North West region 495w
Primary health care 658-9w
Social deprivation 388w

District heating 377w
Rates & rating 641

Divis flats 593w
Demolition 593w
Housing improvement 593w

Dixon, Mr Don
Questions

Employment, Tyne & Wear 116-7w

Dixon, Claude 633w
Mentally disturbed offenders 633w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 811
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 201-2
Questions
Food poisoning, Death 66w
Health services, Statistics 347-8w
Hip replacements, Leicester 784
Hospital waiting lists, Hip replacements 133w
Hospitals, Fires 349w
Road traffic offences, Traffic lights 277-8w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of Information 584w
X rays, Breast cancer 133w
X rays, Cancer hazards 133w
X rays, Medical treatments 133w

Dobson, Lt Col 445w

Dockyard Services Bill 1985/86 639-40w, 640-1w

Dockyards
Apprentices 334w
Companies 627w
Privatisation 627w, 639w

Doctors
Attendance allowance 614w
Breach of contract 555w
Declarations of interest 346w
NHS complaints 556w
Pay 82w
Professional misconduct 555w

DOE circular 32/81 421w

Dogs
Animal experiments 524-5w
Bye laws 10w
Environmental health 338w
Parks 10w

Domestic energy conservation
Expenditure 350w

Domestic wastes
Oil 294
Research 294

Dormand, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 455
Questions
Art finance, Northern Arts 46w
Coal liquefaction, Point of Ayr 638
House of Commons souvenirs, Prices 640
New towns 220w
Unemployment, Economic policy 178-9

Dornoch Firth
Bridges 933

Dorrell, Mr Stephen
Questions
Employment, Northern Ireland 592w

Dorset
Property development 302-3
Railway electrification 472-3w
Rates & rating 292

Double glazing
VAT 634

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 955
Merchant seamen, Conditions of employment (22.01.86) 423-5
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 458
Questions
Coal mining, Scotland 635
Defence procurement, Tenders 626w
Dockyards, Privatisation 627w
Natural gas, Self-sufficiency 630
Rosyth Dockyard, Capital investment 627w
Rosyth Dockyard, Commercial management 640-1w
Rosyth Dockyard, Trident 627w
Teachers, Scotland 546w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Questions
European fighter aircraft, Defence industries 445
Medical education, University teachers 82w
Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK 44-5w
University teachers, Pay 363w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 653w

Downing Street 413w

Draize test 632-3w
Animal experiments 632-3w

Drinking & driving
Blood alcohol levels 472w, 481-2w
Driving offences 481-2w
Publicity 302w
Scotland 321w, 520-1w, 946
Sentencing 946

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre
Disclosure of information 327w
Electoral register 328w

Driving offences
Drinking & driving 481-2w
Scotland 321w
Strathclyde 520-1w

Driving tests
Motorcycles 611w
Waiting lists 611w

Drug abuse 264w, 520-1w
AIDS 551-2w
Government grants 264-5w, 492w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 614-5w
Schools 345w
Tranquillisers 492w, 614-5w
Video recordings 345w

Drug crimes 432-3
Criminal investigation (21.01.86) 241-80, 432, 433
Heroin 432, 433
Housing estates 433
Manpower 370-1w
Personal property (21.01.86) 241-80
Prisoners 214w
Proceeds of crime 100-1w
Scotland 100-1w, 433
Wales 374w

Drug hazards
Arthritis 618w
Piroxicam 618-9w

Drug industry
Limited list prescribing 304w
Procurement 130w

Drug side effects
Committee on Safety of Medicines 620w
Piroxicam 499-500w, 617w

Drug squads 432-3
Manpower 432-3

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill 1985/86
2R (21.01.86) 241-80, 267w
Money res* (21.01.86) 280

Drugs
Cancer 525w
Feldene 499-500w
LD50 toxicity test 525w

Drugs & crime
Channel tunnel 432

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1087-8
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Constitution 638
Council house sales 223w
Council house sales, Wandsworth 304
Crime, Accountability 441
Deportation, Costs 167-8w
Foreign tourists 168w
Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department, Costs 6w
Hospital ancillary staff, Pay 494w
Immigration controls, Foreign tourists 6w
Immigration controls, Medical examinations 168-9w
London Regional Transport, Bus services 55w
London Regional Transport, Government grants 327w
Refugees, Temporary accommodation 782
Weapons, Republic of Ireland 1089

Dunn, Mr Bob, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Education finance 80w
Council of Europe, Young people 163-4w
Deaf, Children 430w
Deaf, Communication 429w
Deaf, EC countries 431w
Deaf, Pupil-teacher ratios 430w
Deaf, Research 427-9w
Deaf, School population 429w
Deaf, Schools 429w
Deaf, Special education 429-30w, 431w
Deaf, Special educational needs 430-1w
Deaf, Teacher training 429w
Educational finance, School governors 193w
Educational finance, Schools 187-8w
Educational publications, AIDS 244w
Educational qualifications, Waltham Forest 537-8w
Free school meals, Pupils 70w
Further education, Local education authorities 75-7w
Grove school, School closures 82w
Handicapped students, Blind 164-5w
Milk, Schools 245w
Nursery schools, School population 77w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Local education authorities 538-42w
School buildings, Construction 78-9w
School meals, Free school meals 434w
Secondary education, School population 245w
Special education, Blind 364w
Special education, Deaf 362w
Travelling expenses, School transport 69w
Youth training scheme, School leaving 79w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 24
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 562, 567-70, 571, 586, 588
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1014-5, 1018, 1029
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Privatisation 385w
Channel tunnel, Railway electrification 517-8w, 654w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 518w
Customs, Channel crossing 591w
NHS, Management 788
Railway sidings, Government assistance to industry 517w
Womens National Commission, Crimes of violence 268w

Durham, Bishop 12, 13
Church Commissioners 12
Costs 12
Social problems 12

Duty solicitors 213-4w
Strangeways Prison 213-4w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Questions
EC Trade Mark Office 222w
Members pay 179-82w
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, Bloomsbury Health Authority 496w

Dysentery
Wales 359w

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 221-4, 236
Oral question time intervention (27.01.86) 636
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 629
Coal mining, Scotland 544w, 635-6
Land reclamation, Scotland 368w
National Coal Board, Public appointments 376w

Ear nose & throat 63w, 551w
Hospital waiting lists 63w

Early retirement
Higher education 78w
Hospital consultants 646-7w
School teachers 68-9w

Early warning systems
British Aerospace 639w
Nimrod aircraft 638-9w

Earnings rules
Elderly 390w
Housing benefits 390w

East Berkshire Health Authority
Mental health community care 779

East London river crossing 184
Tunnels 184

East Lothian 103w
A1 103w
Road accidents 103w

East Timor
Human rights 248w

Eastern Arts Association 18
Arts finance 18

Eastern Health & Social Services Board 541w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
British Rail, Locomotives 385w
Crime, Greater London 433-4
Employment 113w
Railway transport, Contracts 329w

EC action
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 128-30w
Motor vehicle safety 329w
Torture 249w

EC Agricultural Council
Beef & Veal 209-10w

EC budget
Intergovernmental Agreement, 1984 527w
UK contributions 109w, 195-6w, 408w, 527w, (31.01.86) 1249

EC countries
Blind 431w
Deaf 431w
Milk 97w
Tin 446
Unemployment 179
VAT 300w
Vocational training 78w

EC external trade
Hong Kong 642w

EC Finance Council 301w

EC Foreign Affairs Council 486w
Ministerial statements (30.01.86) 1106-14

EC grants & loans
Northern Ireland 212w
Scottish Islands 547w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
EC action 128-30w

EC law
Water supply 140w

EC reform
Intergovernmental Conference 144-5w

EC Trade Mark Office 222w

"Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Control" 511-2w

Economic policy
Cabinet committees 86w
Scotland 545w
Unemployment 5, 178-9, 1090

Economic regions
Arts finance 16
Death 392-4w

Economic sanctions
United Nations 427w

Economic situation
Scotland 546w, 939

Education
Public expenditure 566-70w

Education Act 1981 11

Education of children at home
Children in care 363w

Education support grants 244-5w
School meals 244-5w

Education & industry 148-9w

Educational aid
Zambia 526w

Educational finance
Aids for handicapped 164-5w
Assisted places scheme 80w
Charities 196w
Deeds of covenant 196w
Expenditure 69-70w
Further education 537w
Higher education 106-7w, 537w
Local government expenditure 187-8w
Pay 69-70w
Pickup 70-2w
Polytechnics 318w
School governors 193w
School meals 318-9w
School transport 69w
Schools 187-8w
Science & technology 434w
Teacher training 364-5w

Educational Institute of Scotland 545w, 941
Industrial arbitration 941w
Industrial disputes 545w, 942-3

Educational institutions
Fire Precautions Act 1971 434w

Educational policy (23.01.86) 510-46

Educational publications
AIDS 244w

Educational qualifications
Further education 75-7w
Mendocino Book Company 570w
Waltham Forest 537-8w

Educational standards
Curriculum 319w

Edwards, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Poverty, West Midlands (28.01.86) 924-6, 928

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc
Local government finance, Ministerial statements (29.01.86) 964-75
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 136-42, 146, 151, 156-7
Questions
Advance factory programme, Wales 198w
Agricultural land, Wales 320w
Berlei 4
Bracken, Wales 320w, 322-3w
Coal mine closures, Wales 5-6, 10
Coal mining, Wales 5
Delyn enterprise zone, Land use 9-10
Employment, Wales 359w
Health services finance, Wales 200-1w
Higher education, Wales 106-7w
Industrial development, Wales 4
Industrial diseases, Wales 358w
Industrial investment, Wales 107w
Industrial investment, Wales 359w
Local authorities, Departmental circulars 565w
Local government, Wales 22w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 4-5
National Museum of Wales, Art exhibitions 359w
National Museum of Wales, Exhibitions 358w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Exhibitions 10
Parrot Corporation, Inquiries 8, 9
Pay, Unemployment 4
Public expenditure, Wales 23-32w
Public relations, Welsh Office 240-1w
Pwllpeiran Experimental Hill Farm, Ministers domestic visits 20w
Rate support grants, Arfon 22w
Redundancy, Wales 5
Regional development grants, Wales 107w
Severe weather payments, Wales 21-2w
Unemployment, Caernarfon 20-1w
Unemployment, Wales 3-4, 5, 11, 21w, 359w
Welsh Development Agency, Factories 7-8
Welsh Development Agency, Privatisation 8, 359-60w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Antarctic Treaty, UN resolutions 32-3w
Atlantic fisheries, South Atlantic 34w
Australian Bicentenary, British Australian Bicentennial Committee 246w
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 35w
Bangladesh, Immigration controls 35-6w, 36-7w
British Council 529w
British dependent territories, Postage stamps 642w
British residents abroad, Torture 249w
Chile, Democracy 145w
Chile, Human rights 145w
Diplomatic service, Terrorism 37w
East Timor, Human rights 248w
El Salvador, Armed forces training 146w
El Salvador, Human rights 529w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 247-8w
Ethnic minorities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 181w
European Court of Human Rights 365-6w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 144w
Guatemala, Diplomatic relations 145-6w
Hong Kong, Government 33w
Hong Kong, Stateless persons 33w
Human rights 249w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 246w
Immigration applications, Fees & charges 35w
Immigration controls, Administrative delays 247w
Immigration officers, Indian subcontinent 247w
Nepal, Christianity 644w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 248w
Republic of Ireland, Extradition 33-4w
Republic of Ireland, Terrorism 33w
South Yemen, Refugees 181-2w
Thailand, Prisoners 144w
Torture, EC action 249w
Tristan da Cunha, Palinauris Investments 589w
UNESCO 145-6w
United Nations Association, UK contributions 248-9w
Zambia, Educational aid 526w

El Salvador
Armed forces training 146w, 445w
Defence equipment 532w

Human rights 529w

Elderly
Death 392-4w
Earnings rules 390w
Home helps 493w
Mugging 260w
Nursing homes 485-6w
Residential care 485-6w, 509-10w, 781
Swimming pools 659w

Electoral register
Computer applications 325w, 328w, 407-8w, 480w, 553w
Driver & vehicle licensing centre 328w
Immigration 480w
Inland Revenue 407-8w
Social security abuse 553w
Television licences 521w
Unemployment benefits 325w

Electrical technology
Vacancies 45w

Electricity area boards
Rates & rating 466w

Electricity generation
Costs 632-3
Lignite 1086-7
Nuclear power 632-3
Nuclear power stations 644

Electricity tariffs 375w

Electroconvulsive therapy
NHS 393-4w

Electromagnetic interference
Communication 250-1w

Emergency centres 250w

Emergency debates
Westland helicopters (27.01.86) 646-90

Emergency planning 250w
Civil defence 250w
Local government staff 250w

Emergency powers
Northern Ireland 594w

Emery, Sir Peter
Questions
Civil defence, Expenditure 578w

Emigration
Hong Kong 216w

Employers attitudes
Family credit 494w

Employers statutory sick pay scheme
Sick pay 549w

Employment 113-4w, 167-8
Basildon 123-4w
Building industry 117w
Coal mining 637
Council of Europe 634w
Cumbria 175
International conference 634w
Northern Ireland 592w
Part-time employment 168
Ravenscraig Steelworks 544w
Statistics 112w
Tyne & Wear 116-7w
Wales 359w

Employment Act 1980 474w

Employment discrimination
Age (21.01.86) 212-4
Northern Ireland 213w, 595w

Employment opportunities 119w, 124w
Basildon 123-4w
Channel Tunnel 183-4, 448
Coal mining 635
Energy conservation 634
Enterprise allowance scheme 116w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 637-8
Northern Ireland 635-6w
Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board 635-6w
Older workers 175-6
Parliamentary constituencies 41-3w
Scotland 937
Tourist industry 169
Unemployment 175-6
Wages councils 174

Employment rehabilitation
Social security reform 489w

Employment schemes 40w, 113-4w, 123w
Community programme 118w
North West region 38w

Empty housing
Council house sales 300
Council housing 468w
Local authorities 468w
Police 578w
Public sector housing sales 302
Rates & rating 223w

Empty property
Rates & rating 339w

Energy conservation
Employment opportunities 634
Insulation 631
NHS 634
Public sector 634

Energy costs
Coal prices 631
Regional aid 544-5w

Energy efficiency 350w, 375-6w, 563w
Expenditure 350w
Low incomes 563w

Energy Efficiency Year 375-6w, 633, 643
Coal mining 643

Energy research
Alternative energy 374w
Research finance 374w

Engineering education
Airports 385w, 655w

Engineering qualifications
Higher education 153-5w

Engineers
Industrial training 45w, 129w
Vacancies 45w

England
Museums & galleries 206w

English Industrial Estates Corporation
Northern region 380w

Enterprise allowance scheme 116w, 282w
Employment opportunities 116w
Northamptonshire 203w

Enterprise zones 219-20w
Government grants to local authorities 650w
Northern Ireland 166-7w
Rates & rating 650w

Entry clearances
Administrative delays 247-8w
Bangladesh 11w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 323-4w
Hubbard, Bryan 523w
Immigrants fiancees 247w
Indian subcontinent 247-8w, 271-2w

Environment protection
Sites of special scientific interest 298-9

Environmental health
Air conditioning 548w
Dogs 338w

Environmental health officers 449w
Ministry of Defence 449w

Environmental policy 294
Wales 108w

Epilepsy
Medical treatments 548w

Epping Forest 270w

Equipment
Torture 380w

Erith & District Hospital (27.01.86) 770-6

Espionage
RAF Greenham Common 181

Ethnic minorities
Cabinet Office 188w
Civil service manpower 181w, 183w, 197w, 203-4w, 205w, 212w, 219w, 229-30w, 354w
Dept of Employment 203-4w
Dept of Energy 205w
Dept of the Environment 229-30w
Dept of Trade & Industry 183w
Dept of Transport 212w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 181w
Home Office 219w
Local radio 580w
Ministry of Defence 236w, 354w
Police 442
Recruitment 442
Statistics 475w
Treasury 197w
Unemployment 325w, 475w
Youth custody 522w
Youth training scheme 202-3w

Ethnic monitoring 325w

European Communities
Terrorism 33w

European Convention against Torture 249w, 366w
Torture 366w

European Court of Human Rights 365-6w
Isle of Man 9w

European Court of Justice
UK contributions to EC budget 443-4w, 790

European fighter aircraft
Defence industries 445

European monetary system 445, 645w, 792

European Museum of the Year 386w, 412w
UK contributions 412w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 216, 220, 222, 225, 231-4
Local government finance (28.01.86) 807
Questions
Building Industry, Labour only subcontracting 117w, 168-9
Community programme, North West region 473-5w
Energy conservation, Insulation 631
Family income supplements, North West region 614w
Pressurised water reactors, Sizewell B 644
Rugby 642w
Trade unions, Government grants 474w
Trade unions, Legislation 181
Unemployment, Employment opportunities 175-6

Evennett, Mr David
Debates etc
Erith & District Hospital (27.01.86) 770-3
Questions
Bexley Health Authority, NHS finance 388w
Interest rates 447-8
Truck acts 116w
Violence on television 266-7w

Evidence
House of Commons Select Committees 1091-2
Police informers 241w, 242w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 960
Questions
Business statement 1100
Industrial development, Scotland 939
Ministers domestic visits, Falkirk 546w
Police, Local authorities in Scotland 932
Public order, Scotland 948
Teachers, Scotland 943

Examinations
Industrial disputes 941, 943
Scotland 101-2w

Exceptional circumstances additions
Supplementary benefits 232-3w

Exceptional needs payments 308w
Birmingham 59w
Expenditure 308w
Social security reform 486w

Exchange rates
Defence procurement 641w
Monetary agreements 1091
Opposition days (29.01.86) 979-1009
Sterling 444

Exclusion orders 172w

Excercise Brave Defender 530-1w
Security 354w, 530-1w

Exeter Prison 215w
Prisoners 215w
Prisoners on remand 215w

Exhibitions
National Museum of Wales 358w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 10
Upper Waiting Hall 10

Export controls
Research 146w
USA 146w

Export credit guarantees 379w

Export Credits Guarantee Department 279w

Export licensing
Art works 206-8w, 386w
Defence equipment 532w
Mass spectrometers 451w

Export of live animals 268w

Export of Works of Art Reviewing Committee 206-8w

Export rebates
Agricultural products 435w
Agricultural surpluses 435w
Developing countries 435w
Food exports 401-2w

Exports
Art works 386w
Coal 98w, 628
Libyan Arab Republic 608-9w
Natural gas 629-30
Westland helicopters 334w

External financing limits
Post Office 147w

Extradition
Anglo-Irish Agreement 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 596w
Republic of Ireland 33-4w

Eye bypass 329w
Public inquiries 329w

Eye disorders
Toxocara canis 345w

Factories
Construction 7-8
De Lorean 454w
Take-up 8
Welsh Development Agency 7-8

Factory closures
British Steel Corporation 935
Garcosh 936
Ravenscraig Steelworks 935-6

Factory Inspectorate
Manpower 123w
North West region 123w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 558, 562, 581, 587-9, 590-1, 610, 611
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 455

Falkirk
Ministers domestic visits 546w

Falkland Islands
Disclosure of information 144w
Sovereignty 142-3w, 144w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Questions
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Northern region 380w
Jobclubs, Northern region 174-5
Voluntary restraint agreements, Costs 531w

False imprisonment
Compensation 237-8w
Scotland 237-8w

Families
Homelessness 85w
Standard of living 506w

Family benefits
Income support scheme 59w
Social security reform 59w

Family courts 436w

Family Courts Review 436w

Family credit 58-9w, 60-1w, 308w, 398w, 487-90w, 494w, 551w, 552w, (28.01.86) 819-87
Employers attitudes 494w
Social security reform 58-9w

Family doctors
Professional misconduct 555w
Tranquillisers 132w

Family income
Expenditure 57w
Low incomes 496w
Low pay 496w
Social security reform 487-90w, 506w

Family income supplements
Agricultural workers 233w
Bradford 397w
Fuel aid 614w
North West region 58w, 614w
Publicity 58w
School teachers 397w
Scotland 614w
Social security reform 398w, 552w

Farm incomes 399w
Northern Ireland 399-400w

Farmers
National park 223w
Weather 595w

Farmers lung 357-8w, 369w, 403w, 407w
Industrial diseases 357-8w, 403w, 407w
Publicity 358w, 369w

Farms 400w
Arable land 425w
Untreated milk 585-6w

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Block grant, Leicestershire 337w
Block grant, Local authorities 337-8w
Commission for Racial Equality, Inquiries 85-6w
Commission for Racial Equality, Racial discrimination 217w
Firearms, Crime 322w
Hip replacements, Leicester 783-4
Racial discrimination, Accountants 182w, 217-8w
Speech therapists, Pay 63w

Faslane
Asbestos 605w

Fast reactors
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 3w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Housing stock, Leeds 48w
Immigration controls, Interviews 175w
Local government reform, Dept of the Environment 140w
Local government reform, Dept of Transport 141w
Local government reform, Home Office 175w
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 495w
Ports of entry, Leeds-Bradford Airport 373w
Rate support grants, Leeds 289
Sunrise Clothes, Company investigations 146w
Vocational guidance, Vacancies 203w
Youth training scheme, Leeds 202-3w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 28, 34
Parliamentary papers (23.01.86) 461
South Yemen (21.01.86) 189
Questions
Art works, Export licensing 206-8w, 386w
Art works, Exports 386w
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 207w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 447
Museums & galleries, England 206w
Museums & galleries, Northern Ireland 213w
Museums & galleries, Scotland 204-5w
Museums & galleries, Wales 200w
Natural History Museum, Museums & galleries 193-4w

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 695, 697, 710, 762
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 584
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 822-3, 838, 880
Questions
Early warning systems, British Aerospace 639w
Local government expenditure, Voluntary organisations 298
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 785
Unemployment, Advisory services 124w

Fayed, Mohammed 17w

Fees & charges
Immigration applications 35w
Residential care 553-4w
Road accidents 388w, 654w

Feldene
Drugs 499-500w

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, *Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Cumbria 400-1w
Agricultural workers, Manpower 209w, 341w
Agricultural workers, Part-time employment 425w
Agricultural workers, Pay 342w
Agricultural workers, Professional qualifications 208-9w
Agriculture, Census of production 207-8w
Asulox, Weedkillers 341w
Battery hens, Animal housing 656w
Battery hens, Animal welfare 287w
Birds, Pest control 1w
Coastal protection, Barnstaple 401w
Farm incomes 399w
Farms 400w
Farms, Arable land 425w
Fish, Mercury pollution 2w
Food prices, Price increases 536w
Industrial diseases, Farmers lung 403w
Lime subsidy, Agricultural subsidies 536w
Peas, Plant diseases 403-4w, 404-5w, 585w
Pest control, Bracken 340-1w, 405w
Productivity, Agriculture 655w
Rabies, Channel tunnel 401-2w

FH70 howitzers 136w, 627-8w
Ammunition 136w
Shells 627-8w

Fiat
Westland helicopters 16w

Field, Mr Frank

Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 803
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 820, 822, 827, 852, 861-4
Questions
Attendance allowance, Doctors 614w
Bye laws, Dogs 10w
Family income, Social security reform 487-90w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 235w
Members correspondence, Smith, Gladys 306w
Metropolitan Police 372w
Sunday trading 14

Financial institutions
Investment 14w
Self-regulator system 147-8w

Financial services 147-8w

Financial targets
National Coal Board 638

Fines
Young offenders 260-1w

Fingerprints
Affiliation 11w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Civil defence, Communication 250-1w
Kenwood House, Property transfer 298w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Camden 297w
Wheel clamps, Camden 56w

Fire Precautions Act 1971 434w
Educational institutions 434w

Fire regulations
Hostels 214w

Fire resistant materials 654w
Air safety 654w

Firearms 269-70w
Arms trade 437
Crime 255w, 322w
Heathrow 276w, 484w
Inquiries 437
Northern Ireland 406-7w, 636-8w
Police training 443-4
Theft 322w, 406-7w, 636-8w
Yorkshire & Humberside 255w

Fires
Hospitals 349w
Nursing homes 349w

Fish
Antibiotics 1-2w
Mercury pollution 2w

Fish conservation
Fishing gear 340w

Fish farming
Legislation 48w
Scotland 321w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Crime victims, Crimes of violence 252w
Prime Minister official engagements 411w
Prime Ministers Office, Westland helicopters 411w

Fisheries
Accidents 609-10w
Sea pollution 656w

Fishing gear
Fish conservation 340w

Five Continents Peace Initiative 642w

Flags of convenience
Shipping (22.01.86) 423-9

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 597
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1078
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 593w
Artificial limb & appliance centres review 786-7
Defence Select Committee evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1092
Unemployment 111w

Flats
Council house sales 467w
Council housing 605w
Defective housing 605w
Housing benefits 605-6w

Fleet Air Arm 638w

Fletcher, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 453
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 935
Teachers, Scotland 942-3
Veterinary services, Scotland 425w

Fletcher, Yvonne 354-5w
Death 437

Flood control
Bridge of Allan 322w
North Devon 401w

Fluoridation
Milk 245w

Food contamination
Mercury pollution 2w

Food exports
Export rebates 401-2w

Food hygiene
Hospital catering (21.01.86) 190-202, 502w, 503w
Hospitals 557w

Food imports
Import duties 402-4w

Food industry
Average earnings 43w

Food poisoning
Death 66w
Hospitals 66w
Stanley Royd Hospital 63w

"Food Poisoning at Stanley Royd Hospital Report" (21.01.86) 190-202
Ministerial statements (21.01.86) 190-202

Food prices
Price increases 536w

Food surpluses
Butter 536w

Food & Environment Protection Act 1985 103w
Pesticides 103w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 969
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 657, 662-5
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 453
Questions
Unemployment, Statistics 171
Unemployment, Wales 5
Youth training scheme, Finance 177

Foot & mouth disease
Channel tunnel 401-2w

Football
Tax yields 197w

Fordham, John 171w

Foreign investment in UK
Northern Ireland 593w, 1087, 1088

Foreign loans
Iraq 13w

Foreign policy
Israel 426w
South Africa 144w, 528w

Foreign relations
Westland helicopters 528-9w

Foreign students
Higher education 73-4w
Libyan Arab Republic 373w, 385w, 655w
Repatriation 373w
Student grants 66-8w

Foreign tourists 168w, 271w
Bangladesh 11w
Immigration controls 6w
Indian subcontinent 480-1w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 596w
Ethnic minorities 181w
Northern Ireland 596w
Public relations 248w

Forensic science
Animal experiments 525w
Skuse, Frank 583w

Forestry
Caithness 547w
Nature Conservancy Council 544w
Sutherland 547w

Forestry grants 547w

Forests 547w

Forfeiture
Punishment 270w

Forgery 266w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 902, 905, 907, 918-9
Rate support grants, Sutton (31.01.86) 1253-4
Questions
Rate support grants, Successor authorities 289-90

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 322, 357-9, 364, 365, 367-8
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 955-6
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 400, 406
Questions
Agriculture, Student grants 321w
Australian Bicentenary, British Australian Bicentennial Committee 246w
Bridge of Allan, Flood control 322w
British Overseas Trade Board, Public appointments 148w
British residents abroad, North Yemen 180
False imprisonment, Scotland 237-8w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Dept of Trade & Industry 657w
Health education, AIDS 792-3
Local income tax, Scotland 934-5
Public expenditure 646w
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 947

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1112
Local government finance (28.01.86) 812
Questions
Prison staff, Recruitment 442-3
Rates & rating, Scotland 934

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 958, 960

Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1047, 1056, 1057
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1039
Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) (No 2) Bill, 1R (29.01.86) 975
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 649
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 460
Questions
Atlantic fisheries, South Atlantic 34w
Balance of trade 603w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 657-8w
British Antarctic Survey, Government grants 81w
British Antarctic Survey, RRS John Biscoe 81w
Channel Islands, Defence 174-5w
Chile, Democracy 145w
Chile, Human rights 145w
Coal mining, Dismissal 375w
Convictions, Norton, Alan 174w
De Lorean, Criminal investigation 354w
De Lorean, Lotus Cars 413w
EC budget, UK contributions 109w, 195-6w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council, EC action 128-30w
EC reform, Intergovernmental Conference 144-5w
El Salvador, Armed forces training 146w
Guatemala, Diplomatic relations 145-6w
HMS Endurance, Shipbuilding 90w
Lotus cars, Prosecutions 1082-3
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Fast reactors 3w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Plutonium 4w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Prototype fast reactors 3-4w
Prime Minister official engagements, Shamji, Abdul 86w
Scottish Development Agency, Prestwick Freeport Company 938
Teachers, Scotland 545w
Tobacco, Children 519w
UK contributions to EC budget, European Court of Justice 443-4w
UNESCO 108w, 145-6w
USA, Export controls 146w
War pensions, Housing benefits 491w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Debates etc
Food Poisoning at Stanley Royd Hospital Report, Ministerial statements (21.01.86) 190-202
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 819-32, 833, 834, 836, 837
Questions
Child care 779-80
NHS, Management 787-8
Nurses, Management 788

Fox, Mr Marcus
Questions
Sunday trading, Licensing laws 182

France
Nuclear power 644
Sunday trading 218-9w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
Direct labour departments 511w
Local government services, Privatisation 511w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 49, 90-2
Questions
Armed forces training, El Salvador 445w
Drug crimes 432-3
House renovation grants, Government grants 301
Housing benefits, Expenditure 341-3w
Local government reform, Voluntary organisations 298
Prison employment 216w
Social deprivation, District health authorities 388w
Unemployment, Gravesham 202w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Questions
Breathalysers, Scotland 945-6
Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, Prosecutions 519w
Crown Office for Scotland, Crown immunity 946-7
Debt collection, Scotland 629w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 520-1w, 946
Gas accidents, Glasgow 520w
Hospital closures, Woodilee Hospital 947
Police discipline, Prosecutions 519w
Public order, Scotland 947-8
Public order offences, Scotland 325-6w
Reckless driving, Prosecutions 519-20w
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 947
Scottish Office, Dept of Health & Social Security 947
Sea fishing, Prosecutions 519w
Tobacco, Children 519w

Fraud 266w
Lloyds of London 320w

Free ports 441-2w

Free school meals
Pupils 70w
School meals 434w
Social security reform 307w

Freeman, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 825-6, 833, 837
Questions
Accounting, Companies 450w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 476-80w
Listed buildings, Church buildings 511-2w
Newspaper press, Technological change & employment 790
Unemployment benefits, Inquiries 494-6w

Freemasonry
Corruption 433-4

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Brent 234-6w
Housing capital allocations, Local government finance 303-4
Local radio, Ethnic minorities 580w
Local radio, Greater London 579-80w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 290-1

Freight transport
Channel crossing 591w

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Teachers, Standing Order No 10 applications (27.01.86) 645
Questions
Antismoking campaign, Government grants 503w
Arts finance, Local government reform 17-8
BBC 253w
Earnings rules, Elderly 390w
Education of children at home, Children in care 363w
Eye bypass, Public inquiries 329w
Housing stock 220w
Residential care, Supplementary benefits disregards of income 509-10w
School meals, Child care 245w
School meals, Education support grants 244-5w
School meals, Educational finance 318-9w
Supplementary benefits, Students 491w
Thorney bypass, Road construction 329w
Unemployment 119w
University Grants Committee, Civil servants 318w

Frigates
Navy 637-8w

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 701

Fuel aid
Family income supplements 614w
Supplementary benefit 558w

Fulbourn Hospital 633w
Prisoners transfers 633w

Funerals
Low incomes 498w
Price controls 320w, 384w
Social security reform 498w

Furniture grants 307w
Expenditure 307w

Further education
Educational finance 537w
Educational qualifications 75-7w
Local education authorities 75-7w
Student numbers 157-64w
Students 536-8w
Tuition fees 191-2w
Vocational training 125w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 699
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 28
Local goverment finance (28.01.86) 811
Questions
Blood donors, Canterbury 780-1
Radio broadcasting licences, Anniversaries 484-5w

Galley, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 382, 387
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 846-3
Questions
Community care, Hospital discharges 778
NHS, Management 787-8
Urban housing renewal unit, Council housing 302

Gaming machines
Tax yields 299w
VAT 299w

Gardiner, Mr George
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Dartford tunnel, Construction 184
News International, Picketing 1092

Gardner, Sir Edward
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 251-3
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 452
Questions
Drug crimes, Narcotics 433
News International 1090

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 327-8, 330

Gartcosh
Factory closures 936
Ravenscraig Steelworks 936

Gartcosh Steelworks
Opposition days (23.01.86) 468-509

Gartree Prison 583w

Gas accidents
Glasgow 520w
Inquiries 520w

Gas levy 441w

Gas pipelines
Western Europe 630

Gas safety
Prosecutions 577w
Upper Waiting Hall 44w

GATT
Hong Kong 642w

Gatwick
Airport security 384w

GEC 15w, 184w
Takeovers 15w, 184w

General Certificate of Secondary Education 362w
Costs 433w

General consents 51w, 52w, 141w, 295-6w, 322w, 339w, 422w, 471w, 605w, 648-9w
Battlebridge basin 52w
Greater London Council 51w, 52w, 649w
Greater London Enterprise Board 422w
Local government expenditure 141w
Local government reform 295-6w 339w, 340w
Roundhouse 52w
Speed limits 52w

General Council of British Shipping 210-1w

General Municipal Boilermakers & Allied Trades Union 516w

Genetics
Testing 143w

Geological Museum 193-4w
Museums & galleries 193-4w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
House of Commons Select Committees, Members visits abroad 288-90w, 369-70w
House of Commons Select Committees, Select Committee evidence 287w
House of Commons Select Committees, Select Committee reports 289-93w
House of Commons Select Committees, Specialist advisers 287-8w
Select Committees, Temporary staff 178w

George Brown Collection 386w
Newcastle University 386w

Germany
Air force 531w
Berlin Brigade 335-6w

Gibraltar
Pensions 449-50w

Gifts
Prime Minister 89w, 280w

Gilbert, Rt Hon John
Questions
Brittan, Leon, Ministers 413w
Ministers correspondence, Solicitor-General 330w, 411w
Westland helicopters, Departmental records 88w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 44, 70-3

Glandular fever
Viral diseases 364w

Glasgow
Gas accidents 520w
Housing action areas 238w, 600w
International Garden Festival 1989 548w
Youth training scheme 205w

Glasgow Airport 437w

Glasgow District Council 600w

Glasgow Eastern area renewal 548w
Government grants 548w

GLC Research Library 17-8, 228w

Gleneagles Agreement 467w

Glengarry forest 437w
Radio frequencies 437w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 692-3
Army (30.01.86) 1122, 1139-41
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1049
Questions
Armed forces housing, Maidenhead 297w
Business statement 464, 1099
Light aircraft, Airspace 333w
Motorways, Road signs 328-9w
Nurses, Management 392w
Speech therapists, Pay 307w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1148, 1152-3
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill 2R (31.01.86) 1201-2, 1208, 1211, 1215
Protection of Military Remains Bill, 2R & rem stages (31.01.86) 1229-30
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1236, 1241-2
Questions
Defence contracts, Scott Lithgow 446-7w
Defence procurement 448w
Defence procurement, Departmental coordination 413w
Defence procurement, Shipbuilding 447w
Defence procurement, Tenders 447-8w
Fisheries, Accidents 609-10w
Fraud 266w
Inverclyde District Council, Housing revenue accounts 438w
Social workers training 490w
Student numbers, Scotland 573w, 600w
Submarines, Shipbuilding 353-4w
Submarines, Tenders 447w
Supplementary benefits, Greenock 619w

Golding, Mr John
Questions
Hearing aids, NHS 551w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1153-7

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 215-20, 236-40
Questions
Cross channel electricity link 375w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 632-3
Hinkley Point B, Nuclear power stations 97-8w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear power stations 632
Magnox reactors, Nuclear safety 375w
Nuclear accidents, Information 243w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Fast reactors 3w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Plutonium 4w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Prototype fast reactors 3-4w
Nuclear power stations, Electricity generation 644
Nuclear safety, House of Commons questions 563w
Pressurised water reactors, Sizewell B 644
Radiation hazards, Hinkley Point B 99-100w
Sizewell Inquiry 633
Sizewell Inquiry, Nuclear power stations 377w

Gordon, Sybil (21.01.86) 281-6

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 458
Questions
Direct labour departments 297w
East Timor, Human rights 248w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 279w
Intervention stocks, Barking & Dagenham 342w
Lloyds of London, Inquiries 146w
Patent Office 146-7w
VAT, British Legion 300w
Wheat, Dagenham docks 585w

Gourlay, Mr Harry
Questions
Offices, Procurator fiscal service 337w
Procurators fiscal, Kirkcaldy 470w

Government
Hong Kong 33w

Government assistance
Bradford City Football Club 143w

Government assistance to industry
Airbuses 379w
Coal mining 627-8
Mackies 597w
Railway sidings 517w
Re-chem 20w
Tourism 1081-2
Tourist industry 592w

Government departments
Reprography 298-9w

Government grants 576w
Antismoking campaign 503w
Bradford City Football Club 181
British Antarctic Survey 81w
Centre for World Development Education 285-6w
Derelict land grants 607-8w
Drug abuse 264-5w, 492w
Glasgow Eastern area renewal 548w
Grazing land 595w
Helping the community to care 395-6w, 615-6w
House renovation grants 301
Housing insulation 633
Information technology centres 111w
Inner city partnerships 225-6w
London Regional Transport 327w
National Marriage Guidance Council 175w
Natural Environment Research Council 81w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 643-4
Northern Ireland 454w, 1083
Oxfam 283w
Rural areas 369w
Save the Children Fund 283w
Severe weather payments 208w
Stockbridge Village Trust 419w
Strike ballots 109w
Sussex Police 633w
Tourist industry 126w, 127w
Trade unions 474w
Tranquillisers 132w
Urban programme 225-6w, 415-6w
Wales Tourist Board 457-8w

Government grants to local authorities
Enterprise zones 650w
Housing finance 650-1w
London boroughs 339w, 471w
Rate support grants 288-9, 291-2, 446

Government grants to voluntary organisations 476-80w
Dept of Trade & Industry 657w
Drug abuse 614-5w
Marriage guidance 128w, 131-2w
National Marriage Guidance Council 131-2w

Government loans
Airbuses 379w

Government shareholding
British Telecom 16-8w

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 803
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 312w, 313w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1077
Anglo-Irish talks 311-2w
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Government 326w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland Office 313w
Republic of Ireland, Extradition 33-4w
Republic of Ireland, Terrorism 33w
Terrorism, International cooperation 1085-6

Gower, Sir Raymond
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 973
Questions
Coal mining, Margam Mine 628-9
Industrial development, Wales 4

Grace & favour housing 229w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
Megginson, Pamela, Prisoners release (29.01.86) 1070-1, 1074
Questions
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 435
Security, RAF Greenham Common 181

Gravesham
Unemployment 202w

Gray, MJJ 93w
Courts martial 93w

Grazing land
Government grants 595w
Northern Ireland 595w

Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour Bill 1985/86
2R order read (28.01.86) 777

Greater Glasgow Health Board 646-7w
Junior hospital doctors 646-7w
NHS finance 647w

Greater London
Commuters 385w
Crime 433-4
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 310w, 560-2w
Local radio 276w, 579-80w
Motor vehicle testing 55w
Motor vehicle theft 476w
Public transport (28.01.86) 901-23
Racial attacks 265w
Transient people 46w
Vacant land 339w

Greater London Council
Council housing 651w
General consents 51w, 52w, 649w
Local government expenditure 141w, 295-6w, 339w, 340w
Local government property 648-9w
Local government reform 51w, 53w, 424w, 605w, 648-9w
Property transfer 471w
Theatres 469-70w

Greater London Council Research Library 228w
Finance 17-8

Greater London Enterprise Board 422w
Companies 422w
General consents 422w
Local government reform 339w

Greater Manchester
Coal mining (20.01.86) 161-6
Opencast mining (20.01.86) 161-6
Urban programme 294-5w

Greater Manchester County Council 2w

Greenbelt
Property development 297

Greenock
Supplementary benefits 619w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
South Yemen (21.01.86) 188-9
Questions
Aids for handicapped, ORLAU walking aid 129w
Airports, Engineering education 655w
Animals 268w
Business statement 1100
Durham, Bishop, Church Commissioners 12
Foreign students, Libyan Arab Republic 385w
House of Commons Select Committees, Members visits abroad 526-7w, 629w
House of Commons souvenirs, Profits 640
Industrial health & safety, Ault & Wiborg 325w
Manpower Services Commission, Training 122w
Oral contraceptives, Young people 494w
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 280w, 435-6w, 574w
Repatriation, Foreign students 373w
Sports, Children 224w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 428w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Questions
Crime, Firearms 255w
Petroleum production 376w

Griffiths Inquiry see NHS Management Inquiry

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Questions
Dixon, Claude, Mentally disturbed offenders 633w
Income tax, Travel warrants 591w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Civil service dispersal 656-7w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Civil service manpower 381w, 532-3w
Police, Empty housing 578w

Grimsby
Regional development grants 377-8w

Grist, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 968-9
Questions
Handicapped pupils, Wales 11
Higher education, Wales 106-7w
Pay, Unemployment 4

Groce, Cherry 85w, 521w
Complaints against police 521w
Injuries 85w

Ground, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 702, 753-4

Grove School 82w
School closures 82w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 45
Questions
Bye laws, Business 482w
Computer piracy, Business 582w
Consumer Credit Act 1974, Bureaucracy 452w
Data Protection Act 1984, Companies 372w
Wages councils, Employment opportunities 174

Guatemala
Diplomatic relations 145-6w

Guided weapons
Defence procurement 628w

Gulf war 426w, 427w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1023-4, 1028, 1031, 1038-42
Questions
Butter, Food surpluses 536w
Cereals, Agricultural production 209w
Cereals, Agricultural surpluses 209w
Farm incomes, Northern Ireland 399-400w
Fish, Antibiotics 1-2w
Fish, Mercury pollution 2w
Fish conservation, Fishing gear 340w
Food exports, Export rebates 401-2w
Food imports, Import duties 402-4w
Intervention stocks, Barking & Dagenham 342w
Intervention stocks, Butter 533w
Intervention stocks, Humberside 533-4w
Intervention stocks, Lincolnshire 534w
Intervention stocks, Norfolk 534-5w
Intervention stocks, North Yorkshire 535w
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committees, Local government expenditure 2w
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, Local government reform 2w
Milk Marketing Board, Cheese 208w
Production quotas, Milk 97w
Radioactive waste disposal, Irish Sea 656w
Severe weather payments, Government grants 208w
Untreated milk, Farms 585-6w
Wheat, Dagenham docks 585w

Gwent
Unemployment 3-4

Gwynedd
Postal services 13w

Gypsies
Caravans 46w

Habitual offenders
Statistics 261-2w

Hackett, Patrick 371w
Solitary confinement 371w

Halifax
Housing improvement 302

Hallucinogens
Benzodiazepines 177-8w

Hamilton, Mr James
Questions
Employment 113w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 544w
Redundancy, Scotland 938
Unemployment, Unemployment benefits 170

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Questions
Business statement 465
Channel tunnel, Home Office 252w
Energy costs, Coal prices 631
Production quotas, Milk 97w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 208-9
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 954
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 582-7, 589
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 200
Questions
Drinking & driving, Scotland 321w, 946
Grace & favour housing 229w
NHS administration 498w
Rates & rating, Scotland 544w
Unemployment, Pay 126w

Hammersmith Hospital 389w
Hospital costs per patient 389w

Hampshire
Police 264w
Rail support grants 140w
Youth training scheme 120-1w

Hampshire County Council 140w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 380-1, 386-7, 389-90
Local government finance (28.01.86) 812
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 46
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1048, 1052, 1062
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 312
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 458
Questions
Rate support grants, Leeds 289
Roads, Leeds 384w

Hampstead Wells & Camden Trust (23.01.86) 547-54

Hancock, Mr Michael
Questions
Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment, Privatisation 640w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments 482w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Animal experiments 482-3w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Laboratories 482w

Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Public appointments 483w
Animal experiments 632w
Animal experiments, Animal welfare 483w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 523w, 658w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics industry 532w
Animal experiments, Dogs 524-5w
Animal experiments, Draize test 632-3w
Animal experiments, Forensic science 525w
Animal experiments, Licensing 483w, 523w
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill (HL) 1985/86 523-4w
Apprentices, Devonport Dockyard 334w
Art education, Manpower 634w
Arts Council, Finance 644w
Battery hens, Animal housing 656w
Cruelty to Animals Inspectorate 523w
Defence School of Music, Armed forces deployment 93-4w
Devonport Dockyard, Apprentices 91-2w
Devonport Dockyard, Teachers 91w
Dockyards, Apprentices 334w
Electrical technology, Vacancies 45w
Engineers, Industrial training 45w, 129w
Engineers, Vacancies 45w
Gray, MJJ, Court Martial 93w
Grove School, School closures 82w
LD50 toxicity test 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Anaesthetics 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Animal cruelty 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Animal experiments 525w
LD50 toxicity test, Drugs 525w
Listed buildings, Armed forces housing 649w
"Marine Services Consultation Paper" 639w
Porton Down, Animal experiments 449w
Portsmouth Dockyard, Apprentices 92w
Rate support grants, Hampshire 140w
Redundancy pay 635w
Rights of way, Portsmouth 53w
Robbery, Portsmouth 175-6w, 176-7w
Rosyth Dockyard, Apprentices 93-4w
Rosyth Dockyard, Commercial management 639-40w
Rosyth Dockyard, Teachers 92w
Smoking, Nicorette 65w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 637w
St Marys House, Portsmouth 53w, 420w
Tax yields, Football 197w
Tax yields, Sports 197w
Tobacco, Children 177w
Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 649w
Unemployment, Portsmouth 115w
Wages councils 125w
Wrecks, Invincible 649-50w

Handbooks
Civil defence 250w

Handicap benefits
Social security recipients 61w
Social security reform 60-1w, 231w

Handicapped 507w
Sports Council 465-6w
Youth training scheme 944-5

Handicapped children
Community care 492-3w

Handicapped pupils
Wales 11

Handicapped students
Blind 164-5w

Handicapped workers
Sheltered employment 65w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 252, 273-6
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1111
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 905, 908, 910, 913-5
Questions
Northern Ireland, Investment 1082
Social security benefits, Refugees 396w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Family benefits, Social security reform 59w
Handicap benefits, Social security reform 231w
Helping the community to care, Government grants 615-6w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 130w
Residential care, Social security reform 486-7w
Social Fund 231w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 32
Questions
Arts finance, Economic regions 16
Coal mining, Productivity 629
Council housing, Capital investment 223-4w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 362w
India, Defence contracts 201w
Inland waterways, Mercury pollution 295w
Reprography, Government departments 298-9w
Sites of special scientific interest, Environment protection 299
Unemployment 114-5w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R Order read (24.01.86) 620

Harman, Ms Harriet
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1214-7, 1220
Local government finance (28.01.86) 810
Questions
Residential care, Elderly 485w
Roads, Addington Square 611w
Schwarz, Isabel, Death 786

Harris, Mr David
Questions
Tin, EC countries 446

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 197-8
Questions
Motorways, Lighting 328w
Motorways, Road works 327w
Palace of Westminster, Telephones 629w

Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Questions
Export credit guarantees 379w
Nicaragua, Bank loans 20w
Nicaragua, Inter-American Development Bank 449w
Rates & rating, Scotland 543w
Rural areas, Scotland 369w
United Nations Association, UK contributions 248-9w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Questions
Community hospitals, Clwyd 2
Industrial disputes 117w
Severe weather payments, Wales 21-2w
Welsh Development Agency, Factories 8

Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931, (30.01.86) 1076

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 741-3
Questions
Stansted Airport, Land 302w
Stansted Airport, Railway transport 302w

Haslam, Sir Robert
National Coal Board 376w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Interest rates, Standing Order No 10 applications (21.01.86) 203-4

Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael, *Attorney-General*
Questions
Crime, Armed forces 184-5w
Crime, Ulster Defence Regiment 185-6w
Criminal proceedings, Disclosure of information 355w
De Lorean, Criminal investigation 354w
Disclosure of information, Immunity from prosecution 356w
Family Courts Review 436w
Hepker, Michael, Criminal investigation 187w
Hepker, Michael, Johnson Matthey 187w
Johnson Matthey 187w
Judiciary, Conflict of interests 241w
Legal aid, Civil proceedings 511-2w
Legal aid, Criminal proceedings 512w
Legal aid, Departmental publications 584w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 241-2w
Police informers, Evidence 241w, 242w
Prosecutions, Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 354-5w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 320-1w, 355-6w, 585w, 629-30w
Trespass, Squatting 1w
Westland helicopters, disclosure of information 355w, 412w, 515w, 584w

Hawkins, Sir Paul
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 117, 122
Questions
Sports Council, Finance 296

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Questions
Armoured fighting vehicles, Defence contracts 95w
Berlin Brigade, Defence expenditure 335-6w
Defence procurement, Berlin Brigade 96w
Ironbridge bypass, Public inquiries 465w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1113
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy research 374w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1077-8

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney, *Minister of State for Health*
Questions
Abortion, Hospitals 504-5w
AIDS, Departmental publications 305w
AIDS, Screening 64-5w
Aids for handicapped, ORLAU walking aid 129w
Arthritis, Drug hazards 618w
Bexley Health Authority, NHS finance 388w
Blood donors, Canterbury 780-1
Breast cancer, Screening 64w
Cancer 233w
Cervical cancer, Health education 233w
Cervical cancer, Screening 613w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Benzodiazepine 131-3w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Drug side effects 620w
Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, Public appointments 660-1w
Community care 777-8
Community care, Dependents 779
Community care, Hospital discharges 778
Community care, Local government social services 778-9
Contraceptives, Young people 558w
Dental charges, Advertising 500w
Dentistry 500w
Dentistry, Complaints 495w
Doctors, Declarations of interest 346w
Doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Drug abuse, AIDS 551-2w
Drug hazards, Piroxicam 618-9w
Drug industry, Limited list prescribing 304w
Drug industry, Procurement 130w
Drug side effects, Piroxicam 499-500w, 617w

Family doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Food hygiene, Hospitals 557w
Hammersmith Hospital, Hospital costs per patient 389w
Health service staff, Regional health authorities 621-6w
Health services, NHS finance 620-2w
Hospital catering, Crown immunity 503w
Hospital catering, Food hygiene 502w
Hospital catering, Industrial health & safety 345w
Hospital doctors, Professional misconduct 555w
Kings College Hospital, Hospital catering 503w
Legionnaires disease, Hospitals 615w
Limited list prescribing 495w
Mental Health Act Commission, Complaints 786
Mental health community care 779
Mental Health community care, East Berkshire Health Authority 779
Mental patients, Mental health services 778
Midwives, Manpower 617-8w
Midwives, Vacancies 618w
Mucodyne, Limited list prescribing 497-8w
NHS, Crown immunity 493w
NHS administration 231w, 498w
NHS administration, Nurses 493w
NHS finance, Expenditure 789
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 495w
NHS Management Inquiry 493w
Northern Regional Health Authority, Health services 788-9
Nurses, Management 392w
Nurses, Pay settlements 617w
Oral contraceptives, Young people 494w
Paracetamol, Death 61-2w
Pharmacies 309w
Pharmacies, NHS 309w
Pharmacists, NHS 309w
Prescription drugs, Limited list prescribing 557w
Prescriptions, Costs 507-8w
Primary health care, Consultation papers 616w
Primary health care, District health authorities 658-9w
Regional health authorities, Crown immunity 502-3w
Regional health authorities, NHS administration 396w
Regional health authorities, Trade unions 501w
Residential care, Mentally ill 498w
Road accidents, Fees & charges 388w
Schwarz, Isabel, Death 786
South Manchester Health Authority, NHS finance 58w
Stanley Royd Hospital, Inquiries 63w
Surgery, Blood 781
Teaching hospitals, Pay differentials 230-1w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 501w
X rays, Breast cancer 133w
X rays, Cancer hazards 133w
X rays, Medical treatments 133w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Abolition of Crown Immunity Bill, 1R (29.01.86) 976-8
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 200
Questions
House of Commons souvenirs, Prices 640-1
Job centres, Vacancies 115w
Rates & rating 221w

Hayward, Mr Rob
Questions
Trade union elections 109w

Health education
AIDS 792-3
Cervical cancer 233w

Health hazards
Bracken 345w, 660w
Skoal bandits 304-5w
Tobacco 304-5w

Health Service Commissioner
NHS complaints 556w

Health service staff
Regional health authorities 621-6w
Vacancies 389w
West Midlands 616w

Health services
Mid Glamorgan 7
NHS finance 620-2w
North West region 495w
Northern Regional Health Authority 788-9
Perinatal mortality 2
Scotland 545w
Statistics 347-8w

Health services finance
Area health authorities 7
Community hospitals 3
Mid Glamorgan 6
Rural areas 6
South Wales 7
Wales 200-1w
Welsh Office 6-7

Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 516w, 601-2w, 602-3w

Health & Safety Executive
Civil service manpower 178

Hearing Aid Council
Public appointments 378w

Hearing Aid Council Act 1968 (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
1R (31.01.86) 1195

Hearing aids (31.01.86) 1195
Hospital waiting lists 62-3w
NHS 551w
Wolverhampton Health Authority 551w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Questions
Drug abuse 264w
Mental patients, Mental health services 778
Residential care, Elderly 485-6w
Unemployment, Unemployment benefits 170

Heathrow
Airport security 280-1w
Aliens 484w
Firearms 276w, 484w
Immigration officers 267-8w
Medical examinations 168-9w
Military exercises 281w
Tourism 169

Heating allowances
Expenditure 308w
Social security benefits rules 557-8w
Supplementary benefits 558w

Heddle, Mr John
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 801
Questions
Antismoking campaign, Pupils 58w
Derelict land grants 224w
Planning permission, Change of use 136w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 290
Religious education, Schools 633w

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1111
Local government finance (28.01.86) 801-2, 806
Parliamentary privilege (21.01.86) 314
Questions
Business statement 1103
Environmental policy 294
Trade unions, Legislation 1093-4

Helicopters
Defence procurement 134-5w, 334w, 641w
International cooperation 335w

Helmets
Defence procurement 135w

Helping the community to care 395-6w, 615-6w
Government grants 395-6w, 615-6w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 955
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 402, 412-3
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 936
Public order, Scotland 947-8
School meals, Scotland 238-40w
School transport, Scotland 239-40w
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 942

Hepker, Michael 183-4w, 187w
Company accounts 183-4w
Criminal investigation 187w
Johnson Matthey 184w, 187w

Heroin
Drug crimes 432

Hertfordshire
Job clubs 634w
Local enterprise agencies 600w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 661-2
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 454

Heseltine, Michael 87w, 320-1w, 355-6w, 382w, 574w, 575w, 584w, 585w, 629-30w
Interviews 87w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 627-8
Derelict land, Land reclamation 607-8w
Drug side effects, Piroxicam 499-500w, 617w
Enterprise zones 219-20w

Hickmet, Richard 617w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Tin, Cornwall (24.01.86) 621-2
Questions
VAT, EC countries 300w

Higgins, Mr Terrence
Questions
Business statement 1096-7

Higher education
Age 573w
Early retirement 78w
Educational finance 106-7w, 537w
Engineering qualifications 153-5w
Foreign students 73-4w
Industry 148-9w
Student grants 66-8w
Students 536-8w
Tuition fees 191-2w
Wales 106-7w, 564-5w
Waltham Forest 537-8w

Higher education admission
Cambridge University 153w
Oxford University 153w

Higher education teachers
Conditions of employment 362-3w
Manpower 76w
Pay 82w, 362-3w
Redundancy 78w

Highways Act 1980 457w, 466w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 261-3
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 333, 337

Hill Farming Research Organisation 12-3w, 641-2
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research 12-3w, 641-2

Hillingdon
Housing stock 652w
Local government revenue 652w

Hill, Paul 583w
Prisoners 583w

Hinckley Point B 97-8w, 99-100w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Small businesses, Bureaucracy 110w

Hinkley Point
Nuclear accidents 99-100w
Nuclear power stations 97-8w
Radiation hazards 99-100w

Hip replacements 498w, 783-4
Hospital doctors 498w
Hospital waiting lists 133w, 783-4
Leicester 783-4
Oldham Hospital 498w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 956-7
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 101w
Breathalysers, Scotland 945-6
Drug crimes, Scotland 100-1w
Employment 113-4w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 937
Police, Scotland 931-2
Research finance, Research councils 79-80w
Universities, Research finance 81w
Wind power, Turbines 791

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 298w

HM Inspectorate of schools
School discipline 363w

HMS Daedalus
Coastguard 446w

HMS Endurance 90w
Shipbuilding 90w

HMSO
Printing industry 591w

Hoaxes & false alarms
Burglar alarms 631-2w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 981, 986, 988
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 562, 563, 570, 577-82, 584
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 41-2, 60, 103-6
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1053, 1062
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 459
Westland helicopters, Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 36
Westland helicopterrs, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 355
Questions
Law enforcement, Labour party 436

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1248
Questions
School closures, Scotland 939

Holiday play schemes 204w
Safety 204w

Holidays aborad 44w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Questions
Building societies 443w
Clearing banks 443w
Company finance, Private sector 451w
Crime, Household surveys 440-1
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 295-6w
Manufacturing industries, Private sector 450w
Railway transport, Channel crossing 329-30w
Retail trade, Companies 450-1w

Holloway Prison 272-3w, 322w
Prison accommodation 322w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 322, 323, 331
Local government finance (28.01.86) 809
Questions
Double glazing, VAT 634
Labour mobility 125w
Petroleum exploration, Land drilling 376w
Rates & rating, Parish councils 294-5

Home care services 493-4w

Home helps
Departmental circulars 493w
Elderly 493w
Social Services Inspectorate 493-4w

Home Office
Channel tunnel 252w
Ethnic minorities 219w
Local government reform 175w
Public relations 275-6w

Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department 6w
Costs 6w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 958-9
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1013
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1235-7, 1244-6
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 940
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 1084
A1, East Lothian 103w
Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, Prosecutions 519w
Musselburgh bypass 600w
Road traffic, A1 11-2w
Skoal bandits, Scotland 547w
Tranent bypass 599w

Homelessness
Families 85w
Housing 608w
Secure tenancies 608w

Hong Kong
EC external trade 642w
Emigration 216w
GATT 642w
Government 33w
Stateless persons 33w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 39, 43
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 665-9
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 460

Hormone treatments
Children 346-7w

Horne, David 411-2w

Horse racing 583w

Horticultural Produce Bill 1985/86 (31.01.86) 1249
2R order read (24.01.86) 620

Horticulture
Transport (31.01.86) 1249

Hospital admissions
Wythenshawe Hospital 57w

Hospital ancillary staff
Pay 494w

Hospital bed occupancy rates 456-8w, 661-2w
Salop 397w, 661-2w
West Glamorgan Health Authority 456-8w

Hospital beds
Stone House Hospital 661-2w
Wales 2

Hospital catering
Crown immunity 503w
Food hygiene (21.01.86) 190-202, 502w, 503w
Industrial health & safety 345w
Kings College Hospital 503w
Safety standards 502w

Hospital closures
Wales 3
Woodilee Hospital 947

Hospital consultants
Early retirement 646-7w
Patients 554w
Wales 3

Hospital costs per patient
Hammersmith Hospital 389w

Hospital discharges
Community care 778

Hospital doctors
Hip replacements 498w
Professional misconduct 555w
Scotland 646w

Hospital readmissions 496-7w
Mental patients 496-7w

Hospital waiting lists
Ear nose & throat 63w
Hearing aids 62-3w
Hip replacements 133w, 783-4
Medical treatments 659w
Ophthalmology 549-50w

Hospitals 503w
Abortion 504-5w
Audiology 551w
Bexley Health Authority (27.01.86) 770-6
Crown immunity 557w, 615w, 946-7, (29.01.86) 976-8
Fires 349w
Food hygiene 557w
Food poisoning 66w
Legionnaires disease 615w
Mid Glamorgan 11-2
Rural areas 3
Wales 2

Hostels
Fire regulations 214w

Hotel accommodation 300w

Hotels
Northern Ireland 1082
VAT 300w

House of Commons
Telephones 629w

House of Commons accommodation (29.01.86) 1047-69

House of Commons debates
Speakers rulings & statements (27.01.86) 760

House of Commons divisions
Access to buildings 641

House of Commons Library
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 313, 314

House of Commons passes
Research assistants (29.01.86) 1047-69

House of Commons questions
Nuclear safety 563w

House of Commons refreshment department 640

House of Commons Select Committees 178w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 639
Evidence 1091-2
Members visits abroad 288-90w, 369-70w, 526-7w, 629w
Select Committee evidence 287w
Select Committee reports 289-93w
Speakers rulings & statements (21.01.86) 209-11
Specialist advisers 287-8w

House of Commons souvenirs
Prices 640-1
Profits 640

House of Commons staff
Pay 179-82w

House of Commons Standing Committees
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 305

House of Commons (Services) Select Committee (29.01.86) 1047-69

House of Fraser 17w, 149w, 453w
Lonrho 17-8w
Mergers 17w, 380w
Ministers correspondence 149w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 453w
Sultan of Brunei 17w
Takeovers 17-8w

House prices
Council house sales 105-6w

House renovation grants
Government grants 301

Household surveys
Crime 440-1

Housing
Armed forces dependents 331w
Demolition 458-60w
Homelessness 608w
Managers 565w
Ministry of Defence 297w
Wales 458-60w, 565w

Housing action areas
Glasgow 238w, 600w

Housing benefits 390w
Earnings rules 390w
Expenditure 341-3w
Flats 605-6w
Landlord & tenant 613w
Mid Glamorgan 499w
Social security benefits disqualification 343w
Social security reform 62w, 343w, 398w, 499w
War pensions 491w
Wolverhampton 612-3w

Housing capital allocations 303-4
Local government finance 303-4

Housing construction
Capital investment 303-4
Council housing finance 414w
Wales 198-9w

Housing cooperatives
Inner city areas 300-1

Housing Corporation
Expenditure 199w
Housing finance 200w
Wales 199w, 200w

Housing Defects Act 1984 293-4w, 604-5w

Housing estates 465w
Drug crimes 433

Housing finance
Building repairs 415w
Capital investment 650-1w
Defective housing 604-5w
Government grants to local authorities 650-1w
Housing Corporation 200w
Housing Improvement 337w
Local government reform 652w
London Residuary Body 652-3w
Northern Ireland 541-2w
Urban development grants 336w, 337w

Housing Improvement 140w
Council house sales 336w
Council housing 603-4w
Divis flats 593w
Halifax 302
Housing finance 337w
Langbaurgh 296w
Leicester 301

Housing insulation
Government grants 633
St Helens 633
Voluntary organisations 374-5w

Housing investment programmes
Coventry City Council 287
Local authorities 469w
Local government expenditure 414w, 469w
Local government reform 651w
London boroughs 651-2w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 294w

Housing problems
Young people 613-4w

Housing revenue accounts 53-4w, 438w
Council housing 53-4w
Inverclyde District Council 438w

Housing standards
Multiple occupation 222w
Northern Ireland 541w

Housing stock 220w
Hillingdon 652w
Leeds 48w

Housing subsidies
Rent increases 470w
Wales 461-2w

Housing & Planning Bill 1985-86
1R (23.01.86) 467, 600-7w

Houston
Schools 939-40

Howard, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
Accounting, Companies 450w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 658w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics industry 532w
Bankruptcy, Wales 382-3w
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 452-3w
Company registrations, Wales 108w
Consumer Credit Act 1974, Bureaucracy 452w
Distillers Company, Takeovers 603w
Export licensing, Defence equipment 532w
Financial institutions, Self-regulatory system 147-8w
Funerals, Price controls 320w, 384w
Hearing Aid Council, Public appointments 378w
Hepker, Michael, Company accounts 183-4w
Hepker, Michael, Johnson Matthey 184w
House of Fraser, Ministers correspondence 149w
House of Fraser, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 453w
Imports, Spain 452w
Lloyds of London, Inquiries 14-5w, 146w, 279w, 320w
Mass spectrometers, Export licensing 451w
Mergers, House of Fraser 17w
Metrication, Industry 380w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Civil service dispersal 656-7w
National Weights & Measures Laboratory, Civil service manpower 381w, 532-3w
Pumps, Tyres 454w
Racial discrimination, Accountants 182w
Sumrie Clothes, Company investigations 146w
Takeovers, GEC 184w
Takeovers, House of Fraser 17-8w
Takeovers, Plessey 15w
Trade barriers, Spain 451-2w
Voluntary restraint agreements, Costs 531w
Wines, Measurement 380-1w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 699, 751-3
Army (30.01.86) 1183
Questions
Association for the Conservation of Energy 633
Defence contracts, Tenders 335w
Energy Efficiency Year 375-6w
National Coal Board, Financial targets 638
Weapons, International conferences 334-5w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
South Yemen, Ministerial statements (21.01.86) 185-9
Questions
International cooperation, Westland helicopters 366w
Italy, Westland helicopters 34-5w, 366w
Wallenberg, Raoul, Political prisoners 246-7w
Westland helicopters, Foreign relations 528-9w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 23
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 989-90, 992-5
Local government finance (28.01.86) 803

Howell, Mr Ralph
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 117-8
Questions
Family income, Expenditure 57w
Local government staff, Manpower 228w
Unemployment, Statistics 170-1

Howells, Mr Geraint
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1030
Questions
Exceptional needs payments, Social security reform 486w
Pwllpeiran Experimental Hill Farm, Ministers domestic visits 20w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 391w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review, Trade unions 391-2w
Crimes of violence, Crimes against the person 256w
Information technology centres, Government grants 111w
International cooperation, Westland helicopters 366w
Lloyds of London, Inquiries 279w, 320w
Mortgage interest rates, Owner occupied housing 445
Pharmacies 309w
Pharmacies, NHS 309w
Pharmacists, NHS 309w
Prosthetics, Contracts for services 392w

Hubbard, Bryan 523w
Entry clearances 523w

Hughes, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Horticultural Produce Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 620
Questions
Industrial diseases, Farmers lung 357-8w, 403w
Industrial diseases, Northern Ireland 407w
Industrial diseases, Scotland 369w
Industrial diseases, Wales 358w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 696, 700-7, 731, 751
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 20-1
Questions
Drinking & driving, Publicity 302w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Manpower 12w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Mergers 12w, 13w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Trade unions 12-3w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc

Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 974
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 142, 155-6
Questions
British Rail, Locomotives 517w
Nurses, Wales 3
Railway freight transport, Locomotives 654w
Roads, Wales 563-4w
Unemployment, Wales 3-4

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Unemployment 115w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Industrial Training Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 620
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 320, 321, 325, 336-7, 341-3, 346, 351, 359, 381, 385, 386, 387-8
Local government finance (28.01.86) 805
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 902, 910-2, 914
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 46, 50, 94, 100-3
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1017
Statutory Instruments Standing Committees (22.01.86) 305
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 666
Questions
Defence Select Committee evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1090-1
Detection rates, Criminal investigation 256w
Local authorities, Rent arrears 471w
Local plans, Southwark 653w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 288-9
State earnings related pension scheme, Pensioners 489w
Wages councils 125w

Human embryo experiments (24.01.86) 555
Public petitions (24.01.86) 555

Human growth hormones 346-7w
Children 346-7w

Human rights 249w
Barinov, Valeri 367w
Chile 145w
East Timor 248w
El Salvador 529w
Nepal 644w
Police training 323w
Turkey 280w
USSR 367w

Humberside
Intervention stocks 533-4w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Government assistance to industry, Tourism 1082
Ulster Defence Regiment, Criminal investigation 1080

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Opencast mining, Greater Manchester (20.01.86) 164-6
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy research 374w
Anthracite, South Wales 631-2
Association for the Conservation of Energy 633
Bracken, Plant power 349-50w, 377w
Coal, Exports 98w
Coal liquefaction, Point of Ayr 638
Coal mining, Dismissal 375w
Coal mining, Productivity 376w
Coal mining, Scotland 635-6
Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 4w, 98w
Combined heat & power, Leicester 643
District heating, Rates & rating 641
Domestic energy conservation, Expenditure 350w
Double glazing, VAT 634
Energy conservation, Employment opportunities 634
Energy conservation, NHS 634
Energy conservation, Public sector 634
Energy efficiency, Low incomes 563w
Energy Efficiency Year 643w
Energy Efficiency Year, Coal mining 643
Housing insulation, Government grants 633
Housing insulation, Voluntary organisations 374-5w
Polkemmet Bing, Air pollution 634-5

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Merseyside Residuary Body, Public appointments 230w
Police, Hampshire 264w
Youth training scheme, Hampshire 120-1w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 241-6
Questions
Armistice day ceremonies, Members correspondence 373w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Entry clearances 323-4w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Libyan Peoples Bureau 373w
Chief constables, Political impartiality 252w
Civil defence, Publicity 249w
Crime, Accountability 433-4, 435-6
Crime, Greater London 433-4
Crime prevention, Motor vehicle theft 435
Crimes 433-5
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 435
Crimes of violence, Women 433-4
Deportation 168w
Ethnic minorities, Home Office 219w
Exclusion orders 172w
Firearms, Heathrow 276w, 484w
Forensic science, Skuse, Frank 583w
Immigrants overstaying 272w
Immigration, Disclosure of information 581w
Immigration controls, Libyan Arab Republic 582w
Law enforcement, Labour Party 436
Libyan Peoples Bureau, Deportation 324w
Official secrets, Keays, Sara 253w
Peace camps, RAF Greenham Common 276w
Police, Manpower 435
Police training, Firearms 443-4
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 584w
Public order policing 438
Public relations, Home Office 275-6w
Radio broadcasting licences, Anniversaries 484-5w
Special Branch 438
Special Branch, Complaints against police 437-8
Special Branch, Students 525w
Violence on television 439
Violence on television, Broadcasting controls 439-40
Violence on television, Crimes of violence 439

Hypothermia
Death 548-50w
Scotland 548-50w

Illegal immigrants 167-8w
Indian subcontinent 481w

Immigrants
Social security benefits 552w
Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 552w

Immigrants fiancees
Entry clearances 247w

Immigrants overstaying 272w

Immigration
Disclosure of information 581w
Electoral register 480w

Immigration applications
Administrative delays 246w
Bangladesh 35w
British citizenship 35w
Fees & charges 35w

Immigration controls 583w
Administrative delays 247w
Affiliation 11w
Bangladesh 10-1w, 35-6w, 36-7w
Foreign tourists 6w
Indian subcontinent 583w
Interviews 175w
Libyan Arab Republic 582w
Libyan Peoples Bureau 324w
Medical examinations 168-9w
Merchant seamen 7-8w
Ports 169w

Immigration officers 247w
Heathrow 267-8w
Indian subcontinent 247w

Immunity from prosecution
Civil servants 320-1w, 409-10w
Disclosure of information 355w, 356w, 409-10w, 412w

Import duties
Food imports 402-4w

Importation of Live Fish of the Salmon Family Order 1986
(20.01.86) 37, (28.01.86) 815

Imports
Coal 629, 643
Natural gas 629-30
Spain 452w

Improvement notices 602-3w

Incest
Cruelty to children 233w

Income
North Sea oil 442-3w
Public sector assets 438-40w
Universities 81w

Income support scheme 59w, 60-1w, 551w, 613w, (28.01.86) 819-87
Family benefits 59w

Income tax
Index linking 83w
Tax burden 589-90w
Tax reform 447-8
Tax yields 83w
Travel warrants 591w

Income tax assessment
Job start scheme 475w

Index linking
Income tax 83w

India
Defence contracts 201w
Westland helicopters 201w

Indian subcontinent
Deportation 480-1w
Entry clearances 247-8w, 271-2w
Foreign tourists 480-1w
Illegal immigrants 481w
Immigration controls 583w
Immigration officers 247w

Industrial accidents 119w
Industry 203w

Industrial arbitration
Educational Institute of Scotland 941w
Teachers 183

Industrial buildings, Specific cases 424w

Industrial development
Delyn enterprise zone 9-10
Northern Ireland 593w, 1087
Scotland 937-8, 938-9
Scottish Development Agency 937
Wales 4

Industrial diseases
Asthma 234w
Farmers lung 357-8w, 403w, 407w
Northern Ireland 407w
Scotland 369w
Wales 358w

Industrial disputes 117w
Dept of Health & Social Security 497w
Educational Institute of Scotland 545w, 942-3
Examinations 941, 943
Lost working days 107w
National Union of Teachers 446, 791
Schools & parents 428w
Teachers 428w, 446, 545w, 546w, 599w, (27.01.86) 645, 941w, 942, 943
Wales 107w

Industrial energy prices
Industrial energy conservation 630-1
Oil prices 631

Industrial health & safety 601w
Accidents 178
Ault & Wiborg 325w
Companies 202w
Convictions 601-2w
Crown immunity 126w
Crown lands & estates 516w
District health authorities 502-3w
Hospital catering 345w
Industrial tribunals 602-3w
Punishment 602w
Small businesses 44w

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council 234w

Industrial investment
Wales 359w

Industrial relations
Ambulance services 496w
Coal mining 636-7

Industrial training 118-9w
Engineers 45w, 129w
Shipbuilding 45w, 129w

Industrial Training Bill 1985/86
2R order read (24.01.86) 620

Industrial training schemes 123w
Manpower Services Commission 201-2w

Industrial tribunals
Industrial health & safety 602-3w

Industries
Youth employment 39-40w

Industry
Higher education 148-9w
Industrial accidents 203w
Metrication 380w
Recruitment 85-6w

Infant mortality
Wales 1-2, 21w
West Glamorgan 1-2

Inflation
Unemployment 4

Information
Nuclear accidents 243w
Road works 327w
Social security appeals tribunals 553w

Information technology
University finance 243-4w

Information technology centres 111w
Government grants 111w

Ingham, Bernard 411w
Prime Ministers Office 411w

Initial teacher training 195w, 360w
Student numbers 195w
Wales 360w, 361w

Injuries
Children 232w
Crime victims 260w
Groce, Cherry 85w
Pitman, Sue 9w
Plastic bullets 241-2w, 636w

Inland Revenue
Administrative delays 83w
Electoral register 407-8w

Inland waterways
Mercury pollution 295w

Inner city areas
Housing cooperatives 300-1
Local government finance 225w
Owner occupied housing 299, 300
Private investment 422-3w

Inner city partnerships 225w
Government grants 225-6w

Inner London boroughs
Turkey 484w

Inquiries
Bombings 582-3w
Commission for Racial Equality 85-6w
Firearms 437
Gas accidents 520w
Lloyds of London 14-5w, 146w, 279w, 320w
National Museum of Wales 359w
Parrot Corporation 8, 9
Pitman, Sue 9w
Stanley Royd Hospital 63w
Unemployment benefits 494-6w
Westland helicopters 412w

Insulation
Energy conservation 631

Inter American Development Bank 20w

Interchanges
Motorways 654-5w
M25 654-5w

Interest charges
Armed forces pensions 332w

Interest rates 447-8w
Manufacturing industries 179-80
Opposition days (29.01.86) 979-1009
Overseas aid 319w
Overseas loans 319w
Small businesses 180, 446
Standing Order No 10 applications (21.01.86) 203-4

Intergovernmental Agreement, 1984 527w
EC budget 527w

Intergovernmental Conference 144-5w
EC reform 144-5w

International Conference Centre 298w

International conferences
Employment 634w
Weapons 334-5w

International cooperation
Channel crossing 434w
Helicopters 335w
Terrorism 426w, 1083-4, 1085-6
Westland helicopters 366w

International Council of Scientific Unions
UK contributions 286w

International Garden Festival 1989
Glasgow 548w

International organisations
UK contributions 284-5w

International Tin Council (24.01.86) 621-6

Intervention stocks
Animal feed 585w
Barking & Dagenham 342w
Butter 533w
Cereals 533w
Costs 342w
Humberside 533-4w
Lincolnshire 534w
Norfolk 534-5w
North Yorkshire 535w

Interviews
Heseltine, Michael 87w
Immigration controls 175w
Jobclubs 175
Westland helicopters 143-4w

Inter-American Development Bank
Nicaragua 449w

Invalid care allowances 390w
Community care 616w
Men 612w

Inverclyde District Council 438w
Housing revenue accounts 438w

Investment
Financial institutions 14w
Northern Ireland 1082
Pensions 445
Public corporations 56-7w

Invincible
Wrecks 649-50w

Ipswich Port Authority Bill 1985/86
2R order read (28.01.86) 777

IRA
Associated British Foods 1079, 1086
Weapons 1079, 1086

Iran-Iraq War
Peace negotiations 427w
Shipping safety 426w

Iraq
Armed forces 236w
Armed forces training 427w
Credit 13w
Foreign loans 13w

Irish Sea 650w, 656w
Radioactive waste disposal 650w, 656w

Iron & steel industry
Scotland 169-70, (23.01.86) 468-509, 544w, 935-6

Iron & Steel Trades Confederation 935

Ironbridge bypass 465w
Public inquiries 465w

Irradiated food 553w
Advisory Committee on Irradiated & Novel Foods 553w

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Holloway Prison 272-3w
Holloway Prison, Prison accommodation 322w
Legal aid, Departmental publications 584w

Isle of Man
European Court of Human Rights 9w

Isle of Wight Bill 1985/86
2R* (29.01.86) 931

Israel 426w
Arms embargoes 367-8w
Foreign policy 426w
Prime Minister 142w, 179

Italy
Sunday trading 219w
Westland helicopters 34-5w, 366w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 229-31
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 564, 567, 574
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1021-2
Questions)
Dairy Crest, Touche Ross 425w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 516w
Housing improvement, Leicester 301
Immigration officers, Heathrow 267-8w
Legionnaires disease, Hospitals 615w
Legionnaires disease, Swimming pools 659w
Social security appeals tribunals 64w
Social security appeals tribunals, Information 553w

Japan
Art exhibitions 358w

Jarrett, Cynthia 85w
Death 85w

JE Hanger
Prosthetics 306w

Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 979-84, 1005

Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 954
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 455
Questions
Youth training scheme, Scotland 944

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 693
Army (30.01.86) 1166-70, 1172, 1175
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 612, 613
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 16
Civil defence 251w
Energy Efficiency Year 643w

Jet Provost aircraft 625w
Military aircraft 625w

Job centres
Unemployment 124w, 171
Vacancies 115w, 171

Job clubs 174-5, 124w, 126w, 634w
Hertfordshire 634w
Interviews 175
Northern region 174-5
Training 175

Job security 318w

Job start schemes 282w, 475w
Income tax assessment 475w

John, Mr Brynmor
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1022-6
Questions
Agricultural workers, Manpower 209w, 341w
Agricultural workers, Pay 342w
Agricultural workers, Professional qualifications 208-9w
Cereals, Agricultural production 209w
Cereals, Agricultural surpluses 209w
Family income supplements, Agricultural workers 233w
Industrial accidents, Industry 203w

Johnson Matthey 183-4w, 187w
Hepker, Michael 184w, 187w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 724
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 987
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 952-3
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 399, 402
Questions
Alcoholism, Scotland 545w
Italy, Westland helicopters 34w
Members, Scottish Grand Committee 369w
Police, Scotland 932
Scottish Grand Committee, Costs 369w
Scottish Grand Committee, Security 438w

Joint consultative committees (31.01.86) 1247-8

Joint passports 580-1w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 801
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 965-6
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 142-5
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 463-5w
Bankruptcy, Wales 382-3w
Coal mine closures, Wales 5-6
Drug crimes, Wales 374w
Dysentery, Wales 359w
Employment, Wales 359w
Industrial investment, Wales 359w
Parrot Corporation, Inquiries 9
Reid, P, Members correspondence 481w
Unemployment, Wales 21w, 359w
Wales Tourist Board, Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK 458w
Welsh Development Agency, Privatisation 359-60w
Welsh Water Authority, Privatisation 360w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 805-6
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 972
Questions
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Exhibitions 10
NHS finance, Wales 7
Perinatal mortality, Welsh Office 2
Pupil-teacher ratios, Wales 21w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 365-6, 368
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 62, 110, 130
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1017
Questions
Rates & rating, Local income tax 291
Small businesses, Venture capital 110w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, *Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Bangor 655-6w
Dairy Crest, Touche Ross 425w
EC Agricultural Council, Beef & veal 209-10w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 286-7w
Veterinary services, Scotland 425w

Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith, *Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Education, Public expenditure 566-70w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, School discipline 363w
Initial teacher training, Student numbers 195w
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 245w
Student grants 361w
Student grants, Higher education 66-8w
Student grants, Travel grants 245w
Teacher training, Educational finance 364-5w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 428w
Teachers, Pay 571-4w
University finance, University Grants Committee 243-4w
University Grants Committee, Civil servants 318w

Judgments
Bombings 521w

Judiciary
Conflict of interests 241w

Junior hospital doctors
Greater Glasgow Health Board 646-7w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Questions
Crime, Accountability 436
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Costs 373-4w

Keays, Sara 253w
Official secrets 253w

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 44, 51, 106
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1054, 1059
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 880
Questions
Durham, Bishop 13

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 417-8
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 827-8
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 888-90
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 200-1
Questions
Mental health community care 779
Mental patients, Hospital readmissions 496-7w
Scottish Office, Dept of Health & Social Security 947

Kent, Juliet 475w
Pay 475w

Kenwood House 298w
Property transfer 298w

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1108
Questions
Civil defence, Handbooks 256w

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1170-2
Questions
Fish, Antibiotics 1-2w
Fish farming, Legislation 48w
Railway network, Capital investment 385w
Railway stations, Salisbury 384w, 385w
School teachers, Redundancy 363w
Sewers 48w
Sites of special scientific interest, Redundancy 48-50w
Teachers, Northern Ireland 407w, 455-6w

Kidney patients 344w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 344w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Questions
Association of Chief Police Officers, Public expenditure 173-4w
Birds, Pest control 1w
Business statement 463-4
Crime, Accountability 435-6
Crime prevention, Expenditure 171-2w
Crime prevention, Metropolitan Police 254w
Crimes of violence, Women 170w, 256-60w
Cruelty to children, Disclosure of information 59w
Detention centres 521w
Detention centres, Children in care 521w
Drug abuse, Tranquillisers 614-5w
Duty solicitors, Strangeways Prison 213-4w
Policewomen, Manpower 7-8w
Prison employment 169-70w
Prison population, Prisoners 214w
Prisoners, AIDS 170w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 214w
Prisoners on remand 253w
Sexual offences, Police 170w
Unemployment, Knowsley 112w
Youth custody, Ethnic minorities 522w
Youth custody, Suicide 522w
Youth unemployment Knowsley 181-2

Kings College Hospital 503w
Hospital catering 503w

Kings Lynn
Local enterprise agencies 172

King, Mr Roger
Questions
Cash limits, Customs & Excise 319w
Dim-dip headlights, Motor vehicle safety 55-6w
Hubbard, Bryan, Entry clearances 523w
Mucodyne, Limited list prescribing 497-8w
Police, West Midlands 269w
Rate support grants, Birmingham 222w

King, Rt Hon Tom, *Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 310w

Anglo-Irish Agreement 312w, 313w, 593w, 1078, 1085
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1077-8
Anglo-Irish agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1085
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1084
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 167w, 595-6w, 597w, 1083-4
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Civil service manpower 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Extradition 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 596w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Northern Ireland Government 1083-4
Anglo-Irish talks 311-2w, 597w
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Government 326w
Associated British Foods, IRA 1086
Barry, Peter, Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 597w
Civil servants, Northern Ireland 596w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland Office 313w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Northern Ireland 596w
Overseas aid, Northern Ireland 597w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 406w
Public relations, Northern Ireland Office 314-6w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police stations 167w
Security, Northern Ireland 592w, 1080
Terrorism, International cooperation 1085-6
Ulster Defence Regiment, Criminal investigation 1080
Ulster Unionists 1085
Wages councils, Northern Ireland 597-8w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 306, 307, 309-10
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 646-51, 656, 658
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 451-2, 460
Westland helicopters, Standing Order No 10 applications (23.01.86) 467
Questions
Business statement 462, 1095-6
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 792
Exchange rates, Sterling 444
Manufacturing industries, Trade competitiveness 179-80
Unemployment, Economic policy 1090

Kirkcaldy
Procurators fiscal 470w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 820, 848-52
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 199-200
Questions
British Council 529w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 497w
Local government finance, Scotland 934
Local income tax 228w
Overseas aid, Interest rates 319w
Primary health care, Consultation papers 616w
Social security benefits rules, Poverty 783
Youth training scheme 119w

Knight, Mr Greg
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 247-8, 256, 272-3
Questions
Amateur radio, Broadcasting licences 531w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Employment opportunities 116w
Gaming machines, Tax yields 299w
Gaming machines, VAT 299w
Industrial energy conservation, Industrial energy prices 630-1
Motor insurance 518w
Motor vehicle testing 517w
Road traffic offences 301w

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Maternity hospitals, Retail trade 504w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 447

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Law centres, Departmental coordination 515w

Knowsley
Unemployment 112w
Youth unemployment 181-2

Knowsley metropolitan borough council 416-20w
Urban programme 416-20w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Council house sales 223w
Unemployment, Staffordshire 114w
Welsh Development Agency, Factories 7-8

Laboratories
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments 482w
Animal experiments 482w
Lasswade 425w

Labour mobility 125w

Labour only subcontracting 117w, 167-8
Building industry 117w, 168-9

Labour Party
Law enforcement 436

Labour turnover
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 560-2w

Laker Airways 518-9w

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 722-4
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 958
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 402, 413-5
Questions
Paper industry, Scotland 938
Rent increases, Scottish Special Housing Association 546w

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 27
Local government finance (28.01.86) 807
Questions
Disclosures of information, Westland helicopters 791
Oldham Hospital, Hip replacements 498w
Rates & rating, Local income tax 291

Lamont, Mr Norman, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1141, 1178-85
Questions
Defence contracts, Shells 448w
Defence contracts, Tenders 335w
Defence procurement, Ammunition 136w
Defence procurement, British Standards Institution 446w, 641w
Defence procurement, Guided weapons 628w
Defence procurement, Helicopters 134-5w, 334w
Defence research, Research 91w
Early warning systems, British Aerospace 639w
Early warning systems, Nimrod aircraft 638-9w
FH70 Howitzers, Shells 627-8w
Helicopters, Defence procurement 641w
Jet Provost aircraft, Military aircraft 625w
Nimrod aircraft, Defence expenditure 446w
105 FD ammunition, Defence contracts 639w
Royal ordnance factories, Redundancy 448w, 628w
SP70 guns, Ammunition 446w
SP70 guns, Defence research 628w
SS John Harvey, Mustard gas 446w
Strategic defence initiative, United Technologies 638w
Trident 637w
Trident, Testing 637w
Tucano aircraft 94w, 235-6w
Weapons, Defence contracts 446w
Weapons, International conferences 334-5w
Westland helicopters, Archer, Jeffrey 94w
Westland helicopters, Company finance 641-2w
Westland helicopters, Exports 334w

Lanarkshire
Redundancy 938

Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee 2w
Local government expenditure 2w
Local government reform 2w

Land
Stansted Airport 302w

Land Compensation Acts 293w

Land drilling
Natural gas production 376w
Petroleum exploration 376w

Land reclamation
Derelict land 607-8w
Expenditure 420-1w
Scotland 368w

Land use
Delyn enterprise zone 9-10
Woolwich Arsenal 136w

Landlord & tenant
Housing benefits 613w

Langbaurgh
Housing improvement 296w
Urban development grants 296w

Languages
Departmental publications 558-9w, 559-60w
Mental patients 560w

Lasswade
Laboratories 425w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1110
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1013, 1020
Questions
Business statement 1098
Family income supplements, Publicity 58w
Israel, Prime Minister 142w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants to voluntary organisations 131-2w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants 175w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Manpower Services Commission 128w
Nurses, Management 788
Residential care, Fees & charges 553-4w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 502w
Training 118-9w

Law centres
Departmental coordination 515w

Law enforcement
Labour Party 436

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Questions
Community policing, Police community liaison committees 251-2w
Council of Europe, Young people 163-4w
Inner city areas, Private investment 422-3w
Local government staff, Local government reform 227-8w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 120w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 576, 584-5, 586, 605-6
Questions
Iran-Iraq War, Peace negotiations 427w
Iran-Iraq War, Shipping safety 426w
Israel 426w
Israel, Foreign policy 426w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 427w
Political levy, Publicity 38w
Private rented housing 415w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 446
Terrorism, International cooperation 426w
Video recordings, Prosecutions 169w
Violence on television, Broadcasting controls 439-40

LD50 toxicity test 524w, 525w
Anaesthetics 524w
Animal cruelty 524w
Animal experiments 525w
Drugs 525w

Lead pollution
Water supply 138w, 530w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 739, 747-9

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Protection of Military Remains Bill 2R & rem stages (31.01.86) 1230-4
Questions
Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment, Privatisation 640w
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 448w
Air Force bases, USA 625-6w
Apprentices, Devonport Dockyard 334w
Armed forces civilians 330w
Armed forces dependents, USA 331w
Armed forces education allowances, Boarding schools 331w
Armed forces pensions 332w, 333w
Armed forces pensions, Administrative delays 333w
Armed forces pensions, Interest charges 332w
Armed forces pensions, Navy 332w
Armed forces retirement, Air force 531w
Armed forces training, El Salvador 445w
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 353w
Defence contracts, Scott Lithgow 446-7w
Defence procurement 448w
Defence procurement, Helmets 135w
Defence procurement, Shipbuilding 447w
Defence procurement, Tenders 447-8w, 626w
Defence School of Music, Armed forces deployment 93-4w
Devonport dockyard, Apprentices 91-2w
Devonport dockyard, Teachers 91w
Dockyards, Apprentices 334w
Dockyards, Privatisation 627w
Ethnic minorities, Ministry of Defence 236w, 354w
Frigates, Navy 637-8w
Gray, MJJ, Court martial 93w
HMS Endurance, Shipbuilding 90w
Iraq, Armed forces training 427w
Light aircraft, Airspace 333w
"Marine Services Consultation Paper" 639w
Ministry of Defence, Advertising 236w
Ministry of Defence, Environmental health officers 449w
9 Signal Regiment, Armed forces discharges 444w, 445w
9 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 445w
Phantom aircraft, Air accidents 449w
Porton Down, Animal experiments 449w
Portsmouth dockyard, Apprentices 92w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 333-4w
RNAS Yeovilton, Privatisation 638w
Rosyth dockyard, Apprentices 93-4w
Rosyth dockyard, Capital investment 627w
Rosyth dockyard, Commercial management 639-40w, 640-1w
Rosyth dockyard, Teachers 92w
Rosyth dockyard, Trident 627w
SS John Harvey, Public Record Office 640w
Submarines, Shipbuilding 353-4w
Submarines, Tenders 447w
Type 23 Frigates, Defence procurement 626w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces deployment 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces strength 352w, 353w, 445-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Costs 331w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Defence equipment 352-3w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Length of service 351-2w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Paramilitary forces 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Religious discrimination 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Resignations 351-2w
Woolwich Arsenal, Land use 136w

Lee on Solent 446w
Rescue services 446w

Leeds
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 394w
Housing stock 48w
Rate support grants 289, 292
Roads 384w
Youth training scheme 202-3w

Leeds University 434w
Ministers domestic visits 434w

Leeds-Bradford Airport 373w
Ports of entry 373w

Legal advice & assistance (21.01.86) 281-6

Legal aid
Civil proceedings 511-2w
Criminal proceedings 512w
Departmental publications 584w

Legal aid & advice
Prisoners 213-4w

Legionnaires disease 548w, 615w, 659w
Hospitals 615w
Scotland 548w
Swimming pools 659w

Legislation 48w
Fish farming 48w
Trade unions 181, 1093-4

Leicester
Combined heat & power 643
Council house sales 301
Hip replacements 783-4
Housing improvement 301
Smith houses 301

Leicestershire
Block grant 337w
Local authorities 337w
Youth training scheme 176

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 365-7
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1011, 1028, 1030, 1035
Questions
Armoured fighting vehicles, Defence procurement 331-2w
Coal reserves, Northern Ireland 1086-7
"Reform of Social Security White Paper", Social security reform 491w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
Employment 167-8

Length of service 351-2w
Ulster Defence Regiment 351-2w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Gordon, Sybil, Property transfer (21.01.86) 281-3
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 890-1
Questions
EC Finance Council 301w

Letters
Solicitor-General 574w, 575w, 584w

Levene, Peter 135w
Ministry of Defence 135w
Public appointments 135w

Leverndale Hospital 106w
Patients funds 106w

Lewisham
Prime Minister domestic visits 573w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 322-3, 375-6
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 58, 129
Questions
Business statement 466
House of Commons souvenirs, Profits 640

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
NHS Management Inquiry 493w
Youth training scheme 120w

Libyan Arab Republic
Cereals 608-9w
Exports 608-9w
Foreign students 373w, 385w, 655w
Immigration controls 582w
Overseas workers 582w
Trade barriers 16w

Libyan Peoples Bureau 323-4w, 354-5w, 367w, 582w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 367w, 373w
Deportation 323-4w
Immigration controls 324w
Visas 444

Licensing
Animal experiments 483w, 523-4w
Camping sites 47w
Caravan sites 47w
Local radio 9-10w
Nursing homes 485w
Pest control 1w
Residential care 485w
Security guards 10w

Licensing laws 263w
Sunday trading 182

Lie detectors
10 Downing Street 792
Westland helicopters 143w

Life (24.01.86) 555

Life imprisonment
Robbery 323w

Life insurance
Social security reform 231w

"Lifting the Burden White Paper" 110w

Light aircraft
Airspace 333w
Training 333w

Lighting
Motorways 328w

Lignite
Electricity generation 1086-7

Lilley, Mr Peter
Questions
Business statement 1101-2

Lime subsidy 536w
Agricultural subsidies 536w

Limited list prescribing 304w, 495w, 497-8w, 557w
Drug industry 304w
Mucodyne 497-8w
Prescription drugs 557w

Lincoln Prison 583w

Lincolnshire
Intervention stocks 534w

List D schools 368w
Scotland 368w

Listed buildings
Armed forces housing 649w
Church buildings 511-2w
St Marys House 53w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 709-10, 731, 739

Liverpool
Unemployment 113w
Womens Hospital 501w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 973
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1028-31
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1242
Questions
Family income, Low incomes 496w
Ministers correspondence 790-1
National parks, Farmers 223w
Violence on television, Crime of violence 439

Lloyds Bank (Merger) (Amendment) Bill 1985-86
2R order read & discharged, Bill withdrawn (30.01.86) 1075

Lloyds of London
Fraud 320w
Inquiries 14-5w, 146w, 279w, 320w

Lloyd, Angela 171w
Police raids 171w

Lloyd, Mr Ian
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1109

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 709, 726, 737-40
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 30
Questions
Crimes of violence, Women 5w
Factory Inspectorate, North West region 123w
Foreign tourists, Indian subcontinent 480-1w
Illegal immigrants, Indian subcontinent 481w
Immigration controls, Administrative delays 247w
Immigration controls, Ports 169w
Lorry drivers, Road safety 142w
Manchester Royal Infirmary 308w
Mass spectrometers, Export licensing 451w
Post Office, External financing limits 147w
Rates & rating 221w
Regional health authorities, Trade unions 501w

Local authorities
Arts sponsorship 15-6
Block grant 337-8w
Civil defence 250w, 251w
Departmental circulars 565w
Empty housing 468w
Housing investment programmes 469w
Leicestershire 337w
Mass media 298w
Rent arrears 471w
Tenders 336w
Transport of radioactive materials 611w

Local authorities in England & Wales
Capital investment 198-9w

Local authorities in Scotland
Civil defence 238w
Council housing finance 438w
Police 932
Primary education 939
Rate support grants 546w
Youth training scheme 598w

Local education authorities
Further education 75-7w
Polytechnics 318w
Pupil-teacher ratios 538-42w
Technical & vocational education initiative 125w

Local enterprise agencies 172, 600w
British American Tobacco 172
Civil servants secondment 172
Hertfordshire 600w
Kings Lynn 172
Personnel 172

Local government
Disclosure of information (31.01.86) 1247-8
Wales 22w

Local Government Bill 1985-86
Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 317-96

Local government expenditure 297w, 304, 514-6w
Council housing finance 414w
Educational finance 187-8w
General consents 141w
Greater London Council 141w, 295-6w, 339w, 340w
Housing investment programes 414w, 469w
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committees 2w
Local government reform 51w, 52w, 649w
London boroughs 653w
Parish councils 295
Publicity (22.01.86) 317-96
Rate support grants 293
School meals 318-9w
Stirling District Council 322w
Urban programme 339w, 416w
Voluntary organisations 291-2, 297, 298
Youth training scheme 177

Local government finance (28.01.86) 797-813
Capital investment 296w
Housing capital allocations 303-4
Inner city areas 225w
Ministerial statements (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75
Non-metropolitan districts 607w
Scotland 934, (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75

Local government property
Greater London Council 648-9w

Local government reform
Arts finance 17-8
Building repairs 651w
Civil service manpower 140w, 141w, 175w
Costs 53w
Council housing 652w
Dept of the Environment 140w
Dept of Transport 141w
General consents 295-6w, 339w, 340w
Greater London Council 51w, 53w, 424w, 605w, 648-9w
Greater London Enterprise Board 339w
Home Office 175w
Housing finance 652w
Housing Investment programmes 651w
Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee 2w
Local government expenditure 51w, 52w, 649w
Local government staff 227-8w
Parking 56w
Rate support grants 289
Sports 295
Theatres 469-70w
Voluntary organisations 297, 298
Waste disposal 51w, 52w
Woolwich Ferry 54w

Local government revenue
Hillingdon 652w
London boroughs 652-3w

Local government services
Discrimination 336w
Privatisation 303, 511w

Local government social services
Community care 778-9

Local government staff
Council tenants 468w
Emergency planning 250w
Local government reform 227-8w
Manpower 228w
Pay settlements 22w
Wales 22w

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill 1985-86
2R (31.01.86) 1247-8

Local income tax 228w
Rates & rating 290-1
Scotland 934-5

Local Loans (Increase of Limit) Order 1986 (29.01.86) 1046

Local plans
Southwark 653w

Local radio
Civil defence 438-9
Ethnic minorities 580w
Greater London 276w, 579-80w
Licensing 9-10w

Location of industry
Northern Ireland 1082
Scotland 937

Locomotives
British Rail 385w, 517w
Procurement 385w
Railway freight transport 654w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 196, 197
Questions
Unemployment, Older workers 113w

London boroughs
Building repairs 653w
Government grants to local authorities 339w, 471w
Housing investment programmes 651-2w
Local government expenditure 653w
Local government revenue 652-3w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 630-1w
Political affiliations 526w
Rates & rating 51w

London Coordinating Committee 51w

London Country Bus Services Ltd 327w

London Docklands Development Corporation 220w
Compulsory purchase 220w, 221w
Voluntary organisations 48w

London Fire Brigade 52w

London Regional Transport 55w, 327w, 518w, (28.01.86) 901-23
Bus services 55w
Government grants 327w
Underground railways 55w

London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 901-23

London Residuary Body 141w, 222w, 424w, 470w, 652-3w
Finance 424w, 470w, 652w
Housing finance 652-3w

London Underground 55w

London University 67-8w, 571w
Capital investment 67-8w
University finance 571w

Lonrho 149w
House of Fraser 17-8w

Lorry drivers
Road safety 142w

Lost working days
Industrial disputes 107w

Lothian
Police records 204w

Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
Motion relating to Joint Committee on Petitions (21.01.86) 167 (23.01.86) 431, (30.01.86) 1076

Lotus Cars 354w, 413w
De Lorean 354w, 413w, 1082-3
Prosecutions 1082-3

Lough Neagh 542-3w
Opencast mining 542-3w

Low incomes
Energy efficiency 563w
Family income 496w
Funerals 498w

Low pay
Family income 496w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 749, 751, 760, 761-2
Questions
Channel tunnel, Northern region 183-4

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Questions
Agricultural research, Soils 642
Art finance, Northern Arts 46w
Art works, Export licensing 206-8w, 386w
Art works, Exports 386w
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 207w
Arts Council, Finance 644w
Arts Council grants, South Bank 17
Arts finance, Charitable donations 15, 16
Arts finance, Eastern Arts Association 18
Arts finance, Economic regions 16
Arts finance, Local government reform 17-8
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 15-6
Civil service redundancies, Agricultural research 641-2
Civil service redundancies, Soil Survey of England & Wales 642
European Museum of the Year 386w
George Brown Collection, Newcastle University 386w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 642
Museums & galleries, England 206w
Reprography, Government departments 298-9w
South Bank Theatre Board, Costs 17

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Council house sales, Empty housing 300
Cross border cooperation in Ireland, Border security in Ireland 1088-9
EC Foreign Affairs Council 486w

Lygo, Raymond 15-6w, 87w, 88w, 89w, 135-6w

MacAulay Institute for Soil Research 12-3w, 641-2
Hill Farming Research Organisation 12-3w, 641-2
Manpower 12w
Mergers 12w, 13w
Trade unions 12-3w

McColl Committee see Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review

McCrae, Rev William
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 697, 704
Questions
Hospital waiting lists, Ear nose & throat 63w
Hospital waiting lists, Hearing aids 62-3w
Housing benefits, Earnings rules 390w

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 953
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 415, 416-7
Questions
Enterprise allowance scheme 116w
Medical treatments, Scotland 548w
School closures, Scotland 939-40
Teachers, Scotland 183

McCusker, Mr Harold
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 43, 107-8
Questions
Civil service redundancies, Soil Survey of England & Wales 642
Income tax, Index linking 83w
Income tax, Tax yields 83w
Lloyds of London, Inquiries 14-5w
Mortgage relief 84w
Mortgage relief, Costs 654w
Mortgage relief, tax rates & bands 84w
SS John Harvey, Mustard gas 446w
SS John Harvey, Public Record Office 640w
Tax yields 83w, 84w
Taxpayers 85w
War pensions, Mustard gas 389w

Macfarlane, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 48, 49
Rate support grants, Sutton (31.01.86) 1250-3

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
National income, OECD countries 108-9w
Nationalised industries, Finance 442w
Nationalised industries, Public sector assets 438-40w
Personal income 444w
Privatisation, Public expenditure 441w
Public expenditure 646w
Public expenditure, National income 442w
Public relations, Treasury 299-300w
Public sector assets, Income 439-40w

MacGregor, Ian 636-7
National Coal Board 637

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 804
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 111-2
Questions
Battery hens, Animal welfare 287w
Motorways, Lighting 328w
Private sector housing, South East region 221w
Rate increases 221w
Severe disablement allowance 309w
Unemployment 111w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Questions
Police, Manpower 435
Thames Valley Police 167w
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 267w
Unemployment 114w

MacKay, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 940
Agriculture, Student grants 321w
Alcoholism, Scotland 545w
Civil defence, Local authorities in Scotland 238w
Crown immunity, Scotland 205w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 321w
Forestry, Caithness 547w
Forests 547w
Greater Glasgow Health Board, Junior hospital doctors 646-7w
Greater Glasgow Health Board, NHS finance 647w
Hypothermia, Scotland 548-50w
Industrial diseases, Scotland 369w
Legionnaires disease, Scotland 548w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Manpower 12w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Mergers 12w, 13w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Trade unions 12-3w
Medical treatments, Scotland 548w
Nature Conservancy Council, Forestry 544w
NHS, Manpower 646w
Patients funds, Scotland 106w
Pesticides, Scotland 103w
Police, Local authorities in Scotland 932
Police, Scotland 931-2
Police records, Lothian 204w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 932
Radio frequencies, Glengarry forest 437w
Scottish Islands, EC grants & loans 547w
Skoul bandits, Scotland 547w
Smith, David, Sheriffs 321w
Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen 238w

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 953
Questions
Gas accidents, Glasgow 520w
Rates & rating, Scotland 543w

Mackies
Government assistance to industry 597w

Maclean, Mr David
Debates etc
Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 221, 234-6
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1021, 1031-3, 1035, 1038
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Cumbria 400-1w
Coal mining, Productivity 627-8
Crime prevention 253-4w
Farm incomes 399w
Farm incomes, Northern Ireland 399-400w
Farms 400w
Severe weather payments, Government grants 208w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1034-8
Questions
Industrial development, Scotland 937
Northern Ireland Assembly, Political parties 592w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Social Democratic & Labour party 1081
Public order offences, Scotland 325-6w
Rescue services, Stornoway 304w
Robbery, Prison sentences 323w
Schools, Metropolitan Police 569-70w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1085
Artificial limb & appliance centres review, Management 787
Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, Public appointments 660-1w
Motor vehicle safety, EC action 329w
Patients, Compensation 491-2w
Peace camps, RAF Greenham Common 276w
Security, Northern Ireland 592w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 806

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1172-8
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1053, 1054, 1066, 1067, 1068
Road Traffic Regulation Regulation (Parking) Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 620
Westland helicopter (22.01.86) 310
Questions

Armagh Prison, Body searches 314w
Armed forces pensions 332w, 333w
Armed forces pensions, Administrative delays 333w
Armed forces pensions, Interest charges 332w
Armed forces pensions, Navy 332w
Armed forces retirement, Air force 531w
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 353w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 636w
Baton rounds, Royal Ulster Constabulary 406w
British Standards Institution, Companies 378w
Defence procurement, British Standards Institution 446w, 641w
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 382w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 406-7w, 636-8w
Jet Provost aircraft, Military aircraft 625w
Mackies, Government assistance to industry 597w
9 Signal Regiment, Armed forces discharges 444w, 445w
9 Signal Regiment, Police interrogation 445w
Press releases, Department of Trade & Industry 383w
Press releases, Westland helicopters 382w, 412w
Prisoners transfers, Northern Ireland 371w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 326w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Religious discrimination 326w
Solitary confinement, Hacket, Patrick 371w
Tucano aircraft 94w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces deployment 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces strength 352w, 353w, 445-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Defence equipment 352-3w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Length of service 351-2w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Paramilitary forces 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Religious discrimination 351w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Resignations 351w, 352w
Westland helicopters, Archer, Jeffrey 16w, 88w, 94w

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 609
Questions
Lime subsidy, Agricultural subsidies 536w
Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen 238w

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
Legionnaires disease, Scotland 548w

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1116, 1141-3, 1181
Questions
Defence procurement, Ammunition 136w
Industrial accidents 119w
105 FD ammunition, Defence contracts 639w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 30
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1110
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 348, 381, 390-1
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 456
Questions
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 35w
Bangladesh, Immigration controls 35-6w, 36-7w
Bradford City Football Club, Government assistance 143w
Bradford City Football Club, Government grants 181
Business statement 464, 1102
Cabinet Office, Resignations 575-6w
Codes of practice, Merton 298w
Educational qualifications, Mendocino Book Company 570w
Energy efficiency, Low incomes 563w
Enterprise allowance scheme 116w
Entry clearances, Bangladesh 11w
Family income supplements, Bradford 397w
Genetics, Testing 143w
Immigration, Disclosure of information 581w
Immigration applications, Fees & charges 35w
Immigration controls, Affiliation 11w
Immigration controls, Bangladesh 10-1w
Industrial health & safety, Companies 202w
Railway closures, Wortley 56w
School teachers, Merton 245w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 1082
Westland helicopters, Select committees 575w

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc
Rate support grant (20.01.86) 61, 84, 112-4
Questions
Enterprise allowance scheme 116w
Teachers 428w
Universities, Construction 432w
University Grants Committee, Science education 142w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Magistrates courts
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 374w
Sentencing 481w

Magnox reactors
Nuclear power stations 632
Nuclear safety 375w

Maidenhead
Armed forces housing 297w

Major, Mr John, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security*
Debates etc
Poverty, Barnsley (30.01.86) 1190-94
Questions
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem, Social security recipients 397w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Brent 234-6w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Greater London 310w, 560-2w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Leeds 394w
Dept of Health & Social Security special investigators, Social security abuse 620w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Sick pay 549w
Exceptional needs payments 308w
Exceptional needs payments, Birmingham 59w
Exceptional needs payments, Expenditure 308w
Family income supplements, Agricultural workers 233w
Family income supplements, Bradford 397w
Family income supplements, North West region 58w, 614w
Family income supplements, Publicity 58w
Family income supplements, School teachers 397w
Family income supplements, Scotland 614w
Furniture grants, Expenditure 307w
Heating allowances, Expenditure 308w
Housing benefits 390w
Housing benefits, Earnings rules 390w
Housing benefits, Expenditure 341-3w
Housing benefits, Landlord & tenant 613w
Housing benefits, Wolverhampton 612-3w
Immigrants, Social security benefits 552w
Invalid care allowances, Men 612w
Maternity benefits 305w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 784-5
Members correspondence, Bentley, Barbara 553w
Members correspondence, Smith, Gladys 306w
Pensions, Costs 619w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 781-2
Residential care, Elderly 781
Retirement pensions, Costs 660w
Social security abuse, Civil service manpower 397w
Social security abuse, Electoral register 553w
Social security adjudications, Social security reform 613w
Social security appeals tribunals 64w
Social security appeals tribunals, Information 553w
Social security benefits uprating 489w
Social security recipients 506w
Social security recipients, Debt collection 63w
Specialist claims control units, Social security abuse 550w
Supplementary benefits, Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 558w
Supplementary benefits, Greenock 619w
War pensions, Mustard gas 389w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits disqualification 129w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Questions
Abortion, Hospitals 504-5w
Crime prevention, Motor industry 476w
Crime prevention, Motor vehicle theft 435
Legal aid, Civil proceedings 511-2w
Legal aid, Criminal proceedings 512w
Motor vehicle theft, Greater London 476w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (27.01.86) 645

Malone, Mr Gerald
Questions
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 452-3w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 642
Petroleum exploration, Wells 376w

Management techniques
Distance learning 110w
Small businesses 110w

Management & Personnel Office
Departmental forms 143w

Managers
Housing 565w

"Managing Waste: the Duty of Care" 293-4, 512w
Waste management 293-4

Manchester Prison 213-4w

Manchester Royal Infirmary 308w

Mandatory student grants
Student grants 72w

Mandela, Nelson 246w
Roads 246w

Mandela, Winnie 246w

Manpower Services Commission 116w
Community programme 473-4w
Industrial training schemes 201-2w
National Marriage Guidance Council 128w
Training, 119w, 122w
Youth training scheme 120w

Manufactured exports
Cars 451-2w

Manufactured goods
UK trade with EC 515w, 532w

Manufacturing industries
Average earnings 43w
Interest rates 179-80
Manpower 126w, 635w
Northern Ireland 635w
Pay settlements 173
Private sector 450w

Rates & rating 938-9
Redundancy 937
Trade competitiveness 173, 179-80
Wales 4-5

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 999-1001
Questions
Average earnings 172-3
Initial teacher training, Student numbers 195w
Westminster International Conference Centre 298w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 31
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 137-8, 150
Questions
Children, Nutrition & health 330w
Death rate, Social class 346w
Dentistry, Complaints 495w
Higher education, Wales 564w
Hospital bed occupancy rates, Salop 397w
Hospital beds, Stone House Hospital 661-2w
Hospitals, Wales 2
Housing, Managers 565w
Local Authorities, Departmental circulars 565w
Planning appeals, Wales 239-40w
Pupils, Diets 575w
South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation, Shareholders 367w
Tristan da Cunha, Palinauris Investments 589w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 360-1w, 564-5w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, Public appointments 360w

Margam mine
Coal mining 628-9

Marginal land
Wales 320w

Marginal tax rates
Married people 590w
Single people 590w

"Marine Services Consultation Paper" 639w

Marine Services Organisation 639w

Marines
Armed forces pensions 332w

Market share 18-9w
Aerospace industry 18-9w

Market value
Council housing 512w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 613-4

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1112
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 822
Standing Order No 10 applications (28.01.86) 814
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 646
Westland helicopters, Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 36
Questions
Aliens, Turkey 484w
Business statement 463, 1100
Childbirth, Aliens 233-4w
Council housing, Management 287-8
Family income supplements, School teachers 397w
Firearms, Heathrow 276w, 484w
Public sector housing, Private investment 220w
South Yemen, Refugees 181-2w
Trade unions, Strike ballots 109w

Marriage 660w

Marriage guidance
Government grants to voluntary organisations 128w, 131-2w

Married people
Marginal tax rates 590w

Married women 390w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 702, 743-5
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 959
Questions
British Airways, Air travel 471-2w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 520-1w
International Garden Festival 1989, Glasgow 548w
Roads, Scotland 647-8w

Martial Arts Commission 273w

Martial arts weapons
Retail trade 273w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 245, 258-61
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 932-3
Drug crimes, Scotland 433

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Poverty, Barnsley (30.01.86) 1186-90
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 628
Multifibre arrangement 277-8w
Wines, Measurement 380-1w

Mass media
Local authorities 298w
School teachers 245w

Mass spectrometers
Export licensing 451w

Maternal mortality
Caesarian sections 386-7w

Maternity benefits 305w
Social security reform 130w, 235w, 307w, 551w, 784-5
Young people 551w

Maternity hospitals
Retail trade 504w

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Agricultural products, Transport (31.01.86) 1249
Horticultural Produce Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1249
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1247
Protection of Military Remains Bill, 2R & rem stages (31.01.86) 1227-8, 1229
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 673, 675-6

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland* (from 23 Jan 1986)
Questions
Teachers, Northern Ireland 407w, 455-6w
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 177

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 960
Questions
Greater Glasgow Health Board, Junior hospital doctors 646-7w
Greater Glasgow Health Board, NHS finance 647w
NHS, Manpower 646w
Patients funds, Scotland 106w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 944

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 45, 50, 54, 61, 74-7
Questions
Defence Select Committee Evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1092-3

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, *Solicitor-General*
Debates etc
Gordon, Sybil, Property transfer (21.01.86) 283-6
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 674

Maynard, Miss Joan
Questions
Bombings, Inquiries 582-3w
Complaints against police 322-3w
Forensic science, Skuse, Frank 583w
Ministers 575w
Prisoners, Hill, Paul 583w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 824, 832-40, 881
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 192-3
Questions
Community care, Dependents 779
Community care, Invalid care allowance 616w
Crown immunity, Ministers correspondence 516w
Drug industry, Limited list prescribing 304w
Drug industry, Procurement 130w
Food hygiene, Hospitals 557w
Health service staff, Regional health authorities 621-6w
Industrial health & safety, Crown lands & estates 516w
Pensions, Costs 619w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 782
State earnings related pension scheme 619w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 619w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 710, 711-5
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 320, 323-5, 326, 327, 337, 338, 389
Questions
Community policing 251w
Manpower Services Commission 116w
Members interests, Members staff 640
Rate support grants, Leeds 292
Rates & rating 221w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 781-2
Social fund, Social security reform 486w
Violence on television, Broadcasting controls 439
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 177-8

Means tested benefits
Student grants 364w

Measurement
Wines 380-1w

Medical education
Midwives 618w
University teachers 82w, 363-4w

Medical examinations
Heathrow 168-9w
Immigration controls 168-9w

Medical profession
University finance 244w

Medical records
Asthma 230w
Patients 554w

Medical rehabilitation
Social security reform 60w, 489w

Medical research
Nicorette 65w

Viral diseases 364w

Medical treatments
Accidents 31w
Epilepsy 548w
Hospital waiting lists 659w
Scotland 548w
Singleton Hospital 31w
X rays 133w

Megginson, Pamela
Prisoners release (29.01.86) 1070-4

Mellor, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 264, 276-80
Megginson, Pamela, Prisoners release (29.01.86) 1071-4
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 603-10
Questions
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Animal experiments 482-3w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Laboratories 482w
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, Public appointments 483w
Animal experiments 173w, 632w
Animal experiments, Animal welfare 215w, 483w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 523w
Animal experiments, Dogs 524-5w
Animal experiments, Draize test 632-3w
Animal experiments, Forensic science 525w
Animal experiments, Licensing 483w, 523w
Animal experiments, Tumours 173w
Animals 268w
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill (HL) 1985/86 251w, 523-4w
Bombings, Inquiries 582-3w
Bombings, Judgments 521w
Burglary, Wolverhampton 581w
Bye laws, Business 482w
Bye laws, Dogs 10w
Community policing 251w
Convictions, Norton, Alan 174w
Corporal punishment, Referenda 9w
Crime, Accountability 441
Crime, Firearms 255w
Crime, Household surveys 440-1
Crime, Punishment 270w
Crime victims 254-5w, 255-6w
Crime victims, Cardiff 216w
Crime victims, Crimes of violence 252w
Crime victims, Injuries 260w
Crimes of violence, Crimes against the person 256w
Crimes of violence, Women 5w, 256-60w
Criminal injuries compensation 6-7w
Criminal injuries compensation, Rape 440
Criminal injuries compensation, USA 440
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 632w
Cruelty to Animals Inspectorate 523w
Custodial treatment, Statistics 261-2w
Detection rates, Criminal investigation 256w
Detention centres 521w
Detention centres, Children in care 521w
Dixon, Claude, Mentally disturbed offenders 633w
Drinking & driving, Driving offences 481-2w
Drug abuse 264w, 520-1w
Drug abuse, Government grants 264-5w
Drug crimes 432-3
Drug crimes, Narcotics 432, 433
Drug crimes, Scotland 433
Drug crimes, Wales 374w
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill 1985/86 267w
Duty solicitors, Strangeways Prison 213-4w
Fraud 266w
Gas safety, Prosecutions 577w
Hallucinogens, Benzodiazepines 177-8w
Holloway Prison 272-3w
Holloway Prison, Prison accommodation 322w
LD50 toxicity test 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Anaesthetics 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Animal cruelty 524w
LD50 toxicity test, Animal experiments 525w
LD50 toxicity test, Drugs 525w
Licensing laws 263w
Magistrates courts, Sentencing 481w
Motor vehicle theft, Greater London 476w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants 175w
Offenders, Age 262w
Parking offences, Diplomatic immunity 372w
Police, Manpower 441
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Costs 374w
Prison employment 169-70w, 216w
Prison population 214-5w
Prison population, Prisoners 214w
Prison staff, Recruitment 442-3
Prison staff, Rudgate Prison 443
Prison staff, Winson Green Prison 443
Prisoners, AIDS 170w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 214w
Prisoners, Exeter Prison 215w
Prisoners, Hill, Paul 583w
Prisoners on remand 253w
Prisoners transfers, Northern Ireland 371w
Prisons, Building repairs 5w
Prisons, Construction 5w, 215w
Prisons, Repairs & maintenance 265w
Racial attacks, Greater London 265w
Rape, Metropolitan Police 582w
Reid, P, Members correspondence 481w
Robbery, Cardiff 262w
Robbery, Metropolitan Police 217w
Robbery, Portsmouth 175-6w, 176-7w
Robbery, Prison sentences 323w
School teachers, Crimes of violence 372w
Sexual offences, Police 170w
Solitary confinement, Hackett, Patrick 371w
Styal Prison 273-4w, 274-5w
Tobacco, Children 177w
Video recordings, Prosecutions 169w
Visiting Forces Act 1952 265w
Womens National Commission, Crimes of violence 268w
Womens prisons, Penal reform 372w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 275w
Young offenders, Fines 260-1w
Youth custody, Ethnic minorities 522w
Youth custody, Suicide 522w

Members
Broadcasting 88w
Scottish Grand Committee 369w

Members allowances
Private Members Bills 4w

Members attendance
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 118

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 136, (23.01.86) 441, 452, 453, 475, (27.01.86) 649, 650, 652, 653, 655, 656, 657, 679, 686, (28.01.86) 794, 795

Members correspondence 195w
Armistice Day ceremonies 373w
Bentley, Barbara 553w
Reid, P 481w
Smith, Gladys 306w

Members giving way
Speakers rulings & statements (29.01.86) 1038

Members interests
Members staff 639-40
Speakers rulings & statements (21.01.86) 209-11

Members Interests Select Committee (21.01.86) 209-11

Members interventions
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 425 (23.01.86) 478, 511, 512, 550, 551, (27.01.86) 760, (29.01.86) 981

Members oath & affirmation (27.01.86) 645, (28.01.86) 815

Members pay 179-82w, 437w

Members speeches (29.01.86) 1046
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 41, 66, 86, (22.01.86) 335, 352, (24.01.86) 564, 613, (27.01.86) 675, (29.01.86) 966

Members staff (24.01.86) 620
Members interests 639-40

Members suspension
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 153-5

Members visits abroad
House of Commons Select Committees 288-90w, 369-70w, 526-7w, 629w
Select Committees 526-7w, 629w

Men
Community programme 118w
Invalid care allowances 612w

Mendocino Book Company 570w
Educational qualifications 570w

Mental Health Act 1983 553w, 559-60w

Mental Health Act Commission
Complaints 786

Mental health community care 498w, 779
East Berkshire Health Authority 779
NHS finance 777-8

Mental health services
Mental patients 778

Mental patients
Community care 496-7w
Hospital readmissions 496-7w
Languages 560w
Mental health services 778

Mental patients rights
Departmental publications 558-9w, 559-60w

Mentally disturbed offenders
Dixon, Claude 633w

Mentally handicapped
Children 492-3w
Special schools 11

Mentally ill
Residential care 498w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Questions
Newcastle College of Law, Student grants 81w
Organ donor cards, Publicity 232w
Reyes syndrome 232w, 387-8w

Merchant seamen
Conditions of employment (22.01.86) 423-9
Immigration controls 7-8w
Warsaw Pact 7-8w

Mercury pollution
Fish 2w
Food contamination 2w
Inland waterways 295w

Mergers
House of Fraser 17w, 380w
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research 12w, 13w
Tourist boards 169

Merionnydd
Nuclear power stations 632

Merseyside
Cervical cancer 613w
Police records 170-1w
Unemployment 112-3w
Urban programme 420w

Merseyside County Council 2w

Merseyside Residuary Body 230w
Public appointments 230w

Merton
Codes of practice 298w
School teachers 245w

Metal Box
Neath 5-6, 9
Redundancy 9

Metrication
Business 380w
Industry 380w

Metropolitan Police 372w
Burglar alarms 631-2w
Burglary 217w
Councillors 526w
Crime prevention 254w
Management 10w, 525-6w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 630-1w
Rape 582w
Recruitment 522w
Robbery 217w
Schools 569-70w
Surveillance 171w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates ect
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 967-8
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 145-7
Questions
Community programme, Conditions of employment 118w
Redundancy, Wales 5
Wales Tourist Board, Government grants 457-8w

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 361, 362, 382, 389
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 874-5
Questions
Airguns, Crime 437
Child care 779-80
Employment 114w
Firearms 269-70w

Microsurgery 483w

Mid Glamorgan
Health services 7
Health services finance 6
Hospitals 11-2
Housing benefits 499w

Middle East
Peace negotiations 427w, 447

Midwives
Manpower 617-8w
Medical education 618w
Pay settlements 617w
Vacancies 618w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 577, 594, 604, 605, 613
Questions
Palestine, UN Relief & Works Agency 642w
Westland helicopters, Lie detectors 143w

Milford Haven Port Authority Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931, (30.01.86) 1076

Military aircraft (31.01.86) 1227-34
Jet Provost aircraft 625w

Military attaches 365w
South Africa 365w

Military exercises
Heathrow 281w

Military police 445w
Ministry of Defence police 445w
RAF Greenham Common 445w

Milk
EC countries 97w
Fluoridation 245w
Production quotas 97w
Schools 245w

Milk Marketing Board 208w
Cheese 208w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 25
Questions
Community programme, Administrative costs 474w
Distillers Company, Takeovers 603w

Millbank
Bus lanes 178w

Miller, Dr M S
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 210
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 592
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 169-70
Unemployment 112w

Mills, Mr Iain
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 720-2
Questions
Pumps, Tyres 454w
Spoil heaps, Ove Arup 465w
Trade marks, Service industries 531w

Mills, Sir Peter
Questions
Rabies, Channel tunnel 401-2w

Minimum wage (28.01.86) 816-8
Vacancies 115w

Mining
Spoil heaps 465w

Ministerial speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (28.01.86) 919

Ministerial statements
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 19-34
EC foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1106-14
"Food Poisoning at Stanley Royd Hospital Report" (21.01.86) 190-202
Local government finance (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75
"Paying for Local Government" (28.01.86) 797-813
South Yemen (21.01.86) 185-9
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 27, 31, (21.01.86) 197, 198, (22.01.86) 355, 356
Westland helicopters (23.01.86) 449-60

Ministers 573w, 574-5w
Brittan, Leon 413w

Ministers correspondence 87w, 149w, 183w, 210-1w, 320-1w, 330w, 355-6w, 382w, 411-2w, (23.01.86) 449-60, 467, 516w, 570w, 574-5w, 585w, 611w, 629-30w, 637w, (27.01.86) 649-90, 790-1
Channel crossing 210-1w
Crown immunity 516w
Disclosure of information 87w, (23.01.86) 449-60, 467, (27.01.86) 646-90
House of Fraser 149w
Postgraduate Certificate of Education 570w
Solicitor-General 87w, 320-1w, 330w, 355-6w, 411w, 585w, 629-30w, 637w
Westland helicopters 183w, 382w, 411-2w

Ministers domestic visits
Bootle job centre 126w
Cambridge science park 569w
Falkirk 546w
Leeds University 434w
Pwllpeiran Experimental Hill Farm 20w

Ministers visits abroad
Warsaw Pact 586-89w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Public relations 286-7w

Ministry of Defence
Advertising 236w, 448w
Environmental health officers 449w
Ethnic minorities 236w, 354w
Housing 297w
Levene, Peter 135w
Public relations 333-4w
Recruitment 236w

Ministry of Defence police 445w
Military police 445w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1048, 1053, 1054
Questions
Helicopters, Defence procurement 641w
Intervention stocks, Butter 533w
Intervention stocks, Humberside 533-4w
Intervention stocks, Lincolnshire 534w
Intervention stocks, Norfolk 534-5w
Intervention stocks, North Yorkshire 535w
Regional development grants, Grimsby 377-8w
Westland helicopters, Company finance 641-2w

Mitchell, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport (from 23 Jan 1986 Minister of State for Transport)*
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 901-4, 906, 916, 919, 920
Merchant seamen, Conditions of employment (22.01.86) 426-9
Questions
British Rail, Channel tunnel 472w
British Rail, Locomotives 385w, 517w
British Rail Engineering, Privatisation 385w
Channel tunnel, Container terminals 516-7w
Channel tunnel, Railway electrification 517-8w, 654w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 518w
Dim-dip headlights, Motor vehicle safety 55-6w
London Country Bus Services Ltd 327w
London Regional Transport, Bus services 55w
London Regional Transport, Government grants 327w
Lorry drivers, Road safety 142w
Public transport, Expenditure 518w
Railway closures, Wortley 56w
Railway electrification, Dorset 472-3w
Railway freight transport, Locomotives 654w
Railway network, Capital investment 385w
Railway sidings, Government assistance to industry 517w
Railway stations, Salisbury 384w, 385w
Railway transport, Channel tunnel 329-30w
Railway transport, Contracts 329w
Road accidents, M4 56w
Stansted Airport, Railway transport 302w

Mobile radios 277w
Broadcasting licences 277w

Mobility allowance
Social security appeals 556-7w
Social security recipients 507w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Monetary agreements
Exchange rates 1091

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
House of Fraser 453w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 25
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 952
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 409-10
Questions
Educational Institute of Scotland, Industrial arbitration 941w
Police, Local authorities in Scotland 932
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 546w
Sea fishing, Prosecutions 519w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 707-11, 713
Questions

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 584w
Uganda, British residents abroad 793

Moore, Rt Hon John, *Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Business expansion scheme, Bed & breakfast accommodation 85w
Capital allowances 407w
Charities, Educational finance 196w
Charities, Private education 196w
Electoral register, Inland Revenue 407-8w
Gas levy 441w
Income tax, Index linking 83w
Income tax, Tax burden 589-90w
Income tax, Tax yields 83w
Income tax, Travel warrants 591w
Inland Revenue, Administrative delays 83w
Marginal tax rates, Single people 590w
Mortgage relief 84w
Mortgage relief, Costs 645w
Mortgage relief, Tax rates & bands 84w
National income, Tax yields 528w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 197w
North Sea oil, Income 442-3w
Oil revenues 408w
Tax thresholds, Civil service manpower 299w
Tax yields 83w, 84w
Tax yields, Football 197w
Tax yields, Sports 197w
Taxation, Personal income 644-6w
Taxpayers 85w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 696, 717-20
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 306w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review, Management 787
Financial institutions, Investment 14w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 61w
Handicap benefits, Social security reform 60-1w
Medical rehabilitation, Social security reform 60w, 489w
Members allowances, Private Members Bills 4w
Mobility allowance, Social security appeals 556-7w
Prosthetics, JE Hanger 306w
Public corporations, Investment 56-7w
Public expenditure 86w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 60w
Residential care, Personal income 60w
South Manchester Health Authority, NHS finance 58w
Special education, Blind 364w
Special education, Deaf 362w
"Trade and Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK" 44w
Transport of radioactive materials, Local authorities 611w
Wythenshawe Hospital, Hospital admissions 57w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 308-9, 310, 311
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 685, 686

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Opencast mining, Planning permission 628
Police, Manpower 441

Morrison, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1202-3
Local government finance (28.01.86) 802
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 88-90
Questions
International organisations, UK contributions 284-5w

Morrison, Mr Peter, *Minister of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc
Tin, Cornwall (24.01.86) 623-6
Questions
CR6 taxis, Production 657w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Northern region 380w
Financial institutions, Investment 14w
Manufacturing industries, Private sector 450w
Nationalised industries, Public appointments 380w, 453-4w
Privatisation 17w
Publishing, USSR 13-4w
Regional aid, Expenditure 279w
Regional development grants 383w
Regional development grants, Grimsby 377-8w
Retail trade, Companies 450-1w

Mortgage interest rates
Owner occupied housing 300, 445
Retail price index 475w

Mortgage relief 84w
Costs 645w
Option mortgages 645w
Tax rates & bands 84w

Motor industry
Crime prevention 476w

Motor insurance 518w

Motor vehicle safety
Dim-dip headlights 55-6w
EC action 329w

Motor vehicle testing 517w, 518w
Greater London 55w
Manpower 54w
Public service vehicles 54w, 55w, 303-4w

Motor vehicle theft
Crime prevention 435
Detection rates 476w
Greater London 476w
Northern Ireland 313w

Motorcycles
Driving tests 611w

Motorways
Interchanges 654-5w
Lighting 328w
Road accidents 328w
Road signs 328-9w
Road works 327w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Questions
Prime Minister domestic visits, Lewisham 573w

Mucodyne
Limited list prescribing 497-8w

Mudd, Mr David
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1026-7
Questions
Drinking & driving, Blood alcohol levels 472w
Drinking & driving, Driving offences 481-2w

Mugging
Elderly 260w

Multifibre arrangement 277-8w

Multiple births 387w

Multiple occupation
Housing standards 222w

Multiple sclerosis 509w

Murdoch, Rupert 1089

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Questions
Arts finance, Eastern Arts Association 18
Capital allowances 407w
Employment, Council of Europe 634w
Job clubs, Hertfordshire 634w
Local authorities, Tenders 336w
Local enterprise agencies, Hertfordshire 600w
Martial arts weapons, Retail trade 273w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 318w

Museums & galleries
England 206w
Geological Museum 193-4w
Natural History Museum 193-4w
Northern Ireland 213w
Scotland 204-5w
Universities 165w
Wales 200w

Musselburgh bypass 600w

Mustard gas 389w, 446w
SS John Harvey 446w
War pensions 389w

M1 328w

M4 56w
Road accidents 56w

M25 328-9w, 654-5w
Interchanges 654-5w
Road signs 328-9w

Narcotics
Drug crimes 432, 433
Young people 504w

National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales 660w
Finance 660w

National Coal Board
Financial targets 638
Haslam, Sir Robert 376w
MacGregor, Ian 637
Public appointments 376w, 636-7

National House Building Council 296w

National income
OECD countries 108-9w
Public expenditure 442w
Tax yields 528w
Taxation 528w

National insurance benefits
Social security benefits rates 505-6w

National insurance contributions
Personal income 644-6w
Tax yields 197w

National Marriage Guidance Council 128w, 131-2w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 131-2w, 175w
Manpower Services Commission 128w

National Museum of Wales 200w, 358w, 359w
Art exhibitions 359w
Exhibitions 358w
Inquiries 359w

National parks
Farmers 223w

National Union of Mineworkers 544w

National Union of Teachers 791
Industrial disputes 456, 791

National Weights & Measures Laboratory 532-3w, 656-7w
Civil service dispersal 656-7w
Civil service manpower 381w, 532-3w

Nationalised industries
Compensation 656w
Finance 442w
Privatisation 17w
Public appointments 380w, 453-4w
Public sector assets 438-40w

NATO
Nuclear weapons 90w
Tactical nuclear weapons 90-1w

Natural Environment Research Council
Government grants 81w

Natural gas
Exports 629-30
Imports 629-30

Prices 630
Self-sufficiency 630

Natural gas production
Land drilling 376w

Natural History Museum 193-4w
Museums & galleries 193-4w

Natural wastage
School teachers 68-9w

Nature Conservancy Council
Forestry 544w

Nature conservation
Departmental circulars 421w

Navy
Armed forces pensions 332w
Frigates 637-8w
Refugees 181-2w

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 5, 643-4
Employment opportunities 637-8
Exhibitions 10
Government grants 643-4
North East region 643-4

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1051, 1057, 1063

Neath
Metal Box 5-6, 9

Needham, Mr Richard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Building industry, Northern Ireland 542w
Building regulations, Northern Ireland 594w
Car parks, Northern Ireland 167w
Cervical cancer, Northern Ireland 541w
Divis flats, Housing improvement 593w
Enterprise zones, Northern Ireland 166-7w
Housing finance, Northern Ireland 541-2w
Housing standards, Northern Ireland 541w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Expenditure 405-6w
Road construction, Belfast 543w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 455-6w

Neighbourhood watch schemes 268w
Camden 297w
London boroughs 630-1w
Metropolitan Police 630-1w
Wolverhampton 581w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 809
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Demonstrations 594w
Baton rounds, West Midlands 269w
British Telecom, Shareholders 16-8w
Death, Elderly 392-4w
Housing investment programmes, Coventry City Council 287
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 784-5
Nationalised industries, Public appointments 380w, 453-4w
News International, Conditions of employment 444
Privatisation 17w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 357w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 66, 99-100

Neonatal mortality
South Lincolnshire Health Authority 344w

Nepal
Christianity 644w
Human rights 644w

Netherlands
Sunday trading 219w

Neurology 230w
Brook Hospital 230w

New blood lectureships 149-52w, 243-4w

New businesses 108w, 110w, 116w

New clauses
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 317

New Commonwealth & Pakistan 233-4w

New towns 220w

Newcastle College of Law
Student grants 81w

Newcastle University 386w
George Brown Collection 386w

Newham
Owner occupied housing 300
Social security claims 60w

News International 444, 1089, 1090, 1092
Conditions of employment 444
Picketing 1092

Newspaper press
Technological change & employment 790
Trades Union Congress 1089

Newton, Mr Tony, Minister of State for Social Security
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 854, 878-81
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 893, 897-8
Questions
Aids for handicapped, ORLAU walking aid 130w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 306w, 391-2w, 786-7
Artificial Limb & Applicance Centres Review, Management 787
Artificial Limb & Applicance Centres Review, Trade unions 391-2w
Attendance allowance, Doctors 614w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Social security benefits rules 782
Board & lodging charges 500w
Community care, Invalid care allowance 616w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 497w
Earnings rules, Elderly 390w
Exceptional needs payments, Social security reform 486w
Family benefits, Social security reform 59w
Family credit 308w
Family credit, Employers attitudes 494w
Family credit, Social security reform 58-9w
Family income, Expenditure 57w
Family income, Low incomes 496w
Family income, Social security reform 487-90w
Family income supplements, Fuel aid 614w
Family income supplements, Social security reform 398w, 552w
Free school meals, Social security reform 307w
Fuel aid, Supplementary benefits 558w
Funerals, Social security reform 498w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 61w
Handicap benefits, Social security reform 60-1w, 231w
Handicapped 507w
Hearing aids, NHS 551w
Hearing aids, Wolverhampton Health Authority 551w
Heating allowances, Social security benefit rules 557-8w
Hospital waiting lists, Hearing aids 62-3w
Housing benefits, Mid Glamorgan 499w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 62w, 343w
Industrial diseases, Asthma 234w
Invalid care allowances 390w
Life insurance, Social security reform 231w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 130w, 235w, 307w
Maternity benefits, Young people 551w
Medical rehabilitation, Social security reform 60w, 489w
Mobility allowance, Social security appeals 556-7w
National insurance benefits, Social security benefits rates 505-6w
NHS, Computer staff 616w
Patients, Accidents 554w
Poliomyalitis 509w
Prosthetics, Contracts for services 392w
Prosthetics, J E Hanger 306w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 486w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper", Social security reform 491w
Refugees, Temporary accommodation 782
Residential care, Elderly 485-6w
Residental care, Fees & charges 553-4w
Residential care, Personal income 60w
Residential care, Social security reform 486-7w
Residential care, Supplementary benefits disregards of income 509-10w
Severe disablement allowance 309w
Severe weather payments 306w
Severe weather payments, Supplementary benefits 63w
Sheltered employment, Handicapped workers 65w
Social fund 231w, 497w
Social fund, Social security reform 486w
Social security, Orders & regulations 308w
Social Security Advisory Committee, Public appointments 389-90w
Social security benefits, Refugees 396w
Social security benefits, Social security reform 307-8w, 505-6w
Social security benefits, Students 491w
Social security benefits rules, Poverty 783
Social security benefits uprating, Board & lodging charges 783
Social security claims, Newham 60w
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 494w
Social security recipients, Tyne & Wear 398w
Standard of living, Families 506w
Standard of living, One parent families 506w
State earnings related pension scheme 619w
State earnings related pension scheme, Pensioners 489w
State occupational pensions, Social security reform 507-8w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 782-3
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional circumstances additions 232-3w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 502w
Supplementary benefits, Students 491w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 619w
"Supplementary Benefits & Residential Care" 499w
Unemployment benefits, Inquiries 494-6w
Vessa Sprint wheelchairs, Safety 59w
War pensions, Housing benefits 491w
Wheelchairs 508-9w

NHS
Computer staff 616w
Computers 389w, 616w
Contracts 130w
Crown immunity 493w
Electroconvulsive therapy 393-4w
Energy conservation 634
Hearing aids 551w
Management 787-8
Manpower 646w
Pharmacies 309w
Pharmacists 309w
Privatisation 616w
X rays 133w

NHS adminstration 231w, 493w, 498w
Nurses 493w
Regional health authorities 396w
Royal College of Nursing 392w

NHS & private practice
Codes of practice 346w

NHS complaints
Clinical judgements 555w, 556w
Doctors 556w
Health Service Commissioner 556w
Ombudsman 554w
Patients 554w

NHS finance
Bexley Health Authority 388w
Capital investment 789
Expenditure 789
Greater Glasgow Health Board 647w
Health services 620-2w
Mental health community care 777-8
Primary health care 658-9w
Regional health authorities 495w
Scotland 574w
South Manchester Health Authority 58w
wales 6-7, 574w

NHS Management Board 231w

NHS Management Inquiry 493w

Nicaragua
Bank loans 20w
Inter-American Development Bank 449w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1014, 1029
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 460
Questions
Untreated milk, Farms 585-6w

Nicorette
Medical research 65w
Smoking 65w

Nimrod aircraft 638-9w
British Aerospace 639w
Defence expenditure 446w
Early warning systems 638-9w

9 Signal Regiment 444-5w
Armed forces discharges 444-5w
Official secrets 445w
Police interrogation 445w

Nitrates
Wales 22w
Water supply 138-40w

Nitrogen oxide 224w

Non-departmental public bodies 146-7w

Non-metropolitan counties
Rate support grants 291, 292-3, 446

Non-metropolitan districts
Local government finance 607w

Norfolk
Intervention stocks 534-5w

Norris, Mr Steve
Questions
Civil defence, Communication 250w
Foreign tourists 271w
Management & Personnel Office, Departmental forms 143w

North Devon
Flood control 401w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 551w
Audiology 551w

North Sea oil
Income 442-3w
Oil prices 473w
Production 473w

North West region
Community programmes 473-5w
District health authorities 495w
Employment schemes 38w
Factory Inspectorate 123w
Family income supplements 58w, 614w
Health services 495w
Training 473-5w
Youth employment schemes 38w

North Yemen
Britannia 180
British residents abroad 180

North Yorkshire
Intervention stocks 535w

Northamptonshire
Enterprise allowance scheme 203w
Youth training scheme 202w

Northern Arts 46w
Art finance 46w

Northern Ireland
Administration of Justice 310w
Agriculture 1083
Armed forces 184-5w, 185-6w
Baker Report 594w
Baton rounds 241-2w, 406w, 636w
Building industry 542w
Building regulations 594w
Car parks 167w
Cervical cancer 541w
Civil servants 596w
Civil servants secondment 596w
Cleaning services 1087
Coal reserves 3w, 1086-7
Compensation 311w
Contraceptives 558w
Criminal injuries compensation 310-1w
Dairy farming 399-400w
EC grants & loans 212w
Emergency powers 594w
Employment 592w
Employment discrimination 213w, 595w
Employment opportunities 635-6w
Enterprise zones 166-7w
Farm incomes 399-400w
Firearms 406-7w, 636-8w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 596w
Foreign investment in UK 593w, 1087, 1088
Government grants 454w, 1083
Grazing land 595w
Hotels 1082
Housing finance 541-2w
Housing standards 541w
Industrial development 593w, 1087
Industrial diseases 407w
Investment 1082
Location of industry 1082
Manufacturing industries 635w
Motor vehicle theft 313w
Museums & galleries 213w
Overseas aid 597w
Paramilitary forces 594w
Pay systems 597-8w
Petroleum exploration licences 3w
Police stations 1086
Political parties 1081
Prisoners transfers 371w
Public expenditure 311w
Religious discrimination 213w
Security 311w, 592w, 1080, 1085
Severe weather payments 595w
Taking & driving away 313w
Teachers 407w, 455-6w
Terrorism 593w, 597w, 1078
Tourism 592w, 1081-2
Travelling expenses 1082
Trials 242w
Unemployment 212-3w, 1087, 1088
USA 597w, 1083
Wages councils 597-8w

Northern Ireland Assembly
Costs 1081
Political parties 592w, 1080-1
Social Democratic & Labour Party 1081

Northern Ireland civil service 596w

Northern Ireland constitution
Anglo-Irish talks 593w, 638, 639

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 311w

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 310-1w, 594w

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 Independent Review 594w

Northern Ireland government
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1077-8, 1085, 1087-8
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 1083-4
Anglo-Irish talks 326w

Northern Ireland house condition survey 541w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Expenditure 405-6w

Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board
Employment opportunities 635-6w

Northern Ireland Office
Civil service manpower 313w
Dept of Trade & Industry 413w
Public relations 314-6w

Northern region
Channel tunnel 183-4
English Industrial Estates Corporation 380w
Jobclubs 174-5
NCB Enterprise Ltd 643-4
Unemployment 12
Slums 227w

Northern Regional Health Authority 495w, 788-9
Health services 788-9
Privatisation 495w

Norton, Alan
Convictions 174w

Nottingham Probate Office (21.01.86) 281-6

Nottinghamshire
Coal mining 629

Noye, Kenneth 171w

Nuclear accidents
Hinkley Point B 99-100w
Information 243w
Nuclear power stations 97-8w

Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 250-1w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Fast reactors 3w
Plutonium 3-4w
Prototype fast reactors 3-4w
Transport of radioactive materials 3w
Uranium 4w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Nuclear test ban 643w

Nuclear power
Electricity generation 632-3
France 644
Sizewell Inquiry 632

Nuclear power stations
Electricity generation 644
Hinkley Point B 97-8w
Magnox reactors 632
Merionnydd 632
Nuclear accidents 97-8w
Nuclear safety 243w
Sizewell Inquiry 377w

Nuclear safety
House of Commons questions 563w
Magnox reactors 375w
Nuclear power stations 243w

Nuclear submarines 627w
Rosyth dockyard 627w

Nuclear test ban
Arms control 642w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 643w
Seismic monitoring 643w
USSR 643w

Nuclear war
Casualties 269w

Nuclear weapons
Arms control 643w
NATO 90w

Nuclear weapons tests
Arms control 643w

Nursery schools
School population 77w

Nurses
Management 3, 182-3, 392w, 448, 788
NHS administration 493w

Pay settlements 617w
Wales 3

Nursing homes 65-6w
Elderly 485-6w
Fires 349w
Licensing 485w
Social security reform 486-7w

Nutrition & health
Children 330w
School meals 330w

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Questions
Butter, Food surpluses 536w

Oberon class submarines 353-4w

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 207w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 808
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 194
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 628
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Leeds 394w
Nurses, Management 182-3

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill 1985/86
2R (24.01.86) 556-619

Obscenity
Television (24.01.86) 556-619

Occupational asthma 234w

Occupations
Open University 189-90w
Self-employed 634-6w

OECD countries
National income 108-9w

Offenders
Age 262w

Offices
Procurator fiscal service 337w
Woolwich Arsenal 136w

Official hospitality 144w
10 Downing Street 144w

Official receptions
10 Downing Street 413w

Official secrets
Keays, Sara 253w
9 Signal Regiment 445w
Parkinson, Cecil 253w

Oil
Domestic Wastes 294

Oil prices 408w
Industrial energy prices 631
North Sea oil 473w
Sterling 793

Oil revenues 408w

Older workers
Employment opportunities 175-6
Unemployment 113w

Oldham Hospital 498w
Hip replacements 498w

Ombudsman
NHS complaints 554w

One parent families
Standard of living 506w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 956

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1055-8, 1063, 1068
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 455
Questions
Fish conservation, Fishing gear 340w
Members correspondence 195w
Nursing homes 65-6w
Palace of Westminster, Theft 317-8w

Open University
Costs 73-5w
Degrees 73-5w
Occupations 189-90w
Student numbers 155-6w, 189-90w, 190-2w
Summer schools 74w

Opencast mining
Greater Manchester (20.01.86) 161-6
Lough Neagh 542-3w
Planning permission 628
Productivity 631

Ophthalmology
Hospital waiting lists 549-50w
Regional health authorities 549-50w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Questions
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill (HL) 1985/86 251w
Child care, Research 490w
Food prices, Price increases 536w
Local government services, Privatisation 303

Opposition days
Agricultural policy (29.01.86) 1010-45
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 979-1009
Gartcosh steelworks (23.01.86) 468-509
Interest rates (29.01.86) 979-1009
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1010-45
Schools (23.01.86) 510-46

Option mortgages
Mortgage relief 645w

Oral contraceptives
Young people 494w

Oral questions
Speakers rulings & statements (27.01.86) 641, (29.01.86) 948, (30.01.86) 1089

Orders & regulations
Social security 308w
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 397

Ordination of women 13

Organ donor cards 232w
Publicity 232w

ORLAU walking aid
Aids for handicapped 129w, 130w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
Domestic energy conservation, Expenditure 350w
Electricity tariffs 375w
Industrial energy prices, Oil prices 631
National Coal Board, MacGregor, Ian 637
Sizewell Inquiry 633

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1131

Outer London boroughs
Rate support grants (31.01.86) 1250-8

Ove Arup 465w
Spoil heaps 465w

Overseas aid 20w, 285w
British Council 286w
Contingency reserve 284w
Expenditure 283-4w
Interest rates 319w
Northern Ireland 597w
Sudan 285w

Overseas loans
Interest rates 319w

Overseas students
Student numbers 155-6w

Overseas trade
Balance of trade 657-8w

Overseas workers
Airport security 582w
Libyan Arab Republic 582w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
South Yemen (21.01.86) 187
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 306, 307, 310
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 658-61
Westland helicopters, Minister correspondence (23.01.86) 454
Questions
European monetary system 445

Owner occupied housing 224w, 304
Inner city areas 299, 300
Mortage interest rates 300, 445
Newham 300
Young people 300

Oxfam
Government grants 283w

Oxford University 153w
Higher education admission 153w

Ozal, Turgut 280w

Page, Sir John
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 670
Questions
Bus lanes, Millbank 178w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 715-7

Paisley
Youth training scheme 945

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Palace of Westminster
Telephones 629w
Theft 317-8w

Palestine
Refugees 642w
UN Relief & Works Agency 642w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
Peace negotiations 447

Palinauris Investments 589w
Shareholders 589w
Tristan da Cunha 589w

Paper industry
Scotland 938

Paracetamol
Death 61-2w

Paramilitary forces
Northern Ireland 594w
Ulster Defence Regiment 351w

Parental contributions
Student grants 71-3w

Parish councils 295
Accountability 294-5
Cherwell District Council 46w
Local government expenditure 295
Rates & rating 294-5

Park, Mr George
Questions
Council housing, Coventry City Council 288
Rates & rating 221w

Parking
Local government reform 56w
Pedestrian areas 56w

Parking offences
Diplomatic immunity 372w

Parkinson, Cecil 253w
Official secrets 253w

Parks
Dogs 10w

Parliament Square 178w

Parliamentary constituencies
Employment opportunities 41-3w

Unemployment 357w

Parliamentary papers
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 35, 37, (21.01.86) 205, (23.01.86) 460, 461

Parliamentary privilege
Speakers rulings & statements (21.01.86) 207

Parole Board (29.01.86) 1070-4

Parris, Mr Matthew
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 713, 734-7
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 905, 908, 909, 917
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 561, 601

Parrot Corporation
Inquiries 8, 9

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 593w
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill 1985/86 267w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 247-8w
Entry clearances, Indian subcontinent 271-2w
Immigration officers, Indian subcontinent 247w
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 435-6w
Takeovers, GEC 184w
Takeovers, Plessey 15w
Unemployment, Merseyside 112-3w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 501w

Part-time employment 168
Agricultural workers 425w
Community programme 121-2w
Employment 168
Wales 359w
Womens employment 167-8

Passport control channels 577-8w
Airports 577-8w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
Community care 777-8
Crime, Accountability 433-4

Patent Office 146-7w

Patients
Accidents 554w, 555w
Compensation 491-2w, 554w, 555w
Hospital consultants 554w
Medical records 554w
NHS complaints 554w

Patients funds 106w
Leverndale Hospital 106w
Scotland 106w

Patients rights 558-9w, 559-60w

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Education & Science
Questions
Art education, Manpower 634w
Curriculum, Schools 319w
Education of children at home, Children in care 363w
Educational finance, Expenditure 69-70w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 362w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Costs 433w
Higher education teachers, Pay 82w, 362-3w
Postgraduate Certificate of Education, Ministers correspondence 570w
Religious education, Schools 633w
"School Libraries" 165-6w
School meals, Child care 245w
School meals, Education support grants 244-5w
School meals, Educational finance 318-9w
School teachers, Merton 245w
School teachers, Natural wastage 68-9w
School teachers, Private education 78w
School teachers, Redundancy 363w
Schools, Metropolitan Police 569-70w
Teacher training, Cruelty to children 433w
Teacher training, Student grants 244w
Teachers 428w
Teachers, Contracts of employment 433w
Vocational training, EC countries 78w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State for the Environment (Housing, Urban Affairs & Construction)
Questions
Armed forces housing Maidenhead 297w
Council house sales 223w
Council house sales, Empty housing 300
Council house sales, Leicester 301
Council house sales, Southwark 136-7w, 137-8w
Council housing, Capital investment 223-4w
Council housing, Management 287-8
Council housing, Market value 512w
Derelict land, Land reclamation 607-8w
Fish farming, Legislation 48w
Flats, Defective housing 605w
Flats, Housing benefits 605-6w
Homelessness, Housing 608w
House renovation grants, Government grants 301
Housing & Planning Bill 1985/86 606-7w
Housing cooperatives, Inner city areas 300-1
Housing improvement, Langbaurgh 296w
Housing improvement, Leicester 301
Housing investment programmes, Coventry City Council 287
Housing stock 220w
Inland waterways, Mercury pollution 295w
Local authorities, Empty housing 468w
Local authorities, Housing investment programmes 469w
Local authorities, Rent arrears 471w
Local government staff, Council tenants 468w
Owner occupied housing, Inner city areas 299, 300
Owner occupied housing, Newham 300
Public sector housing, Private investment 220w
Rent increases, Housing subsidies 470w
Sewers 48w
Urban development grants, Langbaurgh 296w
Urban programme, Government grants 415-6w
Urban programme, Greater Manchester 294-5w
Water supply, EC law 140w
Water supply, Lead pollution 138w
Water supply, Nitrates 138-40w
Water supply, Pollutants 138w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, Minister of State for Information Technology
Questions
Aerospace industry, Market share 18-9w
Airbuses, Government assistance to industry 379w
British Standards Institution, Companies 378w
British Telecom, Shareholders 16-8w
Counterfeit manufacturing 18w
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 382w
Ministers correspondence, Westland helicopters 382w
Patent Office 146-7w
Post Office, External financing limits 147w
Postal services, Gwynedd 13w
Press releases, Dept of Trade & Industry 383w
Press releases, Westland helicopters 382w
Trade marks 14w
Trade marks, Scotch House 14w
Trade marks, Service industries 531w
Unfair competition, Airbuses 379w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1224-5
Hearing Aid Council Act 1968 (Amendment) Bill, 1R (31.01.86) 1195
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1238-41
Questions
Agricultural research, Soils 642
Audiology, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 551w
Business statement 1098
Dentistry 500w
Doctors, Declarations of interest 346w
Hearing Aid Council, Public appointments 378w
Nurses, Management 448
Tobacco industry, Advertising codes of practice 786
Zambia, Educational aid 526w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Questions
Government grants 576w
Police, Research 322w
Public sector earnings, Pay comparability 409-10w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 1088

Pay (30.01.86) 1114
Agricultural workers 342w, 425w
Civil defence 250w
Community programme 121-2w
Doctors 82w
Educational finance 69-70w
Higher education teachers 82w, 362-3w
Hospital ancillary staff 494w
House of Commons staff 179-82w
Kent, Juliet 475w
School teachers 78w
Speech therapists 63w, 307w
Teachers 571-4w, 941
Unemployment 4, 126w
University teachers 82w, 244w, 363-4w
West Midlands police 370-1w
Young people 174

Pay comparability
Public sector earnings 409-10w

Pay deductions 597-8w

Pay differentials
Teaching hospitals 230-1w

Pay review bodies 599w
Teachers 942

Pay settlements
Ambulance services 552w
Costs 172-3
Local government staff 22w
Manufacturing industries 173
Midwives 617w
Nurses 617w
Top Salaries Review Body 173

Pay systems
Northern Ireland 597-8w

Payi, Clarence 528w

"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper" (28.01.86) 797-813, (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75
Ministerial statements (28.01.86) 797-813

Peace camps
RAF Greenham Common 276w

Peace negotiations
Iran-Iraq war 427w
Middle East 427w, 447
Palestine Liberation Organisation 447
Peres, Shimon 447

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Dept of Employment, Civil service manpower 358w
Dept of Employment, Training 603w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Training 381w
Student grants, Means tested benefits 364w
Teacher training, Educational finance 364-5w

Peacock Committee see BBC Advertising & Sponsorship Review

Pearce, Austin 135-6w, 281-2w

Pearson Committee see Civil Liability & Compensation for Personal Injury Royal Commission

Pearson Report 556w

Peas
Plant diseases 403-4w, 404-5w, 585w
Seeds 585w

Pedestrian areas
Parking 56w

Penal reform
Womens prisons 372w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 856-9, 860
Questions
Health Services, NHS finance 620-2w
Sports Council, Finance 295

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1010-16
Tin, Cornwall (24.01.86) 621-3, 625
Questions
Apprentices 123w
Family credit, Employers attitudes 494w
Sunday trading 269w

Pensioners
Standing charges (22.01.86) 315-6
State earnings related pension scheme 489w
Television licences 266w

Pensions
Costs 619w
Crown Agents 377w
Gibraltar 449-50w
Investment 445

Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 565-7, 574, 575
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 679-80

Peres, Shimon 179, 447
Peace negotiations 447
Prime Minister official engagements 179

Perinatal mortality
Health services 2
South Lincolnshire Health Authority 344w
Welsh Office 2

Personal income 444w
Assisted places scheme 101w
National insurance contributions 644-6w
Residential care 60w
Taxation 644-6w

Personal property
Drug crimes (21.01.86) 241-80

Personal records
Television licences 576-7w

Personal savings
Social security reform 231w

Pest control
Birds 1w
Bracken 340-1w, 405w
Licensing 1w

Pesticides
Asulox 340-1w
Bracken 341w
Food & Environment Protection Act 1985 103w
Scotland 103w

Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
Order for consideration read (23.01.86) 431, (30.01.86) 1076

Petroleum exploration 376w
Land drilling 376w
Wells 376w

Petroleum exploration licences
Northern Ireland 3w

Petroleum production 376w

Phantom aircraft 449w
Air accidents 449w

Pharmaceutical Society 309w

Pharmacies 309w
NHS 309w

Pharmacists
NHS 309w

Physics
Student numbers 318w
Universities 318w

Picketing
News International 1092

Pickup 70-2w
Administrative costs 70-2w
Educational finance 70-2w

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 78, 84-8
Wages Council Orders Enforcement Bill, 1R (28.01.86) 816-8
Questions
National Coal Board, Public appointments 636-7
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 435-6w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 291-2
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 486w
Youth training scheme, Finance 120w

Pilkingtons
St Helens 631

Piroxicam
Drug hazards 618-9w
Drug side effects 499-500w, 617w

Pitman, Sue 9w
Injuries 9w
Inquiries 9w

Plain English 119w, 143w
Departmental leaflets 119w

Planning
Planning authorities 302-3
Welsh Office 14-5

Planning appeals
Wales 239-40w

Planning authorities
Planning 302-3

Planning inquiries
Sports administration 227w
Tillinghall 296-7

Planning permission
Change of use 136w
Opencast mining 628
Rochford District Council (31.01.86) 1195

Plant diseases
Peas 403-4w, 404-5w, 585w

Plant power
Bracken 349-50w, 377w
Research 349-50w
Wales 322-3w

Plastic bullets
Complaints against police 406w
Injuries 241-2w, 636w
Northern Ireland 241-2w, 406w, 636w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 406w
West Midlands 269w

Play facilities
Scotland 204w

"Pleasure Leisure & Jobs" 169
Tourism 169

Plessey
Takeovers 15w, 279-80w

Plunkett Foundation 526w

Plutonium
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 3-4w

Plymouth dockyard 45w

Point of Ayr 638
Coal liquefaction 638

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 34, (22.01.86) 293, (28.01.86) 794, 795-6

Police
Cardiff 216-7w
Empty housing 578w
Ethnic minorities 442
Finance 263w
Hampshire 264w
Local authorities in Scotland 932
Manpower 216-7w, 270w, 435, 441, 931-2
Recruitment 442, 522w
Rent allowances 632
Research 322w
Rural areas 932
Scotland 931-2
Scottish islands 591w
Sexual offences 170w
Solihull 579-80w
Strathclyde 932
Taxation 632w
Telecommunications technology 322w
West Midlands 269w, 370-1w, 578w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 373-4w
Costs 373-4w
Magistrates courts 374w
Police authorities 373-4w

Police authorities
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 373-4w

Police civilians 273w, 370-1w

Police community liaison committees 251-2w
Community policing 251-2w

Police Complaints Authority 322-3w

Police discipline
Prosecutions 519w
Scotland 519w

Police equipment 263w

Police firearms 173w, 443-4

Police informers
Evidence 241w, 242w
Students 525w

Police interrogation
9 Signal Regiment 445w

Police raids
Lloyd, Angela 171w

Police records 171w
Lothian 204w
Merseyside 170-1w

Police stations
Building repairs 1086
Northern Ireland 1086
Royal Ulster Constabulary 167w

Police training
Firearms 443-4
Human rights 323w

Police vehicles
Death 6w, 932
Road accidents 6w, 932

Policewomen
Manpower 7-8w

Poliomyelitis 509w

Political advertising (22.01.86) 317-96

Political affiliations 526w
London boroughs 526w

Political impartiality 252w
Chief constables 252w

Political levy
Publicity 38w

Political parties
Northern Ireland 1081
Northern Ireland Assembly 592w, 1080-1

Political prisoners
Sakharov, Andrei 445-6
USSR 246w
Wallenberg, Raoul 246-7w

Political refugees 276w

Polkemmet bing 634-5
Air pollution 634-5

Pollock, Mr Alexander
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 954
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 546w
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 933
Industrial development, Scotland 937-8
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 642
Reckless driving, Prosecutions 519-20w

Pollutants
Water supply 138w

Pollution control
Wastes 512w

Polytechnics
Educational finance 318w
Local education authorities 318w
Staff-student ratios 570-2w

Pontypridd Markets Fairs & Town Hall Bill 1985/86
2R* (28.01.86) 777

Poole Borough Council Bill (HL) 1984/85
3R* (21.01.86) 167

Pornography
Children (24.01.86) 556-619

Port Glasgow
Supplementary benefits 619w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 85, 124

Portillo, Mr Michael
Questions
Natural gas, Imports 629-30
Security, Northern Ireland 592w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 135-6w

Porton Down 449w
Animal experiments 449w

Ports
Container terminals 516-7w
Immigration controls 169w

Ports of entry 373w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 373w

Portsmouth
Armed forces housing 649w
Rights of way 53w
Robbery 175-6w, 176-7w
St Marys House 53w, 420w
Unemployment 115w

Portsmouth dockyard 92w
Apprentices 92w

Portugal
Sunday trading 218w, 324w

Post Office
External financing limits 147w

Postage stamps
British dependent territories 642w

Postal services
Gwynedd 13w

Postgraduate Certificate of Education 570w
Ministers correspondence 570w

Postgraduate students
Student grants 157-8w

Poverty
Barnsley (30.01.86) 1186-94
Social security benefits rules 783
West Midlands (28.01.86) 924-30

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 154
Questions
Coal mine closures, Wales 10
Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 793-4
Parrot Corporation, Inquiries 8
Wages councils, Young people 173-4

Powell, Mr William
Questions
Council house sales, Corby District Council 47-8w
Derelict land grants, Corby 229w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Northamptonshire 203w
Trade unions, Strike ballots 109w
Urban programme, Corby 228-9w
Youth training scheme, Northamptonshire 202w

Powley, Mr John
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 811
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 93
Questions
Gibraltar, Pensions 449-50w
Rate support grants, Non-metropolitan counties 292-3

Pre-school education 435w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Merchant seamen, Conditions of employment (22.01.86) 428
Questions
Employment schemes, North West region 38w
Family income supplements, North West region 58w
Industrial health & safety, Accidents 178
Unemployment, Statistics 171-2
Youth employment, Industries 39-40w

Prescription drugs
Limited list prescribing 557w

Prescriptions
Costs 507-8w

Press Association 355w

Press conferences
Speakers rulings and statements (30.01.86) 1114

Press releases
Dept of Trade & Industry 383w
Westland helicopters 382w, 412w

Pressurised water reactors
Sizewell B 644
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 644

Prestwick Freeport Company
Scottish Development Agency 938

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 584w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 805
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 42, 66-70
Questions
Channel crossing, British Council of British Shipping 210-1w
Electroconvulsive therapy, NHS 393-4w
Invalid care allowances 390w
Medical research, Viral diseases 364w

Price controls
Funerals 320w, 384w

Price increases
Food prices 536w

Prices
House of Commons souvenirs 640-1
Natural gas 630

Primary education
Local authorities in Scotland 939

Primary health care
Consultation papers 616w
District health authorities 658-9w
NHS finance 658-9w

Prime Minister 792
Gifts 89w, 280w
Israel 142w, 179
Public appointments 281w
Railway transport 187-8w
Railway travel 573w
Westland helicopters 585w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Lewisham 573w

Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 280w, 411w, 435-6w, 573-4w
Peres, Shimon 179
Shamji, Abdul 86w
Young people 181-2

Prime Minister visits abroad
Brunei 280w

Prime Ministers Office 382w, 409-10w, 410-1w, 575-6w, 637w
Ingham, Bernard 411w
Public relations 409-10w, 410-1w
Resignations 575-6w
Westland helicopters 411w

Prime Ministers questions
Speakers rulings & statements (23.01.86) 448, (30.01.86) 1092

Printing industry
HMSO 591w

Prior, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 130

Prison accommodation
Holloway Prison 322w

Prison employment 169-70w, 216w

Prison hospitals
Prisoners 238w

Prison population 214-5w
Prisoners 214w

Prison sentences
Robbery 323w

Prison staff
Recruitment 442-3
Rudgate Prison 443
Winson Green Prison 443

Prisoners
AIDS 170w
Drug crimes 214w
Exeter Prison 215w
Hill, Paul 583w
Legal aid & advice 213-4w
Prison hospitals 238w
Prison population 214w
Punishment 371w
South Africa 528w
Thailand 144w

Prisoners on remand 253w
Exeter Prison 215w
Terrorism 241w

Prisoners release
Megginson, Pamela (29.01.86) 1070-4

Prisoners transfers
Fulbourn Hospital 633w
Northern Ireland 371w

Prisons
Building repairs 5w
Construction 5w, 215w, 442-3
Contracts 5w
Repairs & maintenance 5w, 265w

Private Bills
Speakers rulings & statements (29.01.86) 961-3, (30.01.86) 1075

Private education
Charities 196w

School teachers 78w
Wales 197w

Private health services
Abortion 504-5w
Dentistry 500w

Private investment
Channel tunnel 448
Inner city areas 422-3w
Public sector housing 220w
Urban planning 227w

Private Members Bills
Members allowances 4w
Speakers rulings & statements (24.01.86) 620, (31.01.86) 1234

Private Members motions (23.01.86) 467

Private rented housing 415w

Private sector
Company finance 451w
Manufacturing industries 450w
Residential care 305-6w

Private sector housing
South East region 221w

Privatisation 17w
Admiralty Surface Weapons Establishment 640w
Apprentices 334w
British Airports Authority (27.01.86) 691-768
British Rail Engineering 385w
Coal mining 628
Defence research establishments 640w
Devonport dockyard 639-40w, 640-1w
Dockyards 627w, 639w
Local government services 303, 511w
Nationalised industries 17w
NHS 616w
Northern Regional Health Authority 495w
Public expenditure 441w
RNAS Yeovilton 638w
Welsh Development Agency 8, 359-60w
Welsh Water Authority 360w

Procedure Select Committee (30.01.86) 1185

Proceeds of crime 100-1w, (21.01.86) 241-80
Drug crimes 100-1w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey:
Questions
Arts finance, Charitable donations 15
Mental Health Act Commission, Complaints 786
Planning inquiries, Tillinghall 296-7
Security, Northern Ireland 1080

Procurator fiscal service
Offices 337w

Procurators fiscal 470w
Kirkcaldy 470w

Procurement
Drug industry 130w
Locomotives 385w

Production quotas
Milk 97w

Productivity
Agriculture 655w
Coal mining 376w, 627-8, 629
Opencast mining 631

Professional industrial & commercial updating 70-2w

Professional misconduct 555w
Doctors 555w
Family doctors 555w
Hospital doctors 555w

Professional qualifications
Agricultural workers 208-9w

Property development
Dorset 302-3
Greenbelt 297

Property transfer (21.01.86) 281-6
Greater London Council 471w
Kenwood house 298w

Property values 12w

Prosecutions
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdesalem 354-5w
Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 519w
Gas safety 577w
Lotus Cars 1082-3
Police discipline 519w
Reckless driving 519-20w
Sea fishing 519w
Tobacco 177w
Video recordings 169w

Prosthetics
Companies 392w
Contracts for services 392w
JE Hanger 306w

Protection of Military Remains Bill 1985/86
2R & rem stages (31.01.86) 1227-34

Protection of Minimum Retirement Age Bill 1985/86
1R (21.01.86) 212-4

Prototype fast reactors
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 3-4w

Public appointments
Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments 483w
Animal experiments 483w
British Overseas Trade Board 148w
Church Commissioners 399w
Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment 660-1w
Hearing Aid Council 378w
Levene, Peter 135w
Merseyside Residuary Body 230w
National Coal Board 376w, 636-7
Nationalised industries 380w, 453-4w
Prime Minister 281w
Regional health authorities 501w
Social Security Advisory Committee 389-90w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 360w

Public bodies 298-9

Public buildings
Crown immunity (29.01.86) 976-8
Smoking (29.01.86) 975

Public corporations
Commercial secrets 56-7w
Investment 56-7w

Public expenditure 86w, 646w
Association of Chief Police Officers 173-4w
Compensation 656w
Education 566-70w
National income 442w
Northern Ireland 311w
Privatisation 441w
Wales 23-32w

"Public Expenditure White Paper" 415w, 566-70w

Public footpaths 466w
Coastal areas 140w
Costs 466w
Devon 140w
Wales 457w

Public Health Inquiry (21.01.86) 190-202

Public inquiries
Eye bypass 329w
Ironbridge bypass 465w

Public opinion
Conservative Party 447

Public order
Scotland 947-8

Public order offences
Scotland 325-6w

Public order policing 438

Public petitions
Baltic Wharf (31.01.86) 1195
Human embryo experiments (24.01.86) 555

Public Record Office
Disclosure of information 640w
SS John Harvey 640w

Dept of Education & Science 245w
Dept of Employment 282-4w
Dept of Energy 243w
Dept of the Environment 295w
Dept of Trade & Industry 278-9w, 383w
Dept of Transport 302-3w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 248w
Home Office 275-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 286-7w
Ministry of Defence 333-4w
Northern Ireland Office 314-6w
Prime Minister Office 409-10w, 410-1w
Treasury 299-300w
Welsh Office 240-1w

Public sector
Energy conservation 634

Public sector assets
Income 438-40w
Nationalised industries 438-40w

Public sector earnings
Pay comparability 409-10w

Public sector housing
Building repairs 414w
Private investment 220w

Public sector housing sales
Empty housing 302

Public service vehicles 54w, 55w, 303-4w
Motor vehicle testing 54w, 55w, 303-4w
Wales 55w, 303w

Public transport
Expenditure 518w
Greater London (28.01.86) 901-23

Publicity
Civil defence 249w
Civil service manpower 240-1w, 243w, 245w, 248w, 282-4w, 286-7w, 295w, 333-4w, 383w
Drinking & driving 302w
Family income supplements 58w
Farmers lung 358w, 369w
Local government expenditure (22.01.86) 317-96
Organ donor cards 232w
Political levy 38w

Publishing
USSR 13-4w

Pumps
Tyres 454w

Punishment
Crime 270w
Forfeiture 270w
Industrial health & safety 602w
Prisoners 371w
Tobacco industry 786

Pupil-teacher ratios
Blind 430w
Deaf 430w
Local education authorities 538-42w
Wales 21w, 197-8w

Pupils
Antismoking campaign 58w
Crimes of violence 372w
Diets 575w
Free school meals 70w

Pwllpeiran experimental hill farm
Ministers domestic visits 20w

Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 59-62
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 840-3, 879

Quality control
Companies 378w

Queen Marys Hospital, Sidcup (27.01.86) 770-6

"Questions of Procedure for Ministers" (21.01.86) 207

Rabies
Channel tunnel 401-2w

Race relations
Rate support grants 222w

Racial attacks 265w
Crime prevention 265w
Greater London 265w

Racial discrimination
Accountants 182w, 217-8w
Commission for Racial Equality 217w

Radiation hazards
Hinkley Point B 99-100w

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Student grants 361w
Student grants, Travel grants 245w
University finance, University Grants Committee 243-4w

Radio broadcasting licences
Anniversaries 484-5w

Radio frequencies
Cancer hazards 437w
Glengarry forest 437w

Radio Times 409-10w

Radioactive waste disposal
Irish Sea 650w, 656w

Radiography
Cancer hazards 133w

RAF Greenham Common 181, 276w, 445w, 530-1w
Espionage 181
Military police 445w
Peace camps 276w
Security 181, 354w, 530-1w
USSR 181

RAF Laarbruch 93w

RAF Molesworth
Security 181

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 269-72
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 971
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 141, 149-51
Questions
Community hospitals, Wales 3
Delyn enterprise zone, Land use 9-10
Health services finance, Wales 200-1w

Railway closures
Wortley 56w

Railway electrification
Channel tunnel 517-8, 654w
Dorset 472-3w

Railway engineering 385w, 932-3

Railway freight transport
Locomotives 654w

Railway network
Capital investment 385w
Channel tunnel 518w

Railway sidings
Government assistance to industry 517w

Railway stations
Salisbury 384w, 385w
Waterloo 329-30w

Railway transport
Channel crossing 329-30w, 472w
Contracts 329w
Prime Minister 187-8w
Stansted Airport 302w

Railway travel
Prime Minister 573w

Raise the Standard 362w
British Deaf Association 362w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Questions
Bilateral aid 19-20w
Centre for World Development Education, Government grants 285-6w
County review programmes 285w
Crown Agents, Pensions 377w
India, Defence contracts 201w
International Council of Scientific Unions, UK contributions 286w
International organisations, UK contributions 284-5w
Nicaragua, Bank loans 20w
Overseas aid 20w, 285w
Overseas aid, British Council 286w
Overseas aid, Contingency reserve 284w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 283-4w
Overseas aid, Interest rates 319w
Save the Children Fund, Governmental grants 283w
Sudan, Overseas aid 285w
UNESCO 108w

Ramashula, Theresa 526w

Rape
Crime victims 440
Criminal injuries compensation 440
Metropolitan Police 582w
West Midlands 582w

Rate fund contributions 53-4w, 462-4w
Wales 461-2w, 462-4w

Rate increases 221w

Rate precepts
Sea fishing 2w

"Rate Support Grant (England) Report, 1986/87" (20.01.86) 38-135

"Rate Support Grant (England) Supplementary Report, 1984/85" (20.01.86) 38-135

"Rate Support Grant (England) Supplementary Report, 1985/86" (20.01.86) 38-135

Rate support grant penalties 294-5
District councils 295

Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 397-422

"Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87" (20.01.86) 136-60

Rate support grants (20.01.86) 38-135, 222-3w
Arfon 22w
Birmingham 222w
Cumbria 175
Government grants to local authorities 288-9, 291-2, 446
Hampshire 140w
Leeds 289, 292
Local authorities in Scotland 546w
Local government expenditure 293
Local government reform 289
Non-metropolitan counties 291, 292-3, 446
Outer London boroughs (31.01.86) 1250-8
Race relations 222w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 294w
Scotland (22.01.86) 397-422
Sefton 293
Successor authorities 289-90
Sutton (31.01.86) 1250-8
Wales (20.01.86) 136-60

Rates & rating (20.01.86) 38-135, 136-60, 180, 221w, (22.01.86) 317-96
Agricultural land 937-8
District heating 641
Dorset 292
Electricity area boards 466w
Empty housing 223w
Empty property 339w
Enterprise zones 650w
Local income tax 290-1
London boroughs 51w
Manufacturing industries 938-9
Parish councils 294-5
Rugby 599w
Scotland (22.01.86) 397-422, 543w, 544w, 599w, 934
Small businesses 934-5
Social security recipients 494w
Social security reform 494w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Arts finance, Charitable donations 15
Drug abuse 520-1w
Drug abuse, AIDS 551-2w
Educational publications, AIDS 244w

Ravenscraig Steelworks 544w, 935
Dalzell 936
Employment 544w
Factory closures 935-6
Glencosh 936

Rayner Review see work of Government Departments Review

Reagan, President 279-80w

Re-Chem
Government assistance to industry 20w

Reckless driving
Death 519-20w
Prosecutions 519-20w

Recruitment
Ethnic minorities 442
Industry 85-6w
Metropolitan Police 522w
Ministry of Defence 236w
Police 442, 522w
Prison staff 442-3
Ulster Defence Regiment 351w, 352w

Red alerts 413w, 449w
Armed forces deployment 413w, 449w

"Red Herrings" 522w
Television programmes 522w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Ministers correspondence, Solicitor-General 356w
Torture, UN Convention on Torture 366w

Redundancy
Agricultural workers 48-50w
British Rail Engineering 932-3
Building industry 542w
Coal mining 5, 10, 637-8
Higher education teachers 78w
Lanarkshire 938
Manufacturing industries 937
Metal Box 9
Royal ordnance factories 448w, 628w
School teachers 363w
Scotland 938
Sites of special scientific interest 48-50w
Speech therapy 502w
Teachers 407w
Wales 5

Redundancy pay 635w, (30.01.86) 1114

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 198-9
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 671-4
Westland helicopters, Ministers correspondence (23.01.86) 454
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland government 1077
British Amateur Rugby League Association, Rugby 296

Rees, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 22

Referenda
Capital punishment 9w
Corporal punishment 9w

"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 65w, 231w, 398w, 486-7w, 487-90w, 491w, 494w, 498w, 507-8w
Social security reform 491w

Refugees 172-3w, 276w
Navy 181-2w
Palestine 642w
Social security benefits 396w
South Yemen 181-2w
Temporary accommodation 782

Regional aid
Energy costs 544-5w
Expenditure 279w
Unemployment 123w

Regional arts associations 18

Regional development grants 383w
Administrative delays 107w
Grimsby 377-8w
Wales 107w

Regional health authorities
Crown immunity 502-3w
Health service staff 621-6w
NHS administration 396w
NHS finance 495w
Ophthalmology 549-50w
Public appointments 501w
Trade unions 501w

Regional planning & development
Scotland 544-5w

Regional selective assistance 383w

Registered homes 485w

Reid, P 481w
Members correspondence 481w

Religious discrimination
Northern Ireland 213w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 326w
Short Brothers 1089
Ulster Defence Regiment 351w

Religious education
Schools 633w

Rent allowances
Police 632w

Rent arrears
Local authorities 471w

Rent increases
Housing subsidies 470w
Scottish Special Housing Association 564w

Renton, Mr Tim, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Chemical weapons, Arms control 643w
Five continents peace initiative 642w
Hong Kong, GATT 642w
Iran-Iraq War, Peace negotiations 427w
Iran-Iraq War, Shipping safety 426w
Israel 426w
Israel, Foreign policy 426w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 427w
Nuclear test ban, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 643w
Nuclear test ban, Seismic monitoring 643w
Nuclear test ban, USSR 643w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 643w
Palestine, UN Relief & Works Agency 642w
Warsaw Pact, Ministers visits abroad 586-89w

Repairs & maintenance
Prisons 5w, 265w

Repatriation
Foreign students 373w

Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (22.01.86) 422

Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (22.01.86) 422

Representation of the People (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1985 (22.01.86) 422

Reprography
Government departments 298-9w

Republic of Ireland
Extradition 33-4w
Sunday trading 219w
Terrorism 33w
USA 1083
Weapons 1089

Rescue services
Lee on Solent 446w
Stornoway 304w

Research
Blind 427-9w
Child care 490w
Crime victims 252w
Deaf 427-9w
Defence research 91w
Domestic wastes 294
Export controls 146w
Manpower 76w
Plant power 349-50w
Police 322w
Speech therapy 501-2w
Waste management 293-4

Research assistants
House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1047-69

Research councils 165w
Research finance 79-80w

Research finance 432w
Agricultural research 940
Defence research 82w
Energy research 374w
Research councils 79-80w
Science & technology research 82w, 194-5w, 432w
Universities 81w

Residential care 65-6w
Board & lodging charges 60w, 485w, 781-2
Elderly 485-6w, 509-10w, 781
Fees & charges 553-4w
Licensing 485w
Mentally ill 498w
Personal income 60w
Private sector 305-6w
Social security reform 486-7w
Social workers training 781
Supplementary benefits 60w, 499w, 502w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 509-10w

Resignations
Cabinet Office 575-6w
Prime Ministers Office 575-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment 351w, 352w

Resource Allocation Working Party 389w

Retail price index
Mortgage interest rates 475w

Retail trade
Companies 450-1w
Martial arts weapons 273w
Maternity hospitals 504w

Retirement age (21.01.86) 212-4

Retirement pensions
Costs 660w

Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) (No 2) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 397-422

"Review of Child Care Consultation Paper" 779-80

"Review of Social Security White Paper" 343w

Reyes syndrome 232w, 387-8w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 804
Questions
Cambridge science park, Ministers domestic visits 569w
Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 538w
Defence research, Research 91w
Higher education teachers, Pay 82w, 362-3w
Leeds University, Ministers domestic visits 434w
Research councils 165w
Research finance 432w
Science & technology research, Research finance 82w, 194-5w, 432w
Science & technology, Educational finance 434w
Social Security Advisory Committee, Public appointments 389-90w
Social security benefits, Students 491w
Student grants 73w
Universities, Museums & galleries 165w
Universities, Student numbers 194w

Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 852-6
Social Security Bill, Money res (28.01.86) 895-6, 897
Questions
National insurance benefits, Social security benefits rates 505-6w
Personal income 444w
Social security benefits, Social security reform 505-6w
Social security recipients 506w
Standard of living, Families 506w
Standard of living, One parent families 506w
State occupational pensions, Social security reform 507-8w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 455-6w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 559, 589-95
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 866, 871-4
Questions
Home helps, Social Services Inspectorate 493-4w
Maternity benefits, Social security reform 785

Rickets
Scotland 368w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 691-700, 708, 733
Channel tunnel, Ministerial statements (20.01.86) 19-34
Questions
Air transport, Competition 518-9w
Channel crossing, British Council of British Shipping 210-1w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 302w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Transport 212w
Exports, Libyan Arab Republic 608-9w
Fisheries, Accidents 609-10w
Local government reform, Dept of Transport 141w
Motorways, Lighting 328w
Motorways, Road works 327w
Parking, Local government reform 56w
Public corporations, Investment 56-7w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 302-3w
Rescue services, Stornoway 304w
Road traffic offences 301w
Transport of hazardous materials 55w
Transport of radioactive materials, Local authorities 611w
Woolwich ferry, Local government reform 54w

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 24
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 84

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc
Local government finance, Ministerial statements (29.01.86) 949-60

Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 397-403, 405
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 103w
Agriculture, Scotland 546w
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 101w
Deficiency diseases, Scotland 368w
Drug crimes, Scotland 100-1w
Economic policy, Scotland 545w
Educational Institute of Scotland, Industrial arbitration 941w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 937
Examinations, Scotland 101-2w
False imprisonment, Scotland 237-8w
Industrial development, Scotland 937-8, 938-9
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 544w
List D schools, Scotland 368w
Local authorities in Scotland, Youth training scheme 598w
Local government finance, Scotland 934
Local income tax, Scotland 934-5
Members, Scottish Grand Committee 369w
Ministers domestic visits, Falkirk 546w
Paper industry, Scotland 938
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 546w
Rates & rating, Scotland 543w, 934
Redundancy, Scotland 938
Rent increases, Scottish Special Housing Association 546w
Rural areas, Scotland 369w
School meals, Scotland 238-40w
School transport, Scotland 239-40w
Scottish Development Agency, Industrial development 937
Scottish Development Agency, Prestwick Freeport Company 938
Scottish Grand Committee, Security 438w
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 941, 942-3
Youth training scheme, Scotland 598-9w

Right of abode
British overseas citizenship 246w

Right to buy 224w

Rights of way
Portsmouth 53w

Riot control weapons 266w

Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 21

River Crouch (31.01.86) 1195

RNAS Yeovilton 638w
Privatisation 638w

Road accidents
Buses 56w
East Lothian 103w
Fees & charges 388w, 654w
Motorways 328w
M4 56w
Police vehicles 6w, 932

Road construction
Belfast 543w
Cost benefit analysis 301-2w
Crofting 369w
Thorney bypass 329w

Road safety
Lorry drivers 142w

Road signs
Motorways 328-9w
M25 328-9w

Road traffic
A1 11-2w

Road Traffic Act 1972 654w

Road traffic offences 301w
Traffic lights 277-8w

Road Traffic Regulation (Parking) Bill 1985/86
2R order read (24.01.86) 620

Road works 647-8w
Information 327w
Motorways 327w

Roads
Addington Square 611w
Construction costs 543w
Expenditure 563-4w
Leeds 384w
Mandela, Nelson 246w
Scotland 647-8w
Wales 563-4w

Robbery
Cardiff 262w
Life imprisonment 323w
Metropolitan Police 217w
Portsmouth 175-6w, 176-7w
Prison sentences 323w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 317-8, 324, 331-2
Questions
Business statement 1099
Local government expenditure, Voluntary organisations 297
Ministers domestic visits, Bootle job centre 126w
Rate support grants, Sefton 293
Stockbridge Village Trust, Government grants 419w–20w
Urban programme, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council 416-20w
Urban programme, Merseyside 420w

Roberts, Mr E[illegible]
Questions
AIDS, Screening 64-5w
National Association of Health Authorities in England & Wales, Finance 660w

Roberts, Mr Wyn, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1033
Questions
A5, Anglesey 457w
Bypasses, Anglesey 529-30w
Cost per pupil, Wales 198w
Environmental policy, Wales 108w
Higher education, Wales 564w
Hospital bed occupancy rates, West Glamorgan Health Authority 456-8w
Museums & galleries, Wales 200w
Public footpaths, Wales 457w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Wales 21w, 197-8w
Re-Chem, Government assistance to industry 20w
Roads, Wales 563-4w
School population, Wales 197w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 360-1w, 564-5w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, Public appointments 360w
Wales Tourist Board 530w
Wales Tourist Board, Government grants 457-8w
Wales Tourist Board, "Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK" 458w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1106-7
Questions
Iron & Steel industry, Scotland 544w, 935-6
Warsaw Pact, Ministers visits abroad 585-89w

Robinson, Mr Mark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 463-5w
Community hospitals, Clwyd 2
Community hospitals, Wales 3
Council house sales, Wales 107w
Council housing finance, Wales 459-62w, 462-4w
Dysentery, Wales 359w
Handicapped pupils, Wales 11
Health services, Mid Glamorgan 7
Hospital closures, Wales 3
Hospital consultants, Wales 3
Hospitals, Mid Glamorgan 11-2
Hospitals, Wales 2
Housing, Managers 565w
Housing, Wales 458-60w
Housing construction, Wales 198-9w
Housing Corporation, Wales 199w, 200w
Housing subsidies, Wales 461-2w
Infant mortality, Wales 1-2, 21w
Local government staff, Wales 22w
NHS finance, Wales 6-7
Nitrates, Wales 22w
Nurses, Wales 3
Perinatal mortality, Welsh Office 2
Planning appeals, Wales 239-40w
Rugby, South Africa 513w
Singleton Hospital, Medical treatments 31w
Water supply, Lead pollution 530w
Welsh Office, Planning 14-5
Welsh Water Authority, Privatisation 360w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Rochford District Council (31.01.86) 1195
Planning permission (31.01.86) 1195

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Industrial diseases, Asthma 234w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 125w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 151
Questions
Bishops, Social problems 13
Defence Select Committee evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1091
Gleneagles Agreement 467w
Health services, Mid Glamorgan 7
Hospitals, Mid Glamorgan 11-2

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
Business expansion scheme, Bed & breakfast accommodation 85w
Council housing, Market value 512w
Dogs, Environmental health 338w
Exceptional needs payments, Birmingham 59w
Flats, Defective housing 605w
Flats, Housing benefits 605-6w
Funerals, Price controls 320w, 384w
Homelessness, Housing 608w
Housing improvement, Langbaurgh 296w
Kent, Juliet, Pay 475w
Local authorities, Housing investment programmes 469w
Local authorities, Empty housing 468w
Local government staff, Council tenants 468w
Public sector housing sales, Empty housing 302
Retail price index, Mortgage interest rates 475w
Toxocara canis, Children 345w
Urban development grants, Housing finance 337w
Urban development grants, Langbaurgh 296w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 22
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 44, 45, 46, 52, 115-6
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland constitution 593w
Bombings, Judgments 521w
Compensation, Northern Ireland 311w
Crime, Armed forces 184-5w
Crime, Ulster Defence Regiment 185-6w
Criminal injuries compensation, Northern Ireland 310-1w
De Lorean, Factories 454w

Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 213w
Interest rates, Small businesses 446
Mental Health Act 1983 553w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Expenditure 405-6w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 241-2w
Police informers, Evidence 241w, 242w
Public appointments, Levene, Peter 135w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 311w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Expenditure 213w
Security, Northern Ireland 311w
Taking & driving away, Northern Ireland 313w
Tucano aircraft 235-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Costs 331w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 212-3w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 801
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 391-2w

Rost, Mr Peter
Questions
District heating, Rates & rating 641
Energy conservation, Public sector 634
Youth training scheme, Derbyshire County Council 283w

Rosyth dockyard 45w, 91-2w, 93-4w, 334w, 627w, 639-40w, 640-1w
Apprentices 91-2w, 93-4w, 334w
Capital investment 627w
Commercial management 639-40w, 640-1w
Manpower 92w
Nuclear submarines 627w
Shipbuilding 627w
Teachers 92w
Trident 627w

Roundhouse
General consents 52w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 29
Questions
Criminal injuries compensation, USA 440
Departmental circulars 421w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 1087
Higher education, Industry 148-9w
Sites of special scientific interest, Codes of practice 421w
Social workers training, Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 397w
"Supplementary Benefits & Residential Care" 499w
Youth training scheme, School teachers 176-7

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
Anthracite, South Wales 632
Berlei 4
Energy conservation, NHS 634

Royal College of Nursing 392w
NHS administration 392w

Royal Festival Hall 17
Management 17

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore 496w
Bloomsbury Health Authority 496w

Royal National Throat Nose & Ear Hospital 551w

Royal ordnance factories
Redundancy 448w, 628w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Baton rounds 406w
Expenditure 213w
Manpower 326w
Police stations 167w
Religious discrimination 326w
Social Democratic & Labour Party 1080

Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve 636-8w

RRS John Biscoe
British Antarctic Survey 81w

Rudgate Prison 274-5w
Prison staff 443

Rugby 642w
British Amateur Rugby League Association 296
Rates & rating 599w
South Africa 513w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 328-31, 339-40, 372-3, 376-8
Rate support grants, Sutton (31.01.86) 1254-8
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1016-22
Questions
Camping sites, Licensing 47w
Codes of practice, Merton 298w
Departmental circulars 421w
Direct labour departments 297w, 511w
Dogs, Environmental health 338w
Empty housing, Rates & rating 223w
Local authorities, Tenders 336w
Local government finance, Capital investment 296w
Local government services, Privatisation 303, 511w
Local government staff, Manpower 228w
Local income tax 228w
Parish councils 295
Parish councils, Cherwell District Council 46w
Public footpaths 466w
Public footpaths, Costs 466w
Rate increases 221w
Rate support grant penalties, District councils 295
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 288-9
Rate support grants, Hampshire 140w
Rate support grants, Leeds 289
Rate support grants, Race relations 222w
Rate support grants, Successor authorities 289-90
Rates & rating 221w
Rates & rating, Electricity area boards 466w
Rates & rating, Parish councils 294-5
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Rate support grants 294w
Sites of special scientific interest, Codes of practice 421w
Sites of special scientific interest, Expenditure 227w
Sites of special scientific interest, Redundancy 48-50w
Waste disposal, Local government reform 51w, 52w
Waste management 512w

Rural areas
Government grants 369w
Health services finance 6
Hospitals 3
Opposition days (29.01.86) 1010-45
Police 932
Scotland 369w

Ryder, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 997-9

Ryman, Mr John
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1203, 1207, 1220
Oral question time point of order (28.01.86) 794-5
Questions
Business statement 466
Durham, Bishop, Social problems 12
Special Branch 438
Westland helicopters, Church Commissioners 14

SACEUR 90-1w

Sackville, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 248, 266-7
Questions
Housing insulation, Voluntary organisations 374-5w

Safety
British residents abroad 793
Holiday play schemes 204w
Vessa Sprint wheelchairs 59w

Safety standards
Hospital catering 502w

St Helens
Housing insulation 633
Pilkingtons 631

St John-Stevas, Rt Hon Norman
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 459
Questions
House of Commons Select Committees, Evidence 1091-2

St Marys House 53w, 420w
Listed buildings 53w
Portsmouth 53w, 420w

St Olaves St Thomas & St Johns Charities (23.01.86) 547-54

Sakharov, Andrei
Political prisoners 445-6

Salisbury
Railway stations 384w, 385w

Salop
Hospital bed occupancy rates 397w, 661-2w

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 293-4w
Defective housing 293-4w
Housing investment programmes 294w
Rate support grants 294w

Save the Children Fund 283w
Government grants 283w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Private Bills, Members interests (29.01.86) 962
Questions
Neighbourhood watch schemes 268w

School buildings
Construction 78-9w

School closures
Grove School 82w
Scotland 368w, 939-40

School discipline
HM Inspectorate of Schools 363w

School governors
Educational finance 193w

School leaving
Social security benefits disqualification 127-9w
Youth training scheme 43w, 79w

"School Libraries" 165-6w

School meals
Child care 244-5w
Education support grants 244-5w
Educational finance 318-9w
Free school meals 434w
Local government expenditure 318-9w
Nutrition & health 330w
School teachers 245w
Scotland 238-40w

School population 428w
Blind 429w
Deaf 429w
Nursery schools 77w

Secondary education 245w
Wales 197w

School teachers
Crimes of violence 372w
Early retirement 68-9w
Family income supplements 397w
Mass media 245w
Merton 245w
Natural wastage 68-9w
Pay 78w
Private education 78w
Redundancy 363w
School meals 245w
Youth training scheme 176-7

School transport
Educational finance 69w
Scotland 239-40w
Travel concessions 239-40w
Travelling expenses 69w

Schools
Blind 429w
Curriculum 319w
Deaf 429w
Drug abuse 345w
Educational finance 187-8w
Houston 939-40
Metropolitan Police 569-70w
Milk 245w
Opposition days (23.01.86) 510-46
Religious education 633w

Schools & parents
Industrial disputes 428w

Schwarz, Isabel
Death 786

Science & technology
Educational finance 434w

Science & technology research
Research finance 82w, 194-5w, 432w

Science budget 194-5w

Science education
College closures 361w
University Grants Committee 142w

Science parks 569w

Scope of debate
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 320, 323, 332, 337, 349, 366, (24.01.86) 577, (29.01.86) 972

Scotch House 14w
Trade marks 14w

Scotland
Advisory services 940
Agricultural advisory services 103w
Agricultural research 940
Agriculture 321w, 546w
Alcoholism 545w
Assisted places scheme 101w
Breathalysers 945-6
Coal mining 375w, 544w, 635-6
Crown immunity 205w
Debt collection 629w
Deficiency diseases 368w
Drinking & driving 321w, 520-1w, 946
Driving offences 321w
Drug crimes 100-1w, 433
Economic policy 545w
Economic situation 546w, 939
Employment opportunities 937
Examinations 101-2w
False imprisonment 237-8w
Family income supplements 614w
Fish farming 321w
Health services 545w
Hospital doctors 646w
Hypothermia 548-50w
Industrial development 937-8, 938-9
Industrial diseases 369w
Iron & steel industry 169-70, (23.01.86) 468-509, 544w, 935-6
Land reclamation 368w
Legionnaires disease 548w
List D schools 368w
Local government finance 934, (29.01.86) 949-60, 964-75
Local income tax 934-5
Location of industry 937
Medical treatments 548w
Museums & galleries 204-5w
NHS finance 574w
Paper industry 938
Patients funds 106w
Pesticides 103w
Play facilities 204w
Police 931-2
Police discipline 519w
Public order 947-8
Public order offences 325-6w
Rate support grants (22.01.86) 397-422
Rates & rating (22.01.86) 397-422, 543w, 544w, 599w, 934
Redundancy 938
Regional planning & development 544-5w
Rickets 368w
Roads 647-8w
Rural areas 369w
School closures 368w, 939-40
School meals 238-40w
School transport 239-40w
Sea fishing 519w
Skoal Bandits 547w
Student numbers 573w, 600w
Teachers 183, 545w, 546w, 599w, 941, 942-3
Unemployment 544w
Veterinary investigation service 103w
Veterinary services 425w
Youth training scheme 598-9w, 944-5

Scott, Mr Nicholas, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, 1079
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Demonstrations 594w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland government 1087-8
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 593w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 1079-80
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland constitution 593w
Armagh Prison, Body searches 314w
Associated British Foods, IRA 1079
Baker Report, Northern Ireland 594w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 636w
Baton rounds, Royal Ulster Constabulary 406w
Border security in Ireland, Terrorism 1078-9
Compensation, Northern Ireland 311w
Criminal injuries compensation, Northern Ireland 310-1w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 592w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland, Border security in Ireland 1088-9
Firearms, Northern Ireland 406-7w, 636-8w
Museums & galleries, Northern Ireland 213w
Northern Ireland, Political parties 1081
Northern Ireland Assembly, Costs 1081
Northern Ireland Assembly, Political parties 592w, 1080-1
Northern Ireland Assembly, Social Democratic & Labour Party 1081
Paramilitary forces, Northern Ireland 594w
Police stations, Northern Ireland 1086
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Expenditure 213w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 326w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Religious discrimination 326w
Security, Northern Ireland 311w
Taking & driving away, Northern Ireland 313w
Weapons, Republic of Ireland 1089

Scott Lithgow 446-7w
Defence contracts 446-7w

Scottish Development Agency
Industrial development 937
Prestwick Freeport Company 938

Scottish Grand Committee
Costs 369w
Members 369w
Security 369w, 438w

Scottish health boards
Contracts for services 947

Scottish islands 547w, 591w
Agriculture 547w
EC grants & loans 547w
Police 591w

Scottish National Farmers Union 546w
Agriculture 546w

Scottish Office
Dept of Health & Social Security 947

Scottish Special Housing Association 546w
Rent increases 546w

Scottish Tourist Board 44-5w

Scottish Trades Union Congress 544w, 546w

Screening
AIDS 64-5w
Breast cancer 64w, 133w
Cervical cancer 541w, 613w

Sea fishing
Prosecutions 519w
Rate precepts 2w
Scotland 519w

Sea pollution
Fisheries 656w

Search warrants 171w

Second reading
Speakers rulings & statements (24.01.86) 620

Secondary education
School population 245w

Secondary Heads Association 570w

Secure tenancies
Homelessness 608w

Security
Air transport 301w
Exercise Brave Defender 354w, 530-1w
Northern Ireland 311w, 592w, 1080, 1085
RAF Greenham Common 181, 354w, 530-1w
RAF Molesworth 181
Scottish Grand Committee 369w, 438w

Security guards
Licensing 10w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 208
Private Bills, Members interests (29.01.86) 961-2
Questions
Hepker, Michael, Company accounts 183-4w
Hepker, Michael, Criminal investigation 187w
Hepker, Michael, Johnson Matthey 184w, 187w
Home helps, Departmental circulars 493w
Johnson Matthey 187w
Rates & rating 221w

Seeds
Peas 585w

Sefton
Rate support grants 293

Seismic monitoring 643w
Nuclear test ban 643w

Select Committee evidence
House of Commons Select Committees 287w
Speakers rulings & statements (21.01.86) 207

Select Committee reports 289-93w
House of Commons Select Committees 289-93w

Select Committees 287-8w, 288-90w, 289-93w, 369-70w
Civil servants 575w
Members visits abroad 526-7w, 629w
Speakers rulings & statements (30.01.86) 1114
Temporary staff 178w
Westland helicopters 575w

Self-employed 118w, 168
Availability for work 202w
Manpower 634-6w
Occupations 634-6w

Self-mutilation 273w

Self-regulatory system 147-8w
Financial institutions 147-8w

Self-sufficiency
Natural gas 630

Sentencing
Crimes of violence 435
Drinking & driving 946
Magistrates courts 481w

Service industries
Trade marks 531w

Service marks 531w

Severe disablement allowance 309w

Severe weather payments 21-2w, 63w, 208w, 306w, 595w
Government grants 208w
Northern Ireland 595w
Supplementary benefits 63w
Wales 21-2w

Sewers 48w

Sexual offences
Police 170w

Shamji, Abdul 86w
Prime Minister official engagements 86w

Shareholders
British Telecom 16-8w
Church Commissioners 14
Palinauris Investments 589w
South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation 367w
Westland helicopters 641-2w

Shaw, Mr Giles, Minister of State for the Home Department
Questions
Airguns, Arms trade 437
Airguns, Crime 436, 437
Association of Chief Police Officers, Public expenditure 173-4w
BBC 253w
BBC Advertising & Sponsorship Review 253w
Baton rounds, West Midlands 269w
Burglar alarms, Houses & false alarms 631-2w
Burglar alarms, Metropolitan Police 631w
Channel Islands, Defence 174-5w
Civil defence 251w
Civil defence, Broadcasting 438-9
Civil defence, Communication 250-1w
Civil defence, Emergency planning 250w
Civil defence, Expenditure 578w
Civil defence, Handbooks 250w
Civil defence, Local authorities 250w, 251w
Civil defence, Pay 250w
Community policing, Police community liaison committees 251-2w
Complaints against police 322-3w
Courts, Basildon 266w
Crime prevention 253-4w
Crime prevention, Burglar alarms 254w
Crime prevention, Expenditure 171-2w
Crime prevention, Metropolitan Police 254w
Crime prevention, Motor industry 476w
Crime prevention, West Midlands 581w
Crimes of violence, Women 170w
Criminal investigation, Tottenham 176w
Educational institutions, Fire Precautions Act 1971 434w
European Court of Human Rights, Isle of Man 9w
Fire regulations, Hostels 214w
Firearms 269-70w
Firearms, Crime 322w
Firearms, Inquiries 437
Groce, Cherry, Complaints against police 521w
Horse racing 583w
Local government reform, Home Office 175w
Local radio, Ethnic minorities 580w
Local radio, Greater London 276w, 579-80w
Local radio, Licensing 9-10w
Martial arts weapons, Retail trade 273w
Metropolitan Police, 372w
Metropolitan Police, Councillors 526w
Metropolitan Police, Management 10w, 525-6w
Metropolitan Police, Recruitment 522w
Metropolitan Police, Surveillance 171w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 268w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Metropolitan Police 630-1w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Wolverhampton 581w
Nuclear war, Casualties 269w
Pitman, Sue, Injuries 9w
Police, Empty housing 578w
Police, Finance 263w
Police, Hampshire 264w
Police, Manpower 216-7w, 270w
Police, Recruitment 522w
Police, Rent allowances 632w
Police, Research 322w
Police, Solihull 579-80w
Police, West Midlands 269w, 370-1w, 578w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Costs 373-4w
Police civilians 273w
Police equipment 263w
Police firearms 173w
Police raids, Lloyd, Angela 171w
Police records 171w
Police records, Merseyside 170-1w
Police training, Human rights 323w
Policewomen, Manpower 7-8w
Racial attacks, Crime prevention 265w
Riot control weapons 266w
Road accidents, Police vehicles 6w
Road traffic offences, Traffic lights 277-8w
Security guards, Licensing 10w
Sussex police, Manpower 633w
Television licences 177w
Television licences, Electoral register 521w
Television licences, Pensioners 266w
Television licences, Wales 9w
Television programmes, "Red Herrings" 522w
Thames Valley police 167w
Thames Valley police, Manpower 267w
Violence on television 266-7w
Violence on television, Complaints 266w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (28.01.86) 795
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1049-50, 1055, 1063, 1064-5
Questions
Handicapped 507w
Manpower Services Commission, Youth training scheme 120w
Poliomyelitis 509w
Prescriptions, Costs 507-8w
Small businesses, Bureaucracy 44w
Wheelchairs 508-9w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Energy conservation, NHS 634
Scottish Development Agency, Industrial development 937

Shells
Defence contracts 448w
Defence procurement 627-8w
FH70 howitzers 627-8w

Sheltered employment
Handicapped workers 65w
Social security reform 65w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1060, 1061-3
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1014

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 196
Questions
Hospital catering, Industrial health & safety 345w
Ministry of Defence, Environmental health officers 449w

Sheriffs
Smith, David 321w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1167-8
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 108-9

Shipbuilding
Defence procurement 447w
HMS Endurance 90w
Industrial training 45w, 129w
Rosyth dockyard 627w
Submarines 353-4w
Vacancies 45w

Shipping
Flags of convenience (22.01.86) 423-9

Shipping safety
Iran-Iraq war 426w

Shop hours 269w

Shop staff
Young people 173-4

Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 269w, 436w
Sunday trading 182

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, House of Commons Select Committees 639

Shoreham Port Authority Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931, (30.01.86) 1076

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 808-9
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 556, 564, 566, 571, 574, 578, 580, 581,582, 587, 588, 591, 594-5, 601, 602, 613, 614-5
Questions
Community programme 118w
Inner city partnerships, Government grants 225-6w
Ulster Unionists 1085
Wages councils, Young people 174

Short, Mrs Renée
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 843-5
Questions
Burglary, Wolverhampton 581w
Community care, Local government social services 778-9
Crime prevention, West Midlands 581w
Dental charges, Advertising 500w
Educational finance, Further education 537w
Health service staff, Vacancies 389w
Hearing aids, Wolverhampton Health Authority 551w
Housing benefits, Wolverhampton 612-3w
Invalid care allowances, Men 612w
Job start scheme 282w
Job start scheme, Income tax assessment 475w
Kidney patients, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 344w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 126w
Midwives, Manpower 617-8w
Midwives, Vacancies 618w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Wolverhampton 581w
NHS, Computer staff 616w
NHS, Computers 616w
Nurses, Pay settlements 617w
Perinatal mortality, South Lincolnshire Health Authority 344w
Police, West Midlands 370-1w, 578w

Postgraduate Certificate of Education, Ministers correspondence 570w
Rape, Metropolitan Police 582w
Regional health authorities, NHS Administration 396w
Science education, College closures 361w
Staff-student ratios, Universities 570-2w
Student grants 361w
Student numbers, Physics 318w
Teacher training, Student grants 244w
Turkey, Human rights 280w
Unemployment, Ethnic minorities 325w, 475w
University finance, London University 571w
University finance, Medical profession 244w

Short Brothers 94w, 543w, 1089
Manpower 543w
Religious discrimination 1089
Sikorsky helicopters 543w
Technical assistance 543w

Sick pay
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 549w

Sikorsky helicopters 543w
Short Brothers 543w

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1050-5, 1060

Silvester, Mr Fred
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 698, 735, 754-5
Local government finance (28.01.86) 808
Questions
Border security in Ireland, Terrorism 1079
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 592w
Urban programme, Greater Manchester 294-5w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1204-8, 1220-1
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1237-8
Questions
Tobacco industry, Advertising codes of practice 785

Singh Toor, Tarsem
Death 790

Single people
Marginal tax rates 590w

Singleton Hospital 31w
Medical treatments 31w

Sites of special scientific interest 299
Codes of practice 421w
Environment protection 298-9
Expenditure 227w
Redundancy 48-50w

Sitting tenants 47-8w, 103-5w, 223w
Council house sales 47-8w, 103-5w

Sizewell B
Pressurised water reactors 644

Sizewell Inquiry 377w, 632, 633
Nuclear power 632
Nuclear power stations 377w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Questions
Business statement 463
Gas pipelines, Western Europe 630

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Business question intervention (30.01.86) 1104
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 28
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 209
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1111-2
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 983
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 319-21, 322, 329
Local government finance (28.01.86) 812
Oral question time intervention (28.01.86) 784
Parliamentary privilege, Select Committee evidence (21.01.86) 207
South Yemen (21.01.86) 188
Standing Order No 10 applications (28.01.86) 814
Statutory Instruments Standing Committees (22.01.86) 305
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 307, 310, 312
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 653, 657, 662, 684
Westland helicopters, Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 36
Questions
Business statement 1104
Northern Ireland, Political parties 1081
Pay settlements, Top Salaries Review Body 173
Prime Minister, Gifts 89w
Television licences, Pensioners 266w
Unemployment 111w

Skoal Bandits 304-5w, 547w, (31.01.86) 1235-46
Health hazards 304-5w
Scotland 547w
Young people 547w

Skuse, Frank 583w
Forensic science 583w

Slums
Northern region 227w

Small businesses 110w
Bureaucracy 44w, 110w
Industrial health & safety 44w
Interest rates 180, 446
Management techniques 110w
Rates & rating 934-5
Training 110w
Venture capital 110w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc
Local government finance (28.01.86) 806
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 579, 581, 593-4, 607, 610-2
Questions
Council housing, Housing improvement 603-4w
Family credit, Social security reform 58-9w
Housing estates 465w
Owner occupied housing, Inner city areas 300
Radio frequencies, Glengarry forest 437w
Urban development grants, Housing finance 336w
Urban housing renewal unit, Conflict of interests 604w
Water supply, Lead pollution 138w, 530w
Water supply, Pollutants 138w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Questions
Ambulance services, Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 552w

Smith, David 321w
Sheriffs 321w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Crime prevention, Burglar alarms 254w
Members correspondence, Bentley, Barbara 553w
Passport control channels, Airports 577-8w
Waste management 512w

Smith, Gladys 306w
Members correspondence 306w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 680-3

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Financial institutions, Self-regulatory system 147-8w
Student grants, Higher education 66-8w

Smith Committee see Resource Allocation Working Party

Smith houses 293-4w
Leicester 301

Smoking
Nicorette 65w
Public buildings (29.01.86) 975

Smoking related diseases 503w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 696, 710, 721, 729, 734, 756-9, 760
Channel crossing (20.01.86) 33
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 908, 909
Questions
Prime Minister, Railway travel 573w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Defective housing 293-4w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Housing investment programmes 294w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Rate support grants 294w
Unemployment, West Bromwich 115w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Airport security, Gatwick 384w
Defence 625w
Early warning systems, Nimrod aircraft 638-9w
EC Agricultural Council, Beef & veal 209-10w
Horse racing 583w
Small businesses, Management techniques 110w
Sussex Police, Manpower 633w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 592w
Trident 637w
Trident, Testing 637w

Social class
Death rate 346w

Social Democratic & Labour Party
Northern Ireland Assembly 1081
Royal Ulster Constabulary 1080

Social deprivation 388w
District health authorities 388w

Social fund 231w, 486w, 497w
Finance 486w
Social security reform 486w

Social problems
Bishops 13
Durham, Bishop 12

Social security
Orders & regulations 308w

Social security abuse
Civil service manpower 358w, 397w
Dept of Health & Social Security special investigators 397w, 620w
Electoral register 553w
Specialist claims control units 550w

Social security adjudications 613w
Social security reform 613w

Social Security Advisory Committee 389-90w
Public appointments 389-90w

Social security appeals
Mobility allowance 556-7w

Social security appeals tribunals 64w
Information 553w

Social security benefits (28.01.86) 819-87
Expenditure 497w
Immigrants 552w
Refugees 396w
Social security reform 307-8w, 505-6w
Students 491w

Social security benefits disqualification
Housing benefits 343w
School leaving 127-9w
Youth training scheme 127-9w

Social security benefits rates
National insurance benefits 505-6w

Social security benefits rules
Bed & breakfast accommodation 782
Heating allowances 557-8w
Poverty 783

Social security benefits uprating 489w
Board & lodging charges 783

Social Security Bill 1985/86
2R (28.01.86) 819-87
Money res (28.01.86) 888-89

Social security claims
Newham 60w
Social security reform 60w

Social security recipients 506w
Ben Rabha, Salah Abdessalem 397w
Debt collection 63w
Dependents 779
Disclosure of information 63w
Handicap benefits 61w
Mobility allowance 507w
Rates & rating 494w
Standing charges (22.01.86) 315-6
Supplementary benefits 455-6w
Travelling expenses 394w
Tyne & Wear 398w

Social security reform 58-9w, 60-1w, 65w, 130w, 231w, 235w, 307w, 308w, 343w, 364w, 398w, 486w, 491w, 497w, 498w, 499w, 507-8w, 551w, 552w, 613w, 784-5, (28.01.86) 819-87, (30.01.86) 1186-94
Employment rehabilitation 489w
Exceptional needs payments 486w
Family benefits 59w
Family credit 58-9w
Family income 487-90w, 506w
Family income supplements 398w, 552w
Free school meals 307w
Funerals 498w
Handicap benefits 60-1w, 231w
Housing benefits 62w, 343w, 398w, 499w
Life insurance 231w
Maternity benefits 130w, 235w, 307w, 551w, 784-5
Medical rehabilitation 60w, 489w
Nursing homes 486-7w
Personal savings 231w
Rates & rating 494w
"Reform of Social Security White Paper" 491w
Residential care 486-7w
Sheltered employment 65w
Social fund 486w
Social security adjudications 613w
Social security benefits 307-8w, 505-6w
Social security claims 60w
State occupational pensions 507-8w
Students 491w
War widows 491w

Social services
Statistics 347-8w

Social services inspectorate 493-4w
Home helps 493-4w

"Social Services Select Committee on Mental Health Community Care" 498w, 777-8

Social workers training 490w
Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 397w, 789
Child care 344w
Finance 489-90w
Residential care 781

Social Survey of England & Wales
Civil service redundancies 642

Soils
Agricultural research 642

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 41, 55, 96-9
Questions
Firearms, Inquiries 437
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Metropolitan Police 630-1w
Police firearms 173w
Prisons, Building repairs 5w
Prisons, Construction 5w
Road accidents, Police vehicles 6w
Styal Prison 274-5w

Solicitor-General
Letters 574w, 575w, 584w
Ministers correspondence 87w, 320-1w, 330w, 355-6w, 411w, 585w, 629-30w, 637w

Solihull
Police 579-80w

Solitary confinement 371w
Hackett, Patrick 371w

South Africa
Capital punishment 528w
Foreign policy 144w, 528w
Military attaches 365w
Prisoners 528w
Rugby 513w
Sporting tours 296, 423w, 466-7w, 606w

South Atlantic 34w
Atlantic fisheries 34w

South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation 367w
Shareholders 367w

South Bank
Arts Council grants 17

South Bank Theatre Board 17
Costs 17

South East region
Private sector housing 221w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority 230w

South Lincolnshire Health Authority 344w
Neonatal mortality 344w
Perinatal mortality 344w

South Manchester Health Authority 58w
Expenditure 58w
NHS finance 58w

South Wales 5, 10, 631-2
Anthracite 631-2
Coal mine closures 5
Coal mining 629
Health services finance 7

South Yemen
British residents abroad (21.01.86) 185-9
Ministerial statements (21.01.86) 185-9
Refugees 181-2w

South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill 1985/86
2R order read (29.01.86) 931, (30.01.86) 1076

Southwark
Council house sales 136-7w, 137-8w, 467w
Local plans 653w

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 142-3w, 144w

Spain
Imports 452w
Sunday trading 218w
Trade barriers 451-2w

Speaker and his deputies, For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (20.01.86) 38, (22.01.86) 332, 340, 349, 379, 385, (23.01.86) 468, (27.01.86) 691, (28.01.86) 819, (29.01.86) 1010, (20.01.86) 1050, 1068
Calling of Members (27.01.86) 760, (28.01.86) 919, (29.01.86) 935
Disallowed questions (20.01.86) 8, 9, (23.01.86) 437, 441
Oral question time intervention (27.01.86) 639
Private Members Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 619, 620
Procedure (20.01.86) 106, 111, (23.01.86) 443, 457, (28.01.86) 808, (29.01.86) 953, 958, 967, 1031, 1053, 1068, (30.01.86) 1112, 1122, (31.01.86) 1234, 1244, 1247
Standing Order No 10 applications (21.01.86) 204
Standing Order No 10 applications, Teachers (27.01.86) 645
Standing Order No 10 applications, Westland (23.01.86) 467

Speakers rulings & statements
Adjournment debates (22.01.86) 425, (23.01.86) 550, 551
Business questions (30.01.86) 1104
Business statement (23.01.86) 464
Cabinet papers (22.01.86) 306-12
Calling of Members (20.01.86) 153-5, (22.01.86) 293, (28.01.86) 813, 922-3, (29.01.86) 943
Deposited papers (20.01.86) 50, (21.01.86) 205, (22.01.86) 313, 314
Disallowed questions (30.01.86) 1092
Disclosure of information (28.01.86) 794
House of Commons debates (27.01.86) 760
House of Commons library (22.01.86) 313, 314
House of Commons Select Committees (21.01.86) 209-11
House of Commons Standing Committees (22.01.86) 305
Members attendance (20.01.86) 118
Members conduct (20.01.86) 136, (23.01.86) 441, 452, 453, 475, (27.01.86) 686, (27.01.86) 649, 650, 652, 653, 655, 656, 657, 679, (28.01.86) 794, 795
Members giving way (29.01.86) 1038
Members interests (21.01.86) 209-11
Members interventions (22.01.86) 425, (23.01.86) 478, 511, 512, 550, 551, (27.01.86) 760, (29.01.86) 981
Members speeches (20.01.86) 41, 66, 86, (22.01.86) 335, 352, (24.01.86) 564, 613, (27.01.86) 675, (29.01.86) 966
Members suspension (20.01.86) 153-5
Ministerial speeches (28.01.86) 919
Ministerial statements (20.01.86) 27, 31, (21.01.86) 197, 198, (22.01.86) 355, 356
New clauses (22.01.86) 317
Oral questions (27.01.86) 641, (29.01.86) 948, (30.01.86) 1089
Orders & regulations (22.01.86) 397
Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 35, 37, (21.01.86) 205, (23.01.86) 460, 461
Parliamentary privilege (21.01.86) 207
Points of order (20.01.86) 34, (22.01.86) 293, (28.01.86) 794, 795-6
Press conferences (30.01.86) 1114
Prime Ministers questions (23.01.86) 448, (30.01.86) 1092
Private Bills (29.01.86) 961-3, (30.01.86) 1075
Private Members Bills (24.01.86) 620, (31.01.86) 1234
Scope of debate (22.01.86) 320, 323, 332, 337, 349, 366, (24.01.86) 577, (29.01.86) 972
Second reading (24.01.86) 620
Select Committee evidence (21.01.86) 207
Select Committees (30.01.86) 1114
Standing Order No 10 applications (28.01.86) 814
Supplementary questions (20.01.86) 14, (22.01.86) 288, 290, 296, (29.01.86) 934, (30.01.86) 1094
Unparliamentary expressions (22.01.86) 323, (23.01.86) 534, (27.01.86) 636, 646, 647, (28.01.86) 784, 796

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Calling of Members, Backbenchers (28.01.86) 922
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1109

Exchange rates (29.01.86) 981-2
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 915-8
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 669-71
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 459
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Greater London 310w, 560-2w
Italy, Westland helicopters 34-5w
London Docklands Development Corporation 220w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 220w, 221w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Voluntary organisations 48w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 15-6w
Westland helicopters, Cabinet Committees 87w

Special Branch 438
Complaints against police 437-8
Students 525w

Special education
Blind 364w, 429-30w, 431w
Deaf 362w, 364w, 429-30w, 431w

Special educational needs 362w, 364w, 430w, 431w
Blind 430-1w
Deaf 430-1w

Special event radio 484-5w

Special schools
Mentally handicapped 11

Specialist advisers
House of Commons Select Committees 287-8w

Specialist claims control units 550w
Social security abuse 550w

Speech therapists
Pay 63w, 307w

Speech therapy
Manpower 501w, 502w
Redundancy 502w
Research 501-2w

Speed, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 27
Questions
Imports, Spain 452w
Motorcycles, Driving tests 611w
Trade barriers, Spain 451-2w
Type 23 frigates, Defence procurement 626w

Speed limits 384w
General consents 52w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Coastal protection, Barnstaple 401w
Energy conservation, Employment opportunities 634
Energy research, Research finance 374w
Prison population 214-5w
Prisoners, Exeter Prison 215w
Prisons, Construction 215w
Public footpaths, Devon 140w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Questions
Owner occupied housing, Inner city areas 299
Police, Manpower 270w
Rent increases, Housing subsidies 470w
Youth training scheme, Finance 176

Spicer, Mr Jim
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Advertising 236w

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 762-5
Questions
Air safety, Fire resistant materials 654w
Air traffic control, Air accidents 210w
Air transport, Security 301w
Airport security, Gatwick 384w
Airports, Engineering education 655w
British Airways, Air travel 471-2w
Commuters, Greater London 385w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Disclosure of information 327w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Electoral register 328w
Eye bypass, Public inquiries 329w
Foreign students, Libyan Arab Republic 385w
Motor insurance 518w
Motor vehicle safety, EC action 329w
Motor vehicle testing 517w
Motorways, Road signs 328-9w
Public order policing 438
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 54w, 55w, 303-4w
Public service vehicles, Wales 303w
Road accidents, Fees & charges 654w
Road construction, Cost benefit analysis 301-2w
Roads, Leeds 384w
Stansted Airport, Land 302w
Thorney bypass, Road construction 329w
Wheel clamps, Camden 56w

Spoil heaps
Mining 465w
Ove Arup 465w

Sporting tours
British Lions 466w
South Africa 296, 423w, 466-7w, 606w

Sports
Children 224w
Finance 606w
Local government reform 295
Tax yields 197w

Sports administration
Planning inquiries 227w

Sports Council
Finance 295, 296
Handicapped 465-6w

Sports sponsorship
Tobacco industry 223w, 423w

Springburn
British Rail Engineering 932-3

SP70 guns 628w
Ammunition 446w
Defence research 628w

Squatting
Trespass 1w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 318-9, 373-5, 377, 378

SS John Harvey 446w, 640w
Mustard gas 446w
Public Record Office 640w

Staff-student ratios
Polytechnics 570-2w
Universities 570-2w

Staffordshire
Unemployment 114w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, House of Commons Select Committees 639
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Northern Ireland government 1083-4
Channel tunnel, Employment opportunities 448
Motorways, Interchanges 654-5w
Sunday trading 268-9w

Standard of living
Families 506w
One parent families 506w

Standing charges
Pensioners (22.01.86) 315-6
Social security recipients (22.01.86) 315-6

Standing Charges (Abolition) Bill 1985/86
1R (22.01.86) 315-6

Standing Order No. 10 applications
Interest rates (21.01.86) 203-4
Speakers rulings & statements (28.01.86) 814
Teachers (27.01.86) 645
Westland helicopters (23.01.86) 467

Standing Order No 24 (20.01.86) 153-5

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1115-25, 1128
Questions
Armed forces, Iraq 236w
Armed forces deployment, USA 449w
Armoured fighting vehicles, Defence contracts 95w
Armoured fighting vehicles, Defence procurement 331-2w
Coastguard, HMS Daedalus 446w
Defence expenditure, Berlin Brigade 335-6w
Defence procurement, Berlin Brigade 96w
Military police, RAF Greenham Common 445w
Ministry of Defence police, Military police 445w
NATO, Nuclear weapons 90w
RAF Greenham Common, Security 354w, 530-1w
Tactical nuclear weapons, NATO 90-1w
Ulster Defence Regiment 235w

Stanley Royd Hospital 63w, (21.01.86) 190-202
Food poisoning 63w
Inquiries 63w

Stansted Airport 302w
Land 302w
Railway transport 302w

State earnings related pension scheme 619w
Pensioners 489w

State occupational pensions
Social security reform 507-8w

Stateless persons
Hong Kong 33w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 308
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 452-3
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 103w
Business statement 463
Centre for World Development Education, Government grants 285-6w
Defence Select Committee evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1092
List D schools, Scotland 368w
Local authorities in Scotland, Youth training scheme 598w
Rates & rating 180
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 941
Trade marks 14w
Trade marks, Scotch House 14w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 598-9w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 694, 725, 729, 732, 733, 760-1
Questions
Air transport, Security 301w
VAT, Tax collection 409w
VAT, Tax thresholds 408-9w

Sterling
Exchange rates 444
Oil prices 793

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 835, 869-71
Questions
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 632
Housing benefits, Landlord & tenant 613w

Housing finance, Defective housing 604-5w
Limited list prescribing 495w
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 280w
Sports administration, Planning inquiries 227w
Trespass, Squatting 1w
Unemployment, Training 124w
Urban programme, Government grants 415-6w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Business statement 1103
Vocational training, Further education 125w

Stevens, Mr Martin
Questions
Uganda, Civil war 529w

Stewart, Mr Allan, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Coal mining, Scotland 544w
Economic situation, Scotland 546w
International Garden Festival 1989, Glasgow 548w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 544w, 935-6
Iron & Steel Trades Confederation 935
Land reclamation, Scotland 368w
Museums & galleries, Scotland 204-5w
Play facilities, Scotland 204w
Regional planning & development, Scotland 544-5w
School closures, Scotland 939-40
Student numbers, Scotland 600w
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 546w, 599w
Unemployment, Scotland 544w
Youth training scheme, Glasgow 205w
Youth training scheme, Paisley 945
Youth training scheme, Scotland 944-5

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Rural areas (29.01.86) 1037
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 627-8

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 23
Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No 4) Order 1985 (22.01.86) 410-2
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 829
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 940
British Rail, Channel tunnel 472w
Coal mining, Scotland 636
Deficiency diseases, Scotland 368w
Sunday trading, Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 182
Tourist boards, Mergers 169

Stewart, Mr Ian, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 984-8, 1004-6
Questions
Banks, Debt collection 85w
Building societies 443w
Clearing banks 443w
European monetary system 645w

Stirling District Council
Local government expenditure 322w

Stockbridge Village Trust 419w
Government grants 419w

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
Obscene Publications (Protection of Children Etc) (Amendment) Bill, 2R (24.01.86) 600, 615-6
South Yemen (21.01.86) 188
Westland helicopters, Minister correspondence (23.01.86) 457
Questions
Violence on television 439

Stone House Hospital 661-2w
Hospital beds 661-2w

Stornoway
Rescue services 304w

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 904-8, 914
Merchant seamen, Conditions of employment (22.01.86) 425-6

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 325-7, 385-6
Questions
Chemical weapons, Arms control 643w
Coal mining, Employment 637
Nuclear test ban, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 643w
Nuclear test ban, Seismic monitoring 643w
Nuclear test ban, USSR 643w
Nuclear war, Casualties 269w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 643w
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 942
Unemployment 112w

Strangeways Prison
Duty solicitors 213-4w

Strategic defence initiative 279-80w
United Technologies 638w

Strathclyde
Driving offences 520-1w
Police 932

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 317, 324, 332-7, 339, 340-1, 363-5, 375-6, 391-2
Local government finance (28.01.86) 812-3
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 118-25, 129, 131
Questions
Block grant 422w
Mental patients, Languages 560w
Mental patients rights, Departmental publications 558-9w, 559-60w
Rate support grants, Local government expenditure 293

Strike ballots
Government grants 109w
Trade unions 109w

Student grants 73w, 192-4w, 361w, 364w
Agriculture 321w
Discretionary student grants 71-2w
Foreign students 66-8w
Higher education 66-8w
Mandatory student grants 72w
Means tested benefits 364w
Newcastle College of Law 81w
Parental contributions 71-3w
Postgraduate students 157-8w
Teacher training 244w
Travel grants 245w

Student numbers 151-2w, 428w
Further education 157-64w
Initial teacher training 195w
Open University 155-6w, 189-90w, 190-2w
Overseas students 155-6w
Physics 318w
Scotland 573w, 600w
Universities 194w

Students
Further education 536-8w
Higher education 536-8w
Police informers 525w
Social security benefits 491w
Social security reform 491w
Special Branch 525w
Supplementary benefits 491w

Styal Prison 273-4w, 274-5w

Submarines
Shipbuilding 353-4w
Tenders 447w

Subsidence
Coal mining 98w
Compensation 4w

Subsidence Compensation Review Committee see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Successor authorities
Rate support grants 289-90

Sudan
Overseas aid 285w

Suicide
Detention centres 522w
Youth custody 522w

Sulphur dioxide 224w

Sultan of Brunei 17w
House of Fraser 17w

Summer schools 74w
Open University 74w
Tuition fees 74w

Sumrie Clothes 146w
Company investigations 146w

Sunday trading 14, 268-9w, 436w
Belgium 218w
Church Commissioners 13-4
Denmark 218w
France 218-9w
Italy 219w
Licensing laws 182
Netherlands 219w
Portugal 218w, 324w
Republic of Ireland 219w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 182
Spain 218w
West Germany 219w

Supplementary benefits
Advisory services 64w
Ben Rabha Sallah Abdessalem 558w
Board & lodging charges 398w, 553-4w, 781-3
Exceptional circumstances additions 232-3w
Fuel aid 558w
Greenock 619w
Heating allowances 558w
Port Glasgow 619w
Residential care 60w, 499w, 502w
Severe weather payments 63w
Social security recipients 455-6w
Students 491w
Young people 619w

Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 552w
Immigrants 552w

Supplementary Benefits & Residential Care 499w

Supplementary benefits disregards of income 390w
Residential care 509-10w

Supplementary questions
Speakers rulings & statements (20.01.86) 14, (22.01.86) 288, 290, 296, (29.01.86) 934, (30.01.86) 1094

Surgery
Blood 780-1

Surveillance
Metropolitan Police 171w

Sussex police 633w
Government grants 633w
Manpower 633w

Sutherland
Forestry 547w

Sutton
Rate support grants (31.01.86) 1250-8

Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Bill (HL) 1984/85
2R order read (21.01.86) 167, (23.01.86) 431
2R* (30.01.86) 1076

Swimming pools 659w
Elderly 659w
Legionnaires disease 659w

Tactical nuclear weapons
Arms control 90w
NATO 90-1w

Takeovers
Distillers Company 603w
GEC 15w, 84w
House of Fraser 17-8w
Plessey 15w, 279-80w
Taxis 532w

Taking & driving away
Northern Ireland 313w

Tamils
Temporary immigrants 583w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 663
Questions
Interest rates, Small businesses 180
International Council of Scientific Unions, UK contributions 286w
Overseas aid, British Council 286w

Tax burden
Income tax 589-90w

Tax collection
Costs 409w
VAT 409w

Tax rates & bands
Mortgage relief 84w

Tax reform
Income tax 447-8

Tax thresholds
Civil service manpower 299w
VAT 408-9w

Tax yields 83w, 84w
Football 197w
Gaming machines 299w
Income tax 83w
National income 528w
National insurance contributions 197w
Sports 197w

Taxation
Charitable donations 15, 16
National income 528w
Personal income 644-6w
Police 632w

Taxis
Takeovers 532w

Taxpayers 85w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Questions
Community programme, Part-time employment 121-2w
Forests 547w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Political parties 1080-1
Nuclear power stations, Electricity generation 644
Parish councils 295
Police, Recruitment 442
Police, Solihull 579-80w
Police equipment 263w
Prime Minister official engagements 280w, 435-6w
Radioactive waste disposal, Irish sea 650w, 656w
Social workers training, Child care 344w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
Business questions intervention (30.01.86) 1096
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 30
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 195
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 457
Questions
Airbuses, Government assistance to industry 379w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Social security benefits rules 782
Border security in Ireland, Terrorism 1078-9
Business statement 1099-1100
Channel crossing, International cooperation 434w
Crime, Firearms 255w
Defence procurement, Helicopters 134-5w
EC budget, UK contributions 408w, 527w
Export rebates, Agricultural surpluses 435w
Food exports, Export rebates 401-2w
Food imports, Import duties 402-4w
Nimrod aircraft, Defence expenditure 446w
Oil revenues 408w
Student grants 364w
UK contributions to EC budget, European Court of Justice 790
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 515w

Teacher training
Blind 429w
Cruelty to children 433w
Deaf 429w
Educational finance 364-5w
Student grants 244w

Teachers 428w
Contracts of employment 433w
Devonport dockyard 91w
Industrial arbitration 183
Industrial disputes 428w, 446, 545w, 546w, 599w, (27.01.86) 645, 941w, 942, 943
Manpower 634w
Northern Ireland 407w, 455-6w
Pay 571-4w, 941
Pay review bodies 942
Redundancy 407w
Rosyth dockyard 92w
Scotland 183, 545w, 546w, 599w, 941, 942-3
Standing Order No 10 applications (27.01.86) 645

Teachers appraisal (23.01.86) 510-46

Teaching hospitals
Pay differentials 230-1w
University finance 67-8w

Technical & vocational education initiative 43w, 125w
Local education authorities 125w

Technical assistance
Short Brothers 543w

Technological change & employment
Newspaper press 790

Teignmouth Quay Company Bill 1985/86
2R order read (28.01.86) 777, (30.01.86) 1076

Telecommunications technology
Police 322w

Telephones
House of Commons 629w
Palace of Westminster 629w

Television
Obscenity (24.01.86) 556-619

Television licences 177w
Electoral register 521w
Pensioners 266w
Personal records 576-7w
Wales 9w

Television programmes
"Red Herrings" 522w
Violence 266-7w

Temporary accommodation
Refugees 782

Temporary immigrants
Tamils 583w

Temporary staff
Select Committees 178w

10 Downing Street 144w
Lie detectors 792
Official hospitality 144w, 413w

Tenders 329w, 335w, 336w, 447w, 626w
Defence contracts 335w
Defence procurement 447-8w, 626w
Local authorities 336w
Submarines 447w

Terlezki, Mr Stefan
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 970
Questions
Advance factory programme, Wales 198w
Company registrations, Wales 108w
Corporal punishment, Referenda 9w
Council house sales, Wales 107w
Crime victims, Cardiff 216w
Crime victims, Injuries 260w
Custodial treatment, Statistics 261-2w
Holidays abroad 44w
Housing & Planning Bill 1985/86 606-7w
Industrial disputes, Wales 107w
Offenders, Age 262w
Police, Manpower 216-7w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Wales 197-8w
Robbery, Cardiff 262w
Television licences, Wales 9w
Young offenders, Fines 260-1w

Terrorism
Anglo-Irish Agreement 593w
Border security in Ireland 1078-9
Diplomatic service 37w
European Communities 33w
International cooperation 426w, 1083-4, 1085-6
Northern Ireland 593w, 597w, 1078
Prisoners on remand 241w
Republic of Ireland 33w

Test tube babies (24.01.86) 555

Testing
Genetics 143w
Trident 637w

Thailand
Prisoners 144w

Thames Valley Police 167w, 267w
Manpower 267w, 435

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 651-8, 682
Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (23.01.86) 449-60
Questions
Agricultural products, Export rebates 435w
Airport security, Heathrow 280-1w
Armed forces deployment, USA 413w
Bradford City Football Club, Government assistance 143w
Bradford City Football Club, Government grants 181
British residents abroad, North Yemen 180
Brittan, Leon, Ministers 413w
Broadcasting, Members 88w
Brunei, Prime Minister visits abroad 280w
Cabinet Committees, Economic policy 86w
Cabinet Office, Resignations 575-6w
Channel tunnel, Employment opportunities 448
Channel tunnel, International cooperation 434w
Channel tunnel, Northern region 183-4
Children, Nutrition & health 330w
Civil servants, Immunity from prosecution 409-10w
Commission for Racial Equality, Inquiries 85-6w
Dartford tunnel, Construction 184
De Lorean, Lotus Cars 413w
Death, Singh Toor, Tarsem 790
Defence procurement, Departmental co-ordination 413w
Defence Select Committee Evidence, Dept of Trade & Industry 1090-1, 1092-3

Disclosure of information, Westland helicopters 412w, 791-2, 793-4
Ethnic minorities, Cabinet Office 188w
European fighter aircraft, Defence industries 445
European monetary system 445, 792
Exchange rates, Sterling 444
Export rebates, Agricultural surpluses 435w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 142-3w
Genetics, Testing 143w
Government grants 576w
Health education, AIDS 792-3
Higher education, Age 573w
House of Commons Select Committees, Evidence 1091-2
Interest rates 447-8
Interest rates, Small businesses 180, 446
Israel, Prime Minister 142w
Jarrett, Cynthia, Death 85w
Law centres, Departmental coordination 515w
Lie detectors, 10 Downing street 792
Management & Personnel Office, Departmental forms 143w
Manufacturing industries, Trade Competitiveness 179-80
Middle East, Peace negotiations 447
Military exercises, Heathrow 281w
Ministers 573w, 574-5w
Ministers correspondence 790-1
Ministers correspondence, Disclosure of information 87w
Ministers correspondence, Westland helicopters 411-2w
Monetary agreements, Exchange rates 1091
Mortgage interest rates, Owner occupied housing 445
National Union of Teachers, Industrial disputes 791
News International 1090
News International, Conditions of employment 444
News International, Picketing 1092
Newspaper press, Technological change & employment 790
NHS finance, Scotland 574w
Nurses, Management 182-3, 448
Official receptions, 10 Downing Street 144w, 413w
Oil prices, Sterling 793
Pensions, Investment 445
Pre-school education 435w
Press releases, Westland helicopters 412w
Prime Minister 792
Prime Minister, Gifts 89w
Prime Minister, Israel 179
Prime Minister, Public appointments 281w
Prime Minister, Railway transport 187-8w
Prime Minister, Railway travel 573w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Lewisham 573w
Prime Minister official engagements 142w, 280w, 411w, 435-6w, 573-4w
Prime Minister official engagements, Shamji, Abdul 86w
Prime Ministers Office 575w
Prime Ministers Office, Ingham, Bernard 411w
Prime Ministers Office, Public relations 409-10w, 410-1w
Prime Ministers Office, Westland helicopters 411w
Public expenditure 86w
Public opinion, Conservative party 447
Public sector earnings, Pay comparability 409-10w
Pupils, Diets 575w
RAF Greenham Common, Espionage 181
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 446
Rates & rating 180
Sakharov, Andrei, Political prisoners 445-6
Security, RAF Greenham Common 181
Solicitor-General, Letters 574w, 575w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 330w, 411w, 637w
Strategic defence initiative 279-80w
Sunday trading, Licensing laws 182
Sunday trading, Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 182
Teachers, Industrial disputes 446
Teachers, Scotland 183
Tin, EC countries 446
Trade unions, Legislation 181, 1093-4
Trades Union Congress, Newspaper press 1089
Turkey, Human rights 280w
Uganda, British residents abroad 793
UK contributions, UNESCO 412w
UK contributions to EC budget, European Court of Justice 790
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 515w
Unemployment, Economic policy 1090
University Grants Committee, Science education 142w
Visas, Libyan Peoples Bureau 444
Westland helicopters, Archer, Jeffrey 88w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 89w
Westland helicopters, Broadcasting controls 87w, 88w
Westland helicopters, Cabinet Committees 87w
Westland helicopters, Departmental records 88w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 87w, 88w, 281-2w, 574w
Westland helicopters, Interviews 143-4w
Westland helicopters, Lie detectors 143w
Westland helicopters, Select Committees 575w
Westland helicopters, USA 88w
Wind power, Turbines 791
Youth unemployment, Knowsley 181-2

Theatres
Greater London Council 469-70w
Local government reform 469-70w

Theft
Firearms 322w, 406-7w, 636-8w
Palace of Westminster 317-8w

Theft Act 1968 323w

Thomas, Mr D E
Debates etc
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 140
Questions
Business statement 465
Council housing finance, Wales 459-62w, 462-4w
Housing, Wales 458-60w
Housing subsidies, Wales 461-2w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear power stations 632
NHS finance, Wales 6-7
Welsh Office, Planning 14-5

Thomas, Dr Roger
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 971
Questions
Infant mortality, Wales 21w
Pitman, Sue, Injuries 9w
Road accidents, Fees & charges 654w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 713, 745-7
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 59, 94
Questions
Civil defence, Broadcasting 438-9
Self employed 118w

Thorney, bypass 329w
Road construction 329w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 116
Questions
Civil defence, Pay 250w
Road construction, Cost benefit analysis 301-2w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Defective housing 293w

Thorne, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 345-6, 349
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 73-4
Questions
Clinical psychologists, Manpower 130-1w
Vessa Sprint wheelchairs, Safety 59w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Building repairs, Building industry 415w
Council housing finance, Local government expenditure 414w
Housing construction, Council housing finance 414w
Housing improvement 140w
Public sector housing, Building repairs 414w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1198, 1207, 1208-10
Employment Select Committee, Press conference (30.01.86) 1114
Public petitions (24.01.86) 555
Questions
AIDS, Departmental publications 305w
Community programme, Employment schemes 118w
Criminal injuries compensation 6-7w
Curriculum, Schools 319w
Handicapped children, Community care 492-3w
Hospital waiting lists, Ophthalmology 549-50w
Immigrants, Social security benefits 552w
Owner occupied housing 304
Self-employed, Availability for work 202w
Trades Union Congress, Newspaper press 1089
Youth training scheme, School leaving 43w, 79w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits disqualification 127-9w

Tillinghall
Planning inquiries 296-7

Tin
EC countries 446

Tobacco
Children 177w, 519w, (31.01.86) 1235-46
Health hazards 304-5w
Prosecutions 177w

Tobacco advertising
Young people 785

Tobacco industry
Advertising codes of practice 785, 786
Punishment 786
Sports sponsorship 223w, 423w

Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill 1985/86
2R (31.01.86) 1235-46

Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) (No 2) Bill 1985/86
1R (29.01.86) 975

Top Salaries Review Body
Pay settlements 173

Torture 366w
British residents abroad 249w
EC action 249w
Equipment 380w
European Convention against Torture 366w
UN Convention on Torture 366w

Tottenham
Civil disorder 438
Criminal investigation 176w

Touche Ross 425w
Dairy Crest 425w

Tourism
Government assistance to industry 1081-2
Heathrow 169
Northern Ireland 592w, 1081-2
"Pleasure Leisure & Jobs" 169

Tourist boards
Mergers 169

Tourist industry
Advertising 44w

Bureaucracy 127w
Employment opportunities 169
Government assistance to industry 592w
Government grants 126w, 127w

Town & country planning (23.01.86) 467
Departmental circulars 46-7w

Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 649w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Antarctic Treaty, UN resolutions 32-3w

Toxocara canis 345w
Children 345w
Eye disorders 345w

Toxocariasis 345w

Tracey, Mr Richard, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)*
Questions
British Amateur Rugby League Association, Rugby 296
Gleneagles Agreement 467w
Grace & favour housing 229w
Greater London Council, Local government property 648-9w
Greater London Council, Property transfer 471w
Greater London Council research library 228w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Companies 422w
Greater London Enterprise Board, General consents 422w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Local government reform 339w
Greenbelt, Property development 297
Handicapped, Sports Council 465-6w
Ironbridge bypass, Public inquiries 465w
Kenwood house, Property transfer 298w
Listed buildings, Armed forces housing 649w
Listed buildings, Church buildings 511-2w
Local government expenditure, Greater London Council 141w, 295-6w, 339w, 340w
Local government expenditure, Local government reform 51w, 52w, 649w
Local government reform, Costs 53w
Local government reform, Dept of the Environment 140w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 51w, 53w, 424w, 605w
Local government staff, Local government reform 227-8w
Local plans, Southwark 653w
London Residuary Body 141w, 222w
London Residuary Body, Finance 424w, 470w, 652w
Merseyside Residuary Body, Public appointments 230w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Camden 297w
New towns 220w
Planning authorities, Planning 302-3
Planning inquiries, Tillinghall 296-7
Planning permission, Change of use 136w
Rights of way, Portsmouth 53w
Rugby 642w
St Marys House, Portsmouth 53w, 420w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Defective housing 293w
Spoil heaps, Ove Arup 465w
Sporting tours, South Africa 423w, 466w, 606w
Sports, Children 224w
Sports, Finance 606w
Sports administration, Planning inquiries 227w
Sports Council, Finance 295, 296
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 223w, 423w
Theatres, Greater London Council 469-70w
Town & country planning, Departmental circulars 46-7w
Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 649w
Transient people, Greater London 46w
Wrecks, Invincible 649-50w

"Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK" 44-5w, 458w
Wales Tourist Board 458w

Trade barriers
Libyan Arab Republic 16w
Spain 451-2w

Trade competitiveness
Manufacturing industries 173, 179-80

Trade documentation 426w

Trade marks 14w
Scotch House 14w
Service industries 531w

Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984 531w

Trade Marks Registry 531w

Trade Union Act 1984 109w

Trade union elections 109w

Trade union recognition
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 496w

Trade unions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 391-2w
Government grants 474w
Legislation 181, 1093-4
MacAulay Institute for Soil Research 12-3w
Regional Health authorities 501w
Strike ballots 109w
Unemployment 1093-4

Trades Union Congress
Newspaper press 1089

Trading funds (21.01.86) 215-40

Traffic lights
Road traffic offences 277-8w

Training 118-9w
Civil servants 381w
Civil service manpower 358w
Dept of Employment 603w
Dept of Trade & Industry 381w
Jobclubs 175
Light aircraft 333w
Manpower Services Commission 119w, 122w
North West region 473-5w
Small businesses 110w
Unemployment 124w

Training aircraft 625w
Defence contracts 94w

Training allowances 176, 282w
Youth training scheme 177

Tranent bypass 599w

Tranquillisers
Complaints 131-3w
Drug abuse 492w, 614-5w
Family doctors 132w
Government grants 132w
Voluntary organisations 132w

Transient people
Greater London 46w

Transport
Agricultural products (31.01.86) 1249
Horticulture (31.01.86) 1249

Transport of hazardous materials 55w

Transport of radioactive materials
Local authorities 611w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 3w

Travel concessions
School transport 239-40w

Travel grants
Student grants 245w

Travel-to-work areas
Unemployment 1[illegible]w

Travel warrants 591w
Income tax 591w

Travelling expenses
Northern Ireland 1082
School transport 69w
Social security recipients 394w

Treasury
Ethnic minorities 197w
Public relations 299-300w

Trespass
Squatting 1w

Trials
Northern Ireland 242w

Trident 637w
Defence expenditure 627w
Rosyth dockyard 627w
Testing 637w

Trippier, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Agricultural workers, Accidents 324-5w
Apprentices 123w
Community programme, North West region 473-5w
Crown immunity, Ministers correspondece 516w
Department of Employment, Departmental leaflets 119w
Employment schemes, North West region 38w
Engineers, Industrial training 45w, 129w
Enterprise allowance scheme 116w, 282w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Employment opportunities 116w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Northamptonshire 203w
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 516w
Holidays abroad 44w
Industrial diseases, Farmers lung 357-8w
Industrial health & safety, 601w
Industrial health & safety, Ault & Wibourg 325w
Industrial health & safety, Convictions 601-2w
Industrial health & safety, Crown lands & estates 516w
Industrial health & safety, Industrial tribunals 602-3w
Industrial health & safety, Punishment 602w
Information technology centres, Government grants 111w
Iron and steel industry, Scotland 169-170
Kent, Juliet, Pay 475
Local enterprise agencies, Hertfordshire 600w
Local enterprise agencies, Kings Lynn 172
Local enterprise agencies, Personnel 172
Manpower Services Commission 116w
Manpower Services Commission, Training 119w, 122w
Manpower Services Commission, Youth training scheme 120w
Redundancy pay 635w
Small businesses 110w
Small businesses, Management techniques 110w
Small businesses, Training 110w
Small businesses, Venture capital 110w
Technical & vocational education initiative 43w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 125w
Tourism, Heathrow 169
Tourism, "Pleasure Leisure & Jobs" 169
Tourist boards, Mergers 169
Tourist industry, Government grants 126w, 127w
"Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK" 44-5w
Training 118-9w
Vocational training, Further education 125w
Youth training scheme 119w, 120w, 121w
Youth training scheme, Finance 120w, 176, 177
Youth training scheme, Hampshire 120-1w
Youth training scheme, Leeds 202-3w
Youth training scheme, Northamptonshire 202w
Youth training scheme, School leaving 43w

Youth training scheme, School teachers 176-7
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 120w
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 177
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 176, 177-8

Tristan da Cunha
Palinaturis Investments 589w

Truck Acts 116w

Tucano aircraft 94w, 235-6w

Tuition fees
Further education 191-2w
Higher education 191-2w
Summer schools 74w

Tumours
Animal experiments 173w

Tunnels
East London river crossing 184

Turbines
Wind power 791

Turkey
Aliens 484w
Human rights 280w
Inner London boroughs 484w

TV Times 409-10w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Drug side effects 620w
Drug abuse, Government grants 264-5w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 593w

Tyne & Wear
Employment 116-7w
Social security recipients 398w

Type 23 frigates 626w
Defence procurement 626w

Tyres
Pumps 454w

Uganda
British residents abroad 793
Civil war 529w

Ulster Defence Regiment 235w
Armed forces deployment 351w
Armed forces strength 352w, 353w, 445-6w
Costs 331w
Crime 185-6w, 351w
Criminal investigation 1080
Defence equipment 352-3w
Length of service 351-2w
Paramilitary forces 351w
Recruitment 351w, 352w
Religious discrimination 351w
Resignations 351w, 352w

Ulster Special Constabulary 636-8w

Ulster Unionists 1085
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1084, 1087-8

UN Convention on Torture 366w
Torture 366w

UN Fund for Population Activities 284-5w

UN Relief & Works Agency
Palestine 642w

UN resolutions 32-3w
Antarctic Treaty 32-3w

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1985/86
Public petitions (24.01.86) 555
2R Order read (24.01.86) 619

Underground railways
London Regional Transport 55w

Unemployment 111w, 112w, 114-5w, 119w
Advisory services 123-4w, 126w, 634w
Barnsley (30.01.86) 1186-94
Caernarfon 20-1w
Crime 440-1
EC countries 179
Economic policy 5, 178-9, 1090
Employment opportunities 175-6
Ethnic minorities 325w, 475w
Gravesham 202w
Gwent 3-4
Inflation 4
Job centres 124w, 171w
Knowsley 112w
Liverpool 113w
Merseyside 112-3w
Northern region 12
Northern Ireland 212-3w, 1087, 1088
Older workers 113w
Parliamentary constituencies 357w
Pay 4, 126w
Portsmouth 115w
Regional aid 123w
Scotland 544w
Staffordshire 114w
Statistics 170-1, 171-2
Trade unions 1093-4
Training 124w
Travel-to-work areas 123w
Unemployment benefits 170
Wales 3-4, 5, 11, 20-1w, 359w
West Bromwich 115w
West Midlands (28.01.86) 924-30
Young people 544w

Unemployment benefits
Electoral register 325w
Inquiries 494-6w
Unemployment 170

UNESCO 108w, 145-6w
UK contributions 286w, 412w

Unfair competition
Airbuses 182-3w, 379w

Unfair dismissal
Coal mining 635-6, 637

Unimax Minet 146w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (21.01.86) 215-40
Pressurised water reactors 644

United Nations
Economic sanctions 427w

United Nations Association 248-9w
UK contributions 248-9w

United Technologies 638w
Strategic defence initiative 638w

Universities
Construction 432w
Finance 149-52w
Income 81w
Museums & galleries 165w
Physics 318w
Research finance 81w
Staff-student ratios 570-2w
Student numbers 194w

University finance
Information technology 243-4w
London University 571w
Medical profession 244w
Teaching hospitals 67-8w
University Grants Committee 243-4w, 365w

University Grants Committee 566w
Civil servants 318w
Science education 142w
University finance 243-4w, 365w

University teachers
Expenditure 153-4w
Medical education 82w, 363-4w
Pay 82w, 244w, 363-4w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speakers rulings & statements (22.01.86) 323, (23.01.86) 534, (27.01.86) 636, 646, 647, (28.01.86) 784, 796

Untreated milk 585-6w
Farms 585-6w

Upper Heyford 333w

Upper Waiting Hall
Exhibitions 10
Gas safety 44w

Uranium
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 4w

Urban development grants 294-6w, 336w, 337w
Housing finance 336w, 337w
Langbaurgh 296w

Urban housing renewal unit 302, 603-4w
Conflict of interests 604w
Council housing 302

Urban planning (23.01.86) 467
Private investment 227w

Urban programme
Community development 416w
Corby 228-9w
Government grants 225-6w, 415-6w
Greater Manchester 294-5w
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council 416-20w
Local government expenditure 339w, 416w
Merseyside 420w

USA
Air force bases 625-6w
Airlines 182-3w, 379w
Armed forces dependents 331w
Armed forces deployment 413w, 448w
Army bases 330w
British embassies 246w
Criminal injuries compensation 440
Export controls 146w
Northern Ireland 597w, 1083
Republic of Ireland 1083
Westland helicopters 88w

USSR
Arms control 643w
Human rights 367w
Nuclear test ban 643w
Political prisoners 246w
Publishing 13-4w
RAF Greenham Common 181

Vacancies
Community programme 356w
Companies 203w
Electrical technology 45w
Engineers 45w
Health service staff 389w
Job centres 115w, 171
Midwives 618w
Minimum wage 115w
Shipbuilding 45w
Vocational guidance 203w

Vacant land
Greater London 339w

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
Bishops, Social problems 13
Church Commissioners, Public appointments 399w
Durham, Bishop 12, 13
Durham, Bishop, Church Commissioners 12
Durham, Bishop, Social problems 12
Ordination of women 13
Social security benefits, Students 491w
Sunday trading 14
Sunday trading, Church Commissioners 13-4
Westland helicopters, Church Commissioners 14

VAT
British Legion 300w
Double glazing 634
EC countries 300w
Gaming machines 299w
Hotels 300w
Tax collection 409w
Tax thresholds 408-9w

VAT repayment
Children 645w
Clothing 645w

Venture capital 110w
Small businesses 110w

Vessa Sprint wheelchairs 59w
Safety 59w

Veterinary investigation service 103w
Scotland 103w

Veterinary services
Animal experiments 483w
Scotland 425w

Victim support schemes 581w
West Midlands 581w

Video recordings
Drug abuse 345w
Prosecutions 169w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1059
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 64w
Coastguard, HMS Daedalus 446w
RAF Greenham Common, Security 354w, 530-1w

Violence
Television programmes 266-7w

Violence on television 266-7w, 439, 441
Broadcasting controls 439-40
Complaints 266w
Crimes of violence 439
Young people 439

Viral diseases
Glandular fever 364w
Medical research 364w

Visas
Libyan Peoples Bureau 444

Visiting Forces Act 1952 265w

Vocational guidance
Vacancies 203w

Vocational training
EC countries 78w
Further education 125w

Voluntary organisations 576w
Community care 778-9
Finance 298
Housing insulation 374-5w
Local government expenditure 291-2, 297, 298
Local government reform 297, 298
London Docklands Development Corporation 48w
Tranquillisers 132w
Youth training scheme 176, 177-8, 205w, 944

Voluntary restraint agreements 531w
Costs 531w

Waddilove Committee see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Waddington, Mr David, Minister of State for the Home Department
Questions
Aliens, Turkey 484w
Channel tunnel, Home Office 252w
Commission for Racial Equality 174w
Commission for Racial Equality, Racial discrimination 217w
Computer piracy, Business 582w
Data Protection Act 1984, Companies 372w
Deportation, Costs 167-8w
Emigration, Hong Kong 216w
Entry clearances, Bangladesh 11w
Entry clearances, Indian subcontinent 271-2w
Foreign tourists 168w
Foreign tourists, Indian subcontinent 480-1w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 476-80w
Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department, Costs 6w
Hubbard, Bryan, Entry clearances 523w
Illegal Immigrants, Indian subcontinent 481w
Immigration, Electoral register 480w
Immigration controls 583w
Immigration controls, Affiliation 11w
Immigration controls, Bangladesh 10-1w
Immigration controls, Foreign tourists 6w
Immigration controls, Indian subcontinent 583w
Immigration controls, Interviews 175w
Immigration controls, Medical examinations 168-9w
Immigration controls, Merchant seamen 7-8w
Immigration controls, Ports 169w
Immigration officers, Heathrow 267-8w
Joint passports 580-1w
Overseas workers, Libyan Arab Republic 582w
Passport control channels, Airports 577-8w
Police, Ethnic minorities 442
Police, Recruitment 442
Political refugees 276w
Ports of entry, Leeds-Bradford Airport 373w
Racial discrimination, Accountants 217-8w
Refugees 172-3w
Repatriation, Foreign students 373w
Shops Bill (HL) 1985/86 436w
Sunday trading 268-9w
Sunday trading, Belgium 218w
Sunday trading, Denmark 218w
Sunday trading, France 218-9w
Sunday trading, Italy 219w
Sunday trading, Netherlands 219w
Sunday trading, Portugal 218w, 324w
Sunday trading, Republic of Ireland 219w
Sunday trading, Spain 218w
Sunday trading, West Germany 219w
Television licences, Personal records 576-7w
Temporary immigrants, Tamils 583w

Wages Bill 1985/86
1R (30.01.86) 1114

Wages Council Orders Enforcement Bill 1985/86
1R (28.01.86) 816-8

Wages councils 125w
Employment opportunities 174
Northern Ireland 597-8w
Young people 173-4

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 1002-4, 1005
Questions
Community programme, Manpower Services Commission 473-4w
Community programme, Vacancies 356w
Employment, Part-time employment 168
Employment schemes 123w
Sites of special scientific interest, Environment protection 298-9

Waiting lists
Driving tests 611w

Waldegrave, Mr William, Minister of State for the Environment (Countryside & Local Government)
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 332, 337, 347-51, 356-7, 365, 368-70, 382-3, 387, 392-3
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 125-31
Questions
Air pollution control 224w
Block grant 422w
Block grant, Leicestershire 337w
Block grant, Local authorities 337-9w
Domestic wastes, Oil 294
Enterprise zones, Government grants to local authorities 650w
Environmental policy 294
Housing capital allocations, Local government finance 303-4
Inner city partnerships, Government grants 225-6w
Local government finance, Non-metropolitan districts 607w
"Managing Waste: the Duty of Care", Waste management 293-4
National parks, Farmers 223w
Radioactive waste disposal, Irish Sea 650w
Rate support grants 222-3w
Rate support grants, Government grants to local authorities 291-2
Rate support grants, Leeds 292
Rate support grants, Local government expenditure 293
Rate support grants, Non-metropolitan counties 292-3
Rate support grants, Sefton 293
Rates & rating 221w
Rates & rating, Dorset 292

Walden, Mr George, Under-Secretary of State for Education & Science
Questions
British Antarctic Survey, Government grants 81w
British Antarctic Survey, RRS John Biscoe 81w
Burton Manor College, College closures 361-2w
Cambridge science park, Ministers domestic visits 569w
Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 538w
Discretionary student grants, Student grants 71-2w
Educational finance, Further education 537w
Educational qualifications, Mendocino Book Company 570w
Engineering qualifications, Higher education 153-5w
Higher education, Foreign students 73-4w
Higher education, Industry 148-9w
Higher education, Tuition fees 191-2w
Higher education admission, Oxford University 153w
Higher education teachers, Manpower 70w
Higher education teachers, Redundancy 78w
Leeds University, Ministers domestic visits 434w
London University, Capital investment 67-8w
Mandatory student grants, Student grants 72w
Medical education, University teachers 82w
Medical research, Viral diseases 364w
Members correspondence 195w
Natural History Museum, Museums & galleries 193-4w
Newcastle College of Law, Student grants 81w
Open University, Costs 73-5w
Open University, Student numbers 189-90w, 190-2w
Open University, Summer schools 74w
PICKUP, Educational finance 70-2w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 318w
Research councils 165w
Research finance 432w
Research finance, Research councils 79-80w
School population 428w
Science education, College closures 361w
Science & technology, Educational finance 434w
Science & technology research, Research finance 82w, 194-5w, 432w
Staff-student ratios, Universities 570-2w
Student grants 73w, 192-4w, 361w, 364w
Student grants, Means tested benefits 364w
Student grants, Parental contributions 71-3w
Student grants, Postgraduate students 157-8w
Student numbers 151-2w
Student numbers, Further education 157-64w
Student numbers, Open University 155-6w
Student numbers, Overseas students 155-6w
Student numbers, Physics 318w
Student numbers, Scotland 573w
Students, Further education 536-8w
Universities, Construction 432w
Universities, Finance 149-52w
Universities, Museums & galleries 165w
Universities, Research finance 81w
Universities, Student numbers 194w
University finance, London University 571w
University finance, Medical profession 244w
University finance, University Grants Committee 365w
University Grants Committee 566w
University teachers, Expenditure 153-4w
University teachers, Pay 363-4w

Wales
Advance factory programme 198w
Agricultural land 320w
Assisted places scheme 463-5w

Asulox 320w
Bankruptcy 382-3w
Bracken 320w, 322-3w
Coal mine closures 5-6, 10
Coal mining 5
Commonwealth Games 513w
Community health services 200-1w
Community hospitals 3
Company liquidations 382-3w
Company registrations 108w
Cost per pupil 198w
Council house sales 107w
Council housing finance 459-62w, 462-4w
District general hospitals 3
Drug crimes 374w
Dysentery 359w
Employment 359w
Environmental policy 108w
Handicapped pupils 11
Health services finance 200-1w
Higher education 106-7w, 564-5w
Hospital beds 2
Hospital closures 3
Hospital consultants 3
Hospitals 2
Housing 458-60w, 565w
Housing construction 198-9w
Housing Corporation 199w, 200w
Housing subsidies 461-2w
Industrial development 4
Industrial diseases 358w
Industrial disputes 107w
Industrial investment 359w
Infant mortality 1-2, 21w
Initial teacher training 360w, 361w
Local government 22w
Local government staff 22w
Manufacturing industries 4-5
Marginal land 320w
Museums & galleries 200w
NHS finance 6-7, 574w
Nitrates 22w
Nurses 3
Part-time employment 359w
Planning appeals 239-40w
Plant power 322-3w
Private education 197w
Public expenditure 23-32w
Public footpaths 457w
Public service vehicles 55w, 303w
Pupil-teacher ratios 21w, 197-8w
Rate fund contributions 461-2w, 462-4w
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 136-60
Redundancy 5
Regional development grants 107w
Roads 363-4w
School population 197w
Severe weather payments 21-2w
Television licences 9w
Unemployment 3-4, 5, 11, 20-1w, 359w
Water pollution 22w

Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 360w, 361w, 564-5w
Public appointments 360w

Wales Tourist Board 457-8w, 530w
Government grants 457-8w
"Trade & Industry Select Committee on Tourism in the UK" 458w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 712, 722, 749-51
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 957
Oral question time point of order (29.01.86) 948
Questions
Civil defence, Emergency planning 250w
Coal mining, Scotland 635
Industrial development, Scotland 938-9
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 936
Youth training scheme, Scotland 944-5

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc
Members oath & affirmation (28.01.86) 815

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Energy
Questions
Coal mining, Employment 637
Coal mining, Margam mine 628-9
Coal mining, Privatisation 628
Coal mining, Productivity 627-8, 629
Coal mining, Redundancy 637-8
Electricity tariffs 375w
Energy conservation, Insulation 631
Energy costs, Coal prices 631
Energy efficiency 375-6w
Energy Efficiency Year 375-6w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Energy 205w
Industrial energy conservation, Industrial energy prices 630-1
Industrial energy prices, Oil prices 631
National Coal Board, Financial targets 638
National Coal Board, MacGregor, Ian 637
National Coal Board, Public appointments 376w, 636-7
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Employment opportunities 637
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Government grants 643-4
North Sea oil, Oil prices 473w
Opencast mining, Planning permission 628
Public relations, Dept of Energy 243w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1116, 1157-60
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 959
Possession of Military Remains Bill 2R & rem stages (31.01.86) 1229, 1234
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 669
Questions
Business statement 1097-8
Crofting, Road construction 369w
Defence procurement, Guided weapons 628w
Funerals, Social security reform 498w
Local radio, Licensing 9-10w
Riot control weapons 266w
Royal ordnance factories, Redundancy 448w, 628w
Scottish islands, EC grants & loans 547w
Sites of special scientific interest, Expenditure 227w
SP70 guns, Ammunition 446w
SP70 guns, Defence research 628w
Weapons, Defence contracts 446w

Wallenberg, Raoul 246-7w
Death 246-7w
Political prisoners 246-7w

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Public transport, Expenditure 518w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1196-201, 1207, 1225-6
Questions
"School Libraries" 165-6w
Social security recipients, Debt collection 63w
Visas, Libyan Peoples Bureau 444

Waltham Forest
Educational qualifications 537-8w
Higher education 537-8w

Wandsworth
Council house sales 304

War pensions
Housing benefits 491w
Mustard gas 389w

War widows
Social security reform 491w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Rates & rating, Local income tax 291

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 973
Questions
Infant mortality, Wales 1-2
Nitrates, Wales 22w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 55w, 303-4w
Public service vehicles, Wales 303w
Transport of hazardous materials 55w

Warning, Robert N
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 265-6
Local Government Bill, Rep & 3R (22.01.86) 360, 361, 391
Questions
Business statement 1100-1
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Benzodiazepines 131-3w
Drug abuse, Government grants 492w
Hallucinogens, Benzodiazepines 177-8w
Tranquillisers, Government grants 132w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Broadcasting licences, Mobile radios 277w
Defence procurement, Helmets 135w

Warsaw Pact
Merchant seamen 7-8w
Ministers visits abroad 586-89w

Warships (31.01.86) 1227-34

Waste disposal
Clinical wastes 51w, 52w
Local government reform 51w, 52w

Waste management 293-4, 512w
"Managing Waste: the Duty of Care" 293-4
Research 293-4

Wastes
Pollution control 512w

Water pollution
Bracken 338w, 345w
Wales 22w

Water supply
EC law 140w
Lead pollution 138w, 530w
Nitrates 138-40w
Pollutants 138w

Waterloo
Railway stations 329-30w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Handicapped, Sports Council 465-6w
London Country Bus Services Ltd 327w
Mental health community care, East Berkshire Health Authority 779
Owner occupied housing 224w
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 267w
Unemployment, Advisory services 123w
Unemployment, Job centres 171

Weapons
Defence contracts 446w
International conferences 334-5w
IRA 1079, 1086
Republic of Ireland 1089

Weather
Farmers 595w

Weedkillers
Asulox 341w

Welsh, Mr Ken
Questions
Exports, Libyan Arab Republic 608-9w
Hospital ancillary staff, Pay 496w
Sizewell Inquiry, Nuclear power stations 377w

Wells
Petroleum exploration 376w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc
Airports Bill, 2R (27.01.86) 692, 723, 759-60
Rate support grants (20.01.86) 109-11

Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1067
Questions
British dependent territories, Postage stamps 642w
Country review programmes 285w
Overseas aid 285w
Overseas aid, Contingency reserve 284w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 283-4w
Save the Children Fund, Government grants 283w
Sudan, Overseas aid 285w

Wells, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 28
Horticultural Produce Bill, 2R order read (24.01.86) 620

Welsh, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Standing Charges (Abolition) Bill, 1R (22.01.86) 315-6
Questions
Unemployment 112w

Welsh Development Agency
Factories 7-8
Privatisation 8, 359-60w

Welsh Office
Departmental circulars 565w
Health services finance 6-7
Perinatal mortality 2
Planning 14-5
Public relations 240-1w

Welsh Rugby Union 513w

Welsh Water Authority 360w, 530w
Dir 80/778/EEC 530w
Privatisation 360w

West Bromwich 115w
Unemployment 115w

West Germany
Sunday trading 219w

West Glamorgan
Infant mortality 1-2

West Glamorgan Health Authority 456-8w
Hospital bed occupancy rates 456-8w

West Midlands
Baton rounds 269w
Crime prevention 581w
Health service staff 616w
Police 269w, 370-1w, 578w
Poverty (28.01.86) 924-30
Rape 582w
Unemployment (28.01.86) 924-30
Victim support schemes 581w

West Midlands County Council 263w

West Midlands police 370-1w
Pay 370-1w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority 344w
Kidney patients 344w

Western Europe
Aerospace industry 19w
Gas pipelines 630

Westland helicopters 13-4, 15-6w, 34-5w, 86w, 87w, 88w, 89w, 94w, 135-6w, 143-4w, 183w, 201w, 279-80w, 281-2w, 320-1w, 330w, 355-6w, 366w, 382w, 411-2w, (23.01.86) 449-60, 467, 515w, 528-9w, 574-5w, 584w, 585w, 629-30w, 637w, 641-2w, (27.01.86) 646-90, 790-1, 793-4, 1090-1, 1092
Archer, Jeffrey 16w, 88w, 94w, 183w
British Aerospace 15-6w, 89w, 135-6w, 183w
Broadcasting controls 87w, 89w
Cabinet Committees 87w
Church Commissioners 14
Company finance 34-5w, 641-2w
Defence Select Committee evidence 1090-1, 1092-3
Departmental records 88w
Disclosure of information 87w, 88w, 281-2w, 330w, 355-6w, 382w, 411w, 412w, 515w, 574w, 575w, 584w, 585w, 629-30w, 637w, 791-2, 793-4
Emergency debates (27.01.86) 646-90
Exports 334w
Fiat 16w
Foreign relations 528-9w
India 201w
Inquiries 412w
International cooperation 366w
Interviews 143-4w
Italy 34-5w, 366w
Lie detectors 143w
Ministerial statements (23.01.86) 449-60
Ministers correspondence 183w, 382w, 411-2w
Press releases 382w, 412w
Prime Minister 585w
Prime Ministers Office 411w
Select Committees 575w
Shareholders 641-2w
Standing Order No 10 applications (23.01.86) 467
USA 88w

Westminister City Council 178w, 214w

Westminster International Conference Centre 298w

Wheat
Dagenham docks 585w

Wheel clamps 56w
Camden 56w

Wheelchairs 508-9w
Aids for handicapped 786-7

Wheeler, Mr John
Debates etc
Drug Trafficking Offences Bill, 2R (21.01.86) 256-8
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1986 (28.01.86) 909-10
Questions
Fire regulations, Hostels 214w

Whitbread Poacher bitter 591w
Alcoholic drinks duties 591w

White, Mr James
Questions
Wallenberg, Raoul, Political prisoners 246-7w

Whitley councils 309w

Whitney, Mr Ray, *Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security*
Debates etc
Children & Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1217-24
Erith & District Hospital (27.01.86) 773-6
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1247-8
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1243-4
Questions
Advisory Committee on Irradiated & Novel Foods, Irradiated food 553w
Ambulance services, Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 552w
Antismoking campaign, Government grants 503w
Antismoking campaign, Pupils 58w
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, Trade union recognition 496w
Asthma, Medical records 230w
Audiology, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 551w
Basildon Hospital, Babies 486w
Brook Hospital, Neurology 230w
Child care, Research 490w
Childbirth, Aliens 233-4w
Children, Injuries 232w
Civil Liability & Compensation for Personal Injury Royal Commission 556w
Clinical psychologists, Manpower 130-1w
Cruelty to children, Disclosure of information 59w
Cruelty to children, Incest 233w
Death, Elderly 392-4w
Death rate, Social class 346w
District health authorities, North West region 495w
Doctors, NHS complaints 556w
Drug abuse, Government grants 492w
Drug abuse, Tranquillisers 614-5w
Drug abuse, Video recordings 345w
Electroconvulsive therapy, NHS 393-4w
Food poisoning, Death 66w
Handicapped children, Community care 492-3w
Health hazards, Bracken 345w, 660w
Health hazards, Skoal Bandits 304-5w
Health service staff, Vacancies 389w
Health services, Statistics 347-8w
Helping the Community to Care, Government grants 395-6w, 615-6w
Hip replacements, Leicester 783-4
Home helps, Departmental circulars 493w
Home helps, Social Services Inspectorate 493-4w
Hospital ancillary staff, Pay 494w
Hospital bed occupancy rates, Salop 397w
Hospital beds, Stone House Hospital 661-2w
Hospital waiting lists, Ear nose & throat 63w
Hospital waiting lists, Hip replacements 133w
Hospital waiting lists, Medical treatments 659w
Hospital waiting lists, Ophthalmology 549-50w
Hospitals, Fires 349w
Housing problems, Young people 613-4w
Human growth hormones, Children 346-7w
Jet Provost aircraft, Military aircraft 625w
Kidney patients, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 344w
Legionnaires disease, Swimming pools 659w
Manchester Royal Infirmary 308w
Marriage 660w
Maternal mortality, Caesarian sections 386-7w
Maternity hospitals, Retail trade 504w
Mental Health Act 1983 553w
Mental patients, Hospital readmissions 496-7w
Mental patients, Languages 560w
Mental patients rights, Departmental publications 558-9w, 559-60w
Multiple births 387w
Narcotics, Young people 504w
National Association of Health Authorities in England & Wales, Finance 660w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants to voluntary organisations 131-2w
NHS, Computer staff 616w
NHS, Computers 616w
NHS complaints, Health Service Commissioner 556w
Northern Regional Health Authority, Privatisation 495w
Nursing homes 65-6w
Oldham Hospital, Hip replacements 498w
Organ donor cards, Publicity 232w
Patients, Accidents 554w, 555w
Patients, Compensation 491-2w
Perinatal mortality, South Lincolnshire Health Authority 344w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 60w
Residential care, Licensing 485w
Residential care, Private sector 305-6w
Reyes syndrome 232w, 387-8w
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, Bloomsbury Health Authority 496w
Smoking, Nicorette 65w
Social deprivation, District health authorities 388w
Social workers training 490w
Social workers training, Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 397w, 789
Social workers training, Child care 344w
Social workers training, Finance 489-90w
Speech therapists, Pay 63w, 307w

Speech therapy, Manpower 501w, 502w
Speech therapy, Research 501-2w
Tobacco industry, Advertising codes of practice 785, 786
Toxocara canis, Children 345w
Tranquillisers, Government grants 132w
Wythenshawe Hospital, Hospital admissions 57w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 459

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 968
Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1986/87 (20.01.86) 139, 153, 154
Social Security Bill, 2R (28.01.86) 866-9
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Bangor 655-6w
Camping sites, Licensing 47w
Commission for Racial Equality 174w
Cost per pupil, Wales 198w
Emigration, Hong Kong 216w
Environmental policy, Wales 108w
Food industry, Average earnings 43w
Hong Kong, Stateless persons 33w
Hospital closures, Wales 3
Housing construction, Wales 198-9w
Housing Corporation, Wales 199w, 200w
Local government, Wales 22w
Local government staff, Wales 22w
Maternal mortality, Caesarian sections 386-7w
Milk Marketing Board, Cheese 208w
Multiple births 387w
Pitman, Sue, Injuries 9w
Postal services, Gwynedd 13w
Rate support grants, Arfon 22w
Regional development grants, Wales 107w
Unemployment, Caernarfon 20-1w
VAT repayment, Children 645w
Welsh Development Agency, Privatisation 8

Wigley, Dafydd (20.01.86) 153-5

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 421w

Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 421w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc
South Yemen (21.01.86) 189
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 673
Westland helicopters, Ministerial correspondence (23.01.86) 457-8

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 209
Local government finance, Wales (29.01.86) 974
Research assistants, House of Commons passes (29.01.86) 1066
Tin, Cornwall (24.01.86) 624-5, 626
Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, 2R (31.01.86) 1242-3
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information (27.01.86) 654
Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 355
Westland helicopters, Parliamentary papers (20.01.86) 36
Questions
Hospital bed occupancy rates, West Glamorgan Health Authority 456-8w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 4-5
Ministers 574-5w
Singleton Hospital, Medical treatments 31w
Solicitor-General, Letters 575w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 585w
Television licences 177w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 584w

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Local government finance, Scotland (29.01.86) 956
Questions
Family income supplements, Fuel aid 614w
Family income supplements, Scotland 614w
Fuel aid, Supplementary benefits 558w
Hammersmith Hospital, Hospital costs per patient 389w
Heating allowances, Social security benefits rules 557-8w
Hypothermia, Scotland 548-50w
Natural gas, Imports 630
Teachers, Scotland 545w, 943

Wind power
Turbines 791

Wines
Codes of practice 380-1w
Measurement 380-1w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
Defence Select Committee, Members interests (21.01.86) 210
Local government finance (28.01.86) 810
Oral question time point of order (28.01.86) 794
South Yemen (21.01.86) 188
Westland helicopters (22.01.86) 306
Westland helicopters, Ministerial statements (22.01.86) 354-5
Westland helicopters, Minister correspondence (23.01.86) 457
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1084
Armistice Day ceremonies, Members correspondence 373w
British Aerospace, Westland helicopters 183w
Broadcasting, Members 88w
Business statement 1097
Ethnic minorities, Cabinet Office 188w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Employment 203-4w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Energy 205w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of the Environment 229-30w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Trade & Industry 183w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Transport 212w
Ethnic minorities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 181w
Ethnic minorities, Home Office 219w
Ethnic minorities, Ministry of Defence 236w, 354w
Ethnic minorities, Treasury 197w
Italy, Westland helicopters 366w
Prime Minister, Railway transport 187-8w
Prime Ministers Office 575w
Prime Ministers Office, Ingham, Bernard 411w
Severe weather payments 306w
Severe weather payments, Supplementary benefits 63w
Solicitor-General, Letters 574w
Solicitor-General, Ministers correspondence 355-6w, 411w, 585w
Special Branch, Complaints against police 437-8
Westland helicopters, Broadcasting controls 87w
Westland helicopters, Disclosure of information 574w
Westland helicopters, Interviews 143-4w

Winson Green Prison
Prison staff 443

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1160-2, 1182
Questions
Cancer 233w
Cervical cancer, Health education 233w
Contraceptives, Young people 558w
Cruelty to children, Incest 233w
Prescription drugs, Limited list prescribing 557w
Sunday trading, Belgium 218w
Sunday trading, Denmark 218w
Sunday trading, France 218-9w
Sunday trading, Italy 219w
Sunday trading, Netherlands 219w
Sunday trading, Portugal 218w, 324w
Sunday trading, Republic of Ireland 219w
Sunday trading, Spain 218w
Sunday trading, West Germany 219w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Army (30.01.86) 1120, 1124
EC Foreign Affairs Council (30.01.86) 1110-1, 1113
Local government finance (28.01.86) 807
Questions
Aerospace industry, Market share 18-9w
Business statement 462-3
Supplementary benefits, Ben Rabha, Sallah Abdessalem 558w
University teachers, Pay 363-4w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Channel tunnel (20.01.86) 29

Wolverhampton
Burglary 581w
Housing benefits 612-3w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 581w

Wolverhampton Health Authority 551w
Hearing aids 551w

Women
Community programme 118w
Crimes of violence 5w, 170w, 256-60w, 433-4

Womens employment 40-2w
Part-time employment 167-8

Womens Hospital
Liverpool 501w

Womens National Commission 268w
Crimes of violence 268w

Womens prisons
Penal reform 372w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Questions
Energy Efficiency Year 375w
Human growth hormones, Children 346-7w

Woodall, Mr Alec
Debates etc
Stanley Royd Hospital (21.01.86) 199
Questions
Industrial health & safety 601w
Industrial health & safety, Convictions 601-2w
Industrial health & safety, Industrial tribunals 602-3w
Industrial health & safety, Punishment 602w

Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen 238w

Woodlee Hospital
Hospital closures 947

Woolwich Arsenal 136w
Land use 136w
Offices 136w

Woolwich ferry 54w
Costs 54w
Local government reform 54w

Work of Government Departments Review 347-8w

"World This Weekend" 88w

Wortley
Railway closures 56w

Wrecks
Conservation 650w
Invincible 649-50w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc

Atomic Energy Authority Bill (HL), 2R (21.01.86) 227-9
Exchange rates (29.01.86) 990, 995-7
Questions
Coal mining, Redundancy 637-8
Income tax, Tax burden 589-90w
Marginal tax rate, Single people 590w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 197w
Oil prices, Sterling 793
Self-employed, Occupations 634-6w
South Africa, Prisoners 528w
Taxation, Personal income 644-6w
Westland helicopters, Fiat 16w
Westland helicopters, USA 88w

Wythenshawe Hospital 57w
Chest medicine 57w
Hospital admissions 57w

X rays
Breast cancer 133w
Cancer hazards 133w
Departmental circulars 133w
Medical treatments 133w
NHS 133w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
BBC Advertising & Sponsorship Review 253w
Empty housing, Rates & rating 223w
European monetary system 792
Milk, Schools 245w
Part-time employment 168
Prime Minister official engagements 574w
Security, Northern Ireland 592w
Unemployment, Advisory services 126w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Firearms 255w

Young, Sir George, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 605w
Building repairs, Building industry 415w
Building repairs, London boroughs 653w
Council house sales, Corby District Council 47-8w
Council house sales, Southwark 467w
Council house sales, Wandsworth 304
Council housing, Greater London Council 651w
Council housing, Housing improvement 603-4w
Council housing finance, Local government expenditure 414w
Derelict land 420-1w
Derelict land grants, Corby 229w
District heating 377w
EC Trade Mark Office 222w
Empty property, Rates & rating 339w
Government grants to local authorities, London boroughs 339w, 471w
Housing construction, Council housing finance 414w
Housing estates 465w
Housing finance, Capital investment 650-1w
Housing finance, Defective housing 604-5w
Housing improvement 140w
Housing investment programmes, Local government reform 651w
Housing investment programmes, London boroughs 651-2w
Housing stock, Hillingdon 652w
Housing stock, Leeds 48w
Inner city areas, Private investment 422-3w
Inner city partnerships 225w
Land reclamation, Expenditure 420-1w
Local government expenditure, London boroughs 653w
Local government expenditure, Voluntary organisations 297, 298
Local government reform, Voluntary organisations 298
Local government revenue, Hillingdon 652w
Local government revenue, London boroughs 652-3w
London Docklands Development Corporation 220w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 220w, 221w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Voluntary organisations 48w
Multiple occupation, Housing standards 222w
Offices, Procurator fiscal service 337w
Owner occupied housing 224w, 304
Private rented housing 415w
Procurators fiscal, Kirkcaldy 470w
Public footpaths, Devon 140w
Public sector housing, Building repairs 414w
Public sector housing sales, Empty housing 302
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Defective housing 293-4w
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Housing investment programmes 294w
Slums, Northern region 227w
Stockbridge Village Trust, Government grants 419w
Urban development grants, Housing finance 336w, 337w
Urban housing renewal unit, Conflict of interests 604w
Urban housing renewal unit, Council housing 302
Urban planning, Private investment 227w
Urban programme, Corby 228-9w
Urban programme, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council 416-20w
Urban programme, Local government expenditure 339w, 416w
Urban programme, Merseyside 420w
Westminster International Conference Centre 298w

Young offenders
Custodial treatment 275w
Fines 260-1w

Young people (31.01.86) 1196-226
Airguns 436
Conferences 163-4w
Contraceptives 494w, 558w
Council of Europe 163-4w
Housing problems 613-4w
Maternity benefits 551w
Narcotics 504w
Oral contraceptives 494w
Owner occupied housing 300
Pay 174
Prime Minister official engagements 181-2
Shop staff 173-4
Skoal Bandits 547w
Supplementary benefits 619w
Tobacco advertising 785
Unemployment 544w
Violence on television 439
Wages councils 173-4

Younger, Rt Hon George, *Secretary of State for Defence*
Questions
Defence 625w
Public appointments, Levene, Peter 135w
Westland helicopters, British Aerospace 135-6w

Youth custody
Ethnic minorities 522w
Suicide 522w

Youth employment 38-9w
Industries 39-40w

Youth employment schemes 40w
North West region 38w

Youth training scheme 119w, 120w, 121w
Corby 202w
Derbyshire County Council 283w
Ethnic minorities 202-3w
Finance 120w, 176, 177, 944
Glasgow 205w
Hampshire 120-1w
Handicapped 944-5
Leeds 202-3w
Leicestershire 176
Local authorities in Scotland 598w
Local government expenditure 177
Manpower Services Commission 120w
Northamptonshire 202w
Paisley 945
School leaving 43w, 79w
School teachers 176-7
Scotland 598-9w, 944-5
Social security benefits disqualification 127-9w
Take-up of employment 120w
Training allowances 177
Voluntary organisations 176, 177-8, 205w, 944

Youth unemployment 38-9w, 111-2w
Knowsley 181-2

Zambia
Agriculture 526w
Educational aid 526w

105 FD ammunition 639w
Defence contracts 639w